

Cain and Abel

Genesis 4:1-16

In 1975 a young film maker was struggling to write a script about a film he had been thinking about for many years. The film was set in space, he knew that, but it lacked any sense of energy, tension, any sense even of truth.

Then the film maker remembered a book he had read in college by a Joseph Campbell, a professor of literature and folklore, called "The hero with a thousand faces". In this Campbell looked at the work of the psychologist Carl Jung, and the great stories that have been told through the story of the earth, myths - in the sense that they are untrue, but they are very true, stories which tell us about families, about life, about death, about happiness, about destiny, about hubris and about quest. These deep, deep, to use the word that Jung used, Archetypal stories tell us deep truths about the human condition.

And the film maker took what his script, which was about people flying around in space, and reshaped it in the manner of these great myths, and suddenly he had a story which spoke deeply to the human condition, and in 1977 Star Wars conquered the world.

In the Christian faith we have these deep truths - I would argue that Star Wars is simply a retelling of the story of David and Goliath, with light sabres instead of slings.

But the effect of going into these stories, is incredibly powerful. We miss the point when we think that Star Wars or Harry Potter is just a story. They are a place where we go and are changed. I wonder if on Sunday morning you think that all we hear is stories, but there is a point to this, because in the place of story you are often transformed far more than a series of bullet points. Stories come at you slant, forcing you to ask questions, and into another world you go for a while where it is safer to ask those questions.

That is the secret of play therapy. It is about going to a place of metaphor and imagination where it is safe to unwrap things. I remember once a young person who was very very angry, and their parents kept telling them to not be angry. Don't be angry, don't be angry - how does that work? Then one day a friend of theirs who was a play therapist said "ask them if their anger was an animal, what animal would it be?" And so they did, and they wondered what the young person would say, and they replied "my anger is like a tiger, diving into a volcano, with machine guns attached". And the parents were terrified, and the therapist friend said "what a brilliant answer, I would love to work with that young person".

We are going to do some therapy, this morning, except I am not going to call it "Play therapy", I am going to call it "Horror therapy". Because the story this morning is the Bible's first horror story.

It's the story of Cain and Abel, which is a little bit like a horror version of the Adam and Eve. In this story there is sacrifice, there is murder, there is a lot of blood, there is a mark, and there is the threat of seven fold revenge.

And if you think that Horror isn't your thing, let me remind you again of the story of Marion Campbell. Marion was a member of Weem but well known in Aberfeldy, and who spent the last

few months of her life opposite our Church, in the bungalow where her son and daughter-in-law Campbell and Tracey live. Marion was the archetypal Church of Scotland woman - she wore immaculate clothes to Church, with a hat, she had been a Sunday school teacher, a nursery teacher she had a wonderful warm personality, always smiled, and even in the last few months of her life had faced her illness with great courage and warmth. When I was preparing the funeral tribute with her family, I came to a question that I often ask people "did they like any films or TV programmes". Oh yes, said the family, she absolutely loved horror movies, she liked nothing more than staying up late into the night watching horror, and the gorier, the better.

And this is not a coincidence - Mark Kermode, says that the loveliest people you meet are horror film fanatics, and every horror film director he has ever interviewed is the loveliest person. It's about having a place you can go to deal with the darkness. The tiger plunging into a volcano with machine guns attached. There is a converse rule says Kermode - some of the directors of family movies are amongst the most horrible people he has ever met.

So if you want to be as lovely as Marion Campbell, stay away from Disney and start watching some horror, and we are going to do that with the Bible's first horror story - the story of Cain and Abel.

The story starts well, and this is the tragedy, Cain is the first birth, and his mother Eve is delighted - see with God, I have brought forth a son. Later on Abel comes and he just arrives. But with Cain it was "I have a son". In the Adam and Eve family home, all the photos on the wall were of Cain, and just a couple of Abel.

They grow up and Cain becomes a tiller of the ground -
And Abel becomes a sheep farmer.

So if you want to take this as a story about the moral superiority of sheep farmers, I will not stop you.

Key Points

- Bring Sacrifice, Lord gazes at Abels, he does not gaze at Cain's (I feel sorry for Cain). It feels like Abel gave of himself. There was genuine cost and loss.
- Cain, countenance falls, an he burned greatly - deep emotional response to being ignored. All the time the family photos were up, but he suspected and feared that at some point his younger brother had overtaken him.
 - Dad telling me that Graeme was better at solving problems

God has parental crises.

God goes to Abel, and says - why is your countenance fallen. And he presents to Cain the possibility of change, that possibility that the script will turn out differently next to him, it will not always be like this.

And then very graphic image, Sin is lying at the door, and it's desire is for you, but you must master it.

Sin is a power....

Face the monster.

Story of the Babbadook...

Amelia Vanek is a troubled and exhausted widow living in the Australian city of Adelaide, who has brought up her six-year-old son Samuel alone. Her late husband, Oskar, was killed in a car accident that occurred as he drove Amelia to the hospital during labour. Sam begins displaying erratic behaviour: he becomes an insomniac and is preoccupied with an imaginary monster, against which he has built weapons to fight. Amelia is forced to pick up her son from school after Sam brings one of the weapons there. One night, Sam asks his mother to read a pop-up storybook called Mister Babadook. It describes the titular monster, the Babadook, a tall pale-faced humanoid in a top hat with taloned fingers which torments its victims after they become aware of its existence. Amelia is disturbed by the book and its mysterious appearance, while Sam becomes convinced that the Babadook is real. Sam's persistence about the Babadook leads Amelia to often have sleepless nights as she tries to comfort him.

Soon after, strange events occur: doors open and close mysteriously by themselves, strange sounds are heard and Amelia finds glass shards in her food. She attributes the events to Sam's behaviour, but he blames the Babadook. Amelia rips up the book and disposes of it. At her birthday party, Sam's cousin Ruby bullies Sam for not having a father, in response to which he pushes her out of her tree house; as a result she breaks her nose. Amelia's sister Claire admits she cannot bear Sam, to which Amelia takes great offence. On the drive home, Sam has another vision of the Babadook and suffers a seizure, so Amelia gets some sedatives from a paediatrician. The following morning, Amelia finds the Mister Babadook book reassembled on the front door step. New words taunt her by saying that the Babadook will become stronger if she continues to deny its existence, containing pop-ups of her killing their dog Buggy, Sam, and then herself. Terrified, Amelia burns the book and runs to the police station after a disturbing phone call. However, Amelia has no proof of the stalking, and when she then sees the Babadook's suit hung up behind the front desk, she leaves. That night, Amelia tries to fall asleep and watches the Babadook open her bedroom door, crawl up the ceiling and attack her. She then turns on all the lights in the house and falls asleep with Sam downstairs. After the attack, Amelia starts to become more isolated and shut-in, becoming impatient, shouting at Samuel for 'disobeying' her constantly, and having frequent visions of the Babadook once again. Her mental state slowly decays and she exhibits erratic and violent behaviour, including cutting the phone line with a knife and then waving the same knife aggressively at Sam without realizing it. This devolves into disturbing hallucinations, in which Amelia violently murders Sam.

Shortly after these visions, Amelia sees an apparition of Oskar, who offers to return to her if she "brings the boy" to him. Realizing that he is a creation of the Babadook, Amelia flees and is stalked through the house by the Babadook until it finally possesses her. Under its influence she breaks Buggy's neck and attempts to kill Sam. Eventually luring her into the basement, Sam knocks her out. Tied up, Amelia awakens with Sam, terrified, nearby. When she tries to strangle him, he lovingly caresses her face, causing her to regurgitate an inky black substance, which seemingly expels the Babadook. When Sam reminds Amelia that "you can't get rid of the Babadook," an unseen force drags him into Amelia's bedroom. After saving Sam, Amelia is forced by the Babadook to re-watch a vision of her husband's death. Furious, she confronts the Babadook, making the beast retreat into the basement, and she locks the door behind it.

After this ordeal, Amelia and Sam manage to recover. Amelia is attentive and caring toward him, encouraging him toward the weapons he makes and being impressed at Sam's magic tricks. They gather earthworms in a bowl, and Amelia takes them to the basement, where the Babadook resides. She places the bowl on the floor for the Babadook to eat. However, as the beast tries to attack her, Amelia calms it down, and it retreats to the corner, taking the earthworms with it. Amelia returns to the yard to celebrate Sam's birthday.

He has to face the monster... face the sin...

But he doesn't he gets Abel out to the field, and he kills him.

The Lord then comes to Abel in an echo of the time when the Lord came to Eve and Adam after they had eaten the apple. "Am I my brother's keeper"

The blood cries out to me from the ground...

And now you are cursed, and the ground will not give to you its strength and you will be a fugitive and a wanderer around the the earth.

No, because anyone who sees me will kill me.

1. Know the monsters, face them, face them with Jesus who knew what it was to fight the devil. He is tempted in every way we are...

2. God looks after Abel - there are people who don't get what they deserve...

Hebrews 11:1-4; 12:1

2. If you want to love, look at the story of Cain

1 John 3:11-16

1 John 1:5-10