

**Economic Prospect**  
**Thanksgiving and Resentment**  
**John Addison Teevan      November 20, 2020**

As Thanksgiving Day approaches, we are gripped by emotional distress and social disruption. These maladies have flowed from Covid-induced fear and death, economic distress for many, and the highly charged and contested elections as well as periods of rioting.

We are not comforted by a calm world (except Hong Kong and ongoing hotspots) nor comforted by the low price of gasoline or airline tickets (what's open even if we traveled?). We should be thinking about God, kids, family gatherings, memory making events, and the relaxation of the easy chair with football or a book.

Instead, we are pacing the floor, talking back at the news, and lecturing our families.

In 2020 we have learned to take injustice and political deceit to new heights which have left many feeling not merely ignored or angry, but fully and openly resentful.

Resentment: this is not a biblical heavyweight like sin or shame; like violence or oppression, but Jordan Peterson has suggested that we elevate resentment to that disreputably high status. Peterson suggests that we revisit the story of Cain and Abel in Genesis 4:1-10, to understand the power of resentment.

We tend to look at the record of Adam and Eve and find a dozen important lessons about the creation and fall of man; God and his creation of us in his image, and evil as a chosen rebellion. All this gives us a genuine foundation for understanding the wonderfully noble yet tragically flawed human condition. When it comes to Cain and Abel, we treat them as a footnote, the first guilty and shameful murder. Big deal.

Peterson begs to disagree. Cain and Abel were mere (if brand new) men, not archetypes of good and evil. In the Genesis record Cain's sacrifice was not acceptable though Abel's was. This was an issue with a solution suggested by the Lord though 'sin was crouching at the door.' Cain, however, took it personally, rejected God's offer, and here is the key, chose the path of resentment.

This resentment resulted in Cain's choice to murder his own brother. Resentment against a brother or humble adjustment to the Lord and others; we face that same choices. Resentment is a serious passion that resists the confidence of trust, dependence, and obedience or even of reason. Cain lived with resentment until the murder, then with regretting his resentment every day for the rest of his life. That would have included Thanksgiving Day if they had it where Cain lived in sullen exile.

Today we have many paths of resentment which have names we do not admire like jealousy, bitterness, suspicion, accusation, hate, and blame. Where there is abuse or oppression or injustice, we feel that we are entitled to our resentment. Stories of the oppressed rightly gain our sympathy. Some will seek to intervene on their behalf. This is how resentment can spread to other people. How about solutions?

Resentment, grievance, and destructive reaction are not the pathway to solutions. People must channel their resentment and abandon their anger. How? Trust God and follow the path of forgiveness instead. This sounds cheap and useless to the oppressed. But that path did bring about a transformation of the oppressive Roman empire...and not a few other impossible victories. Lincoln and Wilberforce got it right too.

If we resist resentment what should we pursue? Gratitude for the good things that we do have so that we can put issues in perspective (Cain could not) and act in ways that make real change (Cain failed here too). Otherwise, there will be social disruptions that echo Jesus and James who warned of the high cost of anger. ML King refused violent resentment; he chose the non-violent path. Now that was a solution.

Resentment 'is crouching at the door, but you must rule over it.' How? Choose to have a Happy Thanksgiving.