

The Ten Commandments: No Murder

The driving question of our sermon text is: Are you a life-giver or a life-taker? Generally, most sermons on this commandment address the morally controversial and thorny issues in our culture like abortion, euthanasia, capital punishment, gun control, just war, etc. We will address these issues today in a cursory manner, but our focus will concentrate on the personal: Are you a life-giver?

At the end of the Pentateuch, Moses offers this invitation: "...I have set before you life and death, blessing and curse. Therefore choose life, that you and your offspring may live, loving the Lord your God, obeying his voice and holding fast to him, for he is your life and length of days..." (Deuteronomy 30:19-20).

We will choose life only as we grasp four truths that the sixth commandment teaches.

Thesis: We will become life-givers only as we embrace God's divine prerogative, our unique dignity, Jesus' radical transformation, and our sobering responsibility.

Exodus 20:13

You shall not murder.

- I. **God's Divine Prerogative: God alone has the authority and power to give and take life.**
Life is sacred because God is the only Sovereign over life and death. He alone possesses the unique, sovereign power to give life (see Acts 17:25). He alone possesses the unique, sovereign power to take life (see Deuteronomy 32:29). Since He is the giver of life, it is His prerogative to take it, in His own time, in His own way. Therefore, murder violates God's sovereignty and robs Him of His glory.

Note: In OT law, capital punishment is required for premeditated, intentional murder because God's Word legislates it (see Genesis 9:6a; Romans 13:4). Therefore all killing is not murder. The Bible condemns all unjust, unlawful taking away of life. It does not condemn killing in the case of public justice, lawful war, or necessary self-defense (See the Westminster Larger Catechism, Question 136 for more insight on this).
- II. **Our Unique Dignity: People are made in God's image.**
 - A. Life is sacred because we are made in the image of God (see Genesis 9:6b – For God made man in his own image.). God places an immense value on human life.
 - B. John Calvin clarifies: "Our neighbor bears the image of God: to use him, abuse her, or misuse him is to do violence to God who images himself in every human soul."
- III. **Jesus' Radical Transformation. Jesus radically transforms the sixth commandment.**
Four ways:
 - A. **Jesus deepens the scope of this commandment: Matthew 5:21-22.**
Therefore, all of us stand guilty before God for breaking the sixth commandment since we are all guilty of heart murder. The root of all murder is a heart filled with envy, hatred, anger, and vindictiveness. To hate, to feel bitter and resentful towards another person is murder. Here is where the sharp needle of the law now makes way for the scarlet thread of the Gospel.
 - B. **Jesus perfectly obeys.**
Jesus completely fulfills this commandment. Jesus was peaceable when He was

provoked. He was led like a lamb to the slaughter. He did not open His mouth.

C. **Jesus rescues people who fail to obey.**

He saves us from our murderous selves by His own murder. He is murdered to eventually end all murder. Jesus was subject to a horrendous breaking of the sixth commandment. We must acknowledge that our most heinous sin is that we crucified our Lord. He bore all of our hatred, resentment, anger, and murder on the cross. We were there when they crucified Jesus not physically but certainly spiritually. The religious leaders and the Roman soldiers represented us. Horatius Bonar says it best: "Of all that shouting multitude, I feel that I am one; And in that din of voices rude, I recognize my own. Around the cross the throng I see, Mocking the Sufferer's groan; Yet still my voice it seems to be, As if I mocked alone." Trust in our life-giving Lord to be delivered from all of our murderous ways.

IV. **Our Sobering Responsibility: Become a life giver.**

- A. **Repent.** Ask the Lord for forgiveness for the ways that you have degraded, diminished, and deprived others of the full life that God wants them to enjoy.
- B. **Rejoice** in God's pardon for your own murderous ways. You've hated, you've scorned, you've belittled, you've verbally abused your spouse, you've been calloused to the needs of others. In some cases, you may have actually murdered someone.
- C. **Rest.** Some of you have had a member of your family or a friend murdered. Comfort your hearts in the truth that our God is a God of perfect justice who will right every wrong (See Romans 12:17-21).
- D. **Resolve to become a life-giver.** Ask the Lord to show you how to lay down your life and serve others (see 1 John 3:15-16). He gave His life-giving Spirit to us so that we might move out into the deserts of this life and become life-givers by our words and works. Cultivate a readiness to pursue reconciliation with anyone who has a conflict with you (See Matthew 5:23-24).

Discussion Questions

1. The Hebrew version of Exodus 20:13-15 contains only two words per commandment: "No murder. No adultery. No stealing." What do you think the Lord intends to say to His people by such terse language?
2. What do you make of the fact that God uses three murderers to write much of His biblical revelation (Moses (See Exodus 2:17), David (2 Samuel 11 and 12) and Paul (Acts 7))? What do you think God intends to say to us by this?
3. Do you agree with this statement: "Not all killing is murder"? Our doctrinal statement (Westminster Larger Catechism Question 136) says that the commandment to murder does not include three things: a lawful war, necessary defense, and public justice. Where would you go in the Bible to validate this position to a friend who was questioning you on this?
4. How would you use Jesus' transformation of the sixth commandment to comfort a grieving woman struggling with guilt over a past abortion?

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5. Where would you go in Scripture to help a woman considering an abortion to end an unwanted pregnancy? A starting point might be passages such as Exodus 21:22-23, Psalm 102:18; 139:13-14. What do you make of this statement from Rosaria Butterfield: "Abortion is not a right or entitlement, but it steals praise from God by denying image bearers the privilege to live through and for Him. Abortion attacks and destroys the image of God."

 6. What do you believe the Bible teaches about suicide? Consider what we believe: When a person takes his/her own life, he or she usurps God's prerogative, for He alone has the right to bring life to an end. It is a cowardly and selfish act that leaves huge emotional scars and burdens on those who are left behind. "Suicide is an act of a mind unhinged, though such acts do not themselves forfeit God's grace as we once thought, yet suicide is a direct breach of the sixth commandment." (J.I. Packer, *Growing in Christ*, p. 260). The Jewish rabbinic scholars set forth the following Scriptures as a sanction against suicide: Genesis 9:5; Deuteronomy 4:9; Job 2:9-10.

 7. How would say that writing in a living will "DNR," urging the doctors not to take extraordinary measures to resuscitate you, is different than euthanasia, a "mercy killing," when active measures are taken to end the life of another to spare him pain, suffering and indignity?

 8. Is there any relationship in your life right now that is estranged and broken? Using Jesus' admonition in Matthew 5:23-24, ask the Lord to give you a readiness and willingness to be reconciled. What steps do you need to take for this to happen?

 9. Lastly, how would you evaluate your own heart as you reflect on the words you speak to your family members and others with whom you work? Do you speak life-giving or life-taking words? Where do you need to work on speaking words that give grace and life (See Ephesians 4:26, 29)?