

Exodus 20:13
2011

Do Not Murder!

Aug. 7th,

Matthew 5:21-22

The Ten Commandments – No. 6

No Murder (Exodus 20:13)

One upon a time, one family lived; this family has two sons. One son was herding livestock and the other son was farming. This family faithfully worshipped God. Each son brought his own offering to God; the younger son brought some of the firstborn of his flock and the older son brought some of the fruits of the soil to the LORD. God favored the younger son and his offering, whereas the older brother's offering did not get God's approval. The older brother lost his temper and angered himself; he was jealous of his brother. One day the older brother asked his younger brother to go out in the field; the older brother attacked his brother and killed him. He became the first murderer throughout human history; his name is Cain who killed his brother Abel; their parents are Adam and Eve who were the first humans created by God (Genesis 4:1-16). That is the first killing accident.

A third grade Sunday school teacher was giving a lesson on the commandment, "Honor your father and mother." "Now, does anyone know a commandment for brothers and sisters?" she asked. One sharp girl raised her hand and said, "You shall not kill."

The Six Commandment – Do Not Murder – looks simple, true, and obvious. We might say that we all know that because this rule is strictly kept as a legal law in any human society. Have you ever killed someone? Probably not. At the same time, this rule implies many social, ethical, and legal issues debated in our society such as abortion, capital punishment, stem cell research, suicide, and so on.

High Value to Human Life

First and foremost this rule teaches us is that life belongs to God; God is the giver of life. Biblically speaking, our body belongs to God; it is not ours. We are entrusted to take care of our body according to His will. God regards a human life as valuable and precious. "To save one life," the Talmud teaches, "is to save the world."

With regard to the value of life, I want to share the following story: A professor at the UCLA medical school confronted his students with this case: "A father has syphilis; the mother has tuberculosis. They already have had four children. The first is blind, the second is dead, the third is deaf, the fourth also has tuberculosis. The mother is pregnant again. The parents are willing to have an abortion if you say they should. What do you advise? The majority of students advised abortion. The professor said, "Congratulations, you have just killed Beethoven!" Reverence for life!

All human beings are made in the image of God. Then God said, Let us make humankind in our image...So God created humankind in his image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them...Then the LORD God formed man from the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and the man became a living being.

Motives to Kill

Nevertheless, we often hear in the news of people being killed, i.e., the recent massacre in Norway, hate crimes, crimes of anger, rage, and so on. The motives to harm others come from hatred, anger, or paranoia symptoms (mental disorders).

Listen to Jesus' teaching on the Sermon on the Mount: "You have heard that it was said to the people long ago, 'Do not murder, and anyone who murders will be subject to judgment.' But I tell you that anyone who is angry with his brother will be subject to judgment. Again, anyone who says to his brother, 'Raca,' is answerable to the Sanhedrin. But anyone who says, 'You fool! will be in danger of the fire of hell'" (Matthew 5:21-22). Jesus is concerned about the motive inside rather than the act outside. Anger is the feeling of strong displeasure; "anger is fed by feelings of disappointment, hurt, rejection, and embarrassment. Anger is the opposite of the feeling of love. Love draws you toward the person; anger sets you against the person" (Gary Chapman). You see, anger affects everyone. Not just you, but those around you. It's very contagious!

Jesus revolted against an entire worldview peacefully, lovingly, and nonviolently. When he was arrested by the Roman soldiers, he told his disciple who tried to defend him against arrest, "Peter, put away your sword" (Matt. 26:52). He didn't even allow the use of weapons to harm others.

Promoting Care and Support

You are not to kill. What does this mean? Answer: We are to fear and love God so that we neither endanger nor harm the lives of our neighbors, but instead help and support them in all of life's needs. (Reformed and Lutheran traditions –Luther's Small Catechism)

Q: Is it enough, then, if we do not kill our neighbor in any of these ways? A: No; for when God condemns envy, hatred, and anger, he requires us to love our neighbor as ourselves, to show patience, peace, gentleness, mercy, and friendliness toward him, to prevent injury to him as much as we can, also to do good to our enemies (Book of Confessions, Heidelberg Catechism). Those words remind us of the three principles that John Wesley taught his followers (Methodists) – Do no harm. Do good. Stay always in the love of God.

The Apostle Paul says in the Bible, "Get rid of all bitterness, rage and anger, brawling and slander, along with every form of malice. Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you. Be imitators of God, therefore, as dearly loved children and live a life of love, just as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us as a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God (Ephesians 4:31-5:2).

So God doesn't just care that you act right. He cares that you ARE right on the inside. Remember, what Jesus did is move the commandments from just outward actions – "kill" – to inward attitudes and motives – "hate." Love rather than hatred is what this commandment is about. Let it be so by God's help. Amen.