

You Shall Not Murder

July 16, 2017

Our Savior's Way
Worshipping Sundays 8:00, 9:30, & 11:00 AM
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We've reached a fairly straight forward point in our Small Catechism series on the 10 Commandments. Believe it or not, we're at the 5th commandment: "You shall not murder." I think it seems pretty straightforward for everyone. We hear this commandment and think, "Well I've never killed anyone, so I don't need to worry about that one." But recently there has been a court case/battle that connects to this very topic.

There was a young couple who had been dating for about two years. Throughout their time together the young man had been contemplating suicide. At first his girlfriend tried to persuade her boyfriend to get help. But as time progressed things changed. There came the point where this young man decided to end his life. As he was going through with the action he was texting his girlfriend. When he saw that it was working he got scared and called her. This is when the trouble comes in because a text message between the girlfriend and another of her friends revealed that she told him to get back in the car. And in the end the young man did die. But the question raised is, did this young woman kill her boyfriend?

Let's look back at our commandment for a minute. Because in the direct wording of the commandment, no, she did not. The young

man did that himself. However, we cannot just take a part of scripture and use that to define the whole. In order to understand this issue properly we have to look at everything scripture says about murder. The other clearest indication comes from the words of Christ. Jesus said in Matthew 5, “You have heard that it was said to those of old, ‘You shall not murder; and whoever murders will be liable to judgment.’ But I say to you that everyone who is angry with his brother will be liable to judgment; whoever insults his brother will be liable to the council; and whoever says, ‘You fool!’ will be liable to the hell of fire.”

These words from Jesus get to the heart of the matter. People during that time took the literal interpretation of the commandment. You shall not murder means that you shall not physically murder another. Jesus, in his way of correcting the teachings of the Pharisees, explains that murder is not only defined as the physical act of killing another, but doing so in your own heart. Every time hatred enters into your heart, or you’ve thought about how nice it would be for someone to be dead, you are breaking the 5th commandment. It doesn’t matter how much or how little hatred there is, murder is there. And if the young girl in the story from before had any hatred or desire for that young man to be dead in her heart, then she too is guilty of murder.

With this explanation of murder we can think back to all of the times where this has been true in our thoughts. We not only need to avoid murdering others, but hating others. Our culture doesn’t make that easy. In our culture hatred lets loose at the smallest offense. Sometimes it’s not even that a person did something wrong, they simply stated their opinion. But what happens is the internet and usage of social media has given people a free market for their hatred and anger. We no longer worry about what is polite or kind. We see something we don’t like and lash out. Hatred and murder have taken root in our hearts and made even expressing our

thoughts or thinking out loud a dangerous practice. If we truly want to escape the prison that anger and hatred create we need to do something drastic.

We need to die.

Romans 8 speaks of two courses for us to live by. The first is to live by the flesh. If we live by the flesh then we end up being ruled by our sinfulness. Anger, hatred, and murder are things we don't care about. We let them freely rule in our hearts and minds because they feel good. We type whatever we feel. Our words and thoughts are filled with violence and poison. And it's not just anger. Living in this way opens the door for every sin to enter. Lust, envy, greed, laziness, pride. It could be any one of those seven deadly sins.

But on the opposite side, Romans 8, speaks about living by the spirit. These two courses of living are cast as polar opposites in this passage. Living by the spirit means we aren't subject to the desires of the flesh. We don't have to follow what our desires tell us. As our spirit is strengthened we can resist temptation and sin.

This was a revelation to me because for the longest time, I couldn't understand how scripture says that those who are baptized are dead to sin, but I keep sinning. I try but I can't do what I want to do. Like our reading from Paul last week, the good I want to do, I don't do. But it is the evil that I don't want that I keep on doing.

This week as I was preparing for this sermon and reading from different authors, that it hit me. I realized that it means being dead to always sinning. One of the commentaries I read had this to say, "It is true that baptized believers are no longer in the realm of the flesh in the sense of being subjected to its **totalitarian** control and domination. When that was the case, there was no struggle, but only slavery under the rule of sin and death."

Life in the spirit is a battle. I participate in a continual battle of putting to death my sinful self so that I can live by the spirit. It is my opportunity to resist the world's influences, resist the devil, and resist temptation so that I might be more like Jesus, become more of the new man that He promises me I am. That battle excites me. It gives me hope in the future. I know that I won't be able to resist sin and temptation all the time, but the times I fail don't matter. What matters is that in my new life in the spirit I keep fighting. When I fall, I ask for repentance and get up to fight again, knowing that I'm forgiven.

We began with the command for what we should not do. We should not murder and we've talked about how to do that and the hope we have in living by the spirit. But I want to close today with the part from the Small Catechism that tells us what to do next. Martin Luther's explanation of this command says, "We should fear and love God so that we do not hurt or harm our neighbor in his body, but help and support him in every physical need."

The way out of the cycle of anger and hatred is help and support. Our life in the spirit allows us to resist the desire to hate and to engage in the act of supporting and helping our neighbors. The process is easy enough, but it requires some effort from us. The first is to actually get to know our neighbors. The old adage that fences make good neighbors has taken over our mindset when it comes to neighbors. But God's desire for us is to know them by name.

The next step is to help and support them. Whether it's lending them a tool or baking them a pie. We can always find a way to help and support the people around us. Through this effort we not only live in the spirit, but we might just bring new life in the spirit to them as we love and honor both our neighbors and our God.