

LD 40; Matthew 5:21-22; I John 3:11-18; Murder and its Parts I. The Foundation of this Command II. Avoiding Murder III. Protecting Life

Congregation of our Lord Jesus Christ, how many people have you killed? That is quite a question! How many have I killed? None, right? Well, perhaps you have killed more than you think! Today as we consider the 6<sup>th</sup> commandment, we are going to be looking at murder and its parts. As we have seen with the commandments, Jesus Christ interprets and applies the commands of God to our hearts. Now this particular command is visibly transgressed every day. Just look at the shootings in Chicago- with almost 800 people killed in Chicago last year alone. With another 53 people shot over the Memorial Day weekend, our society does not take this commandment seriously. Life is cheap in our day. Add to this the evil of abortion and euthanasia, there is no lack of blood shed. When we read this command, we remember that it is speaking of murder in specific. Or what we would call manslaughter. This is a specific kind of taking a life. This command has in its view the unjust act of taking the life of a fellow man. So today we consider this theme: Jesus Christ forbids murder as He teaches us to love our neighbor.

### **I. The Foundation of this Command**

We start again this week by considering the foundation of this commandment. Why is God so concerned about life- and why should we care about the life of others? Well, all other actions and every of commandment presumes the life of others. It was not good for man to be alone. God made humanity to be a community- a corporate body if you will. As a part of the human race, to attack fellow man is in fact an attack on your own members- putting your own good and your own life in jeopardy! To kill a fellow man is to shed the lifeblood of your own kin! Added to this; life is a gift from God. Even as we learn from Genesis, the Holy Spirit is the author of life. Man has the Spirit breathed within us; making us living souls. So we must not lightly extinguish this breath! The Holy Spirit is living within us- we are temples of the living God. How we treat our bodies and the bodies of others must reflect this fact! God made man- and only He has the power over life and death. As Job confessed, the LORD gives and the LORD takes away. Our God has a creator's

right over our life and death. We cannot and must not put ourselves in the place of God- taking away what God is sovereign over. And even the way and manner in which we were made proves the uniqueness of man's life. Being made in the image of God, mankind is unique. We need to learn to view fellow man as fellow image bearers. So to attack a person is in fact an attack on the image of God- which is seen as an attack on God Himself! We were made for a purpose- created to love and serve God and to love and serve fellow man. What murder does is cut short the ability for man to love and serve God and his neighbor. In this way, the murdered individual is also robbed of an opportunity to serve. The dead do not praise you as Psalm 115 says. All humanity shares this purpose- and the ending of a life puts a stop to one's ability to fulfill this calling. And even when God authorizes the government to use the sword and end a person's life, there is a deeper purpose of saving life at work. So in Gen. 9:6 when the government ends the life of a murderer, by that action the lives of others are protected. Even capital punishment has a goal of stopping further bloodshed. If the LORD will require the death of an animal that takes the life of man; how much more when a man takes the life of his brother?!

## **II. Avoiding Murder**

Now that we understand that murder is both an attack on your brother and your God, we move on to consider how we are to avoid murder in all its parts and expressions. As you may know, the Devil is identified as a murderer from the beginning in John 8. So if you murder, you are acting like the devil. But in what ways is murder committed? Well, obviously murder will include the actual action of taking the life of a man. So we must certainly not kill. But by extension, murder includes any action that puts the life of someone in danger. So added to the shootings and abortion, we could add reckless driving, shoddy construction and unsafe food handling to the list of ways in which murder is committed. But not only does this commandment forbid any action that puts the life of someone else in danger, it also forbids by extension anything that leads up to murder as well. As QA 106 explains, murder includes anything that is the root of murder. This also what we read of in Mt. 5:22, anyone who is angry with his neighbor has already committed murder in his heart. So we

are to avoid murder in all its parts- that includes with our words as we belittle, insult, gossip or slander. And it includes our thoughts- anger, envy, and the desire for revenge. In God's sight, these also are part of the sin of murder as they lead to murder- being the root of murder. As we also read in I John 3:15- everyone who hates his brother is a murderer. So how many of us have committed murder? We all have! But even how we act towards ourselves is in view. As QA 105 concludes, I am not to endanger myself either. So self-harm is a form of murder since my own life is also to be protected. This applies not just to suicide, but to all actions that put your life in danger. To illustrate this point, lack of sleep, laziness, gluttony and drunkenness are also in view. Any action you take to harm your body is an attack on the temple of the Holy Spirit. The end result is this, we do not mess around with our lives and the lives of others. Remember the value of life- you were bought at a price! The blood of Jesus was shed to purchase bodies and souls- so what you do with your body is important! Cutting a life short should be the farthest from our minds. This makes the first murder in Scriptures all the more horrendous. As we read from I John 3:12, do not be like Cain who murdered his brother. When Cain killed Abel in cold blood, that blood cried out for vengeance! So why do we need this commandment? Because we are all haters by nature. Titus 2:2- we ourselves were hated by others and hating one another. And that hatred is the root of murder. We need the Love of God to set us free from this life of hatred! We have all broken this command in various ways- so we thank God for the forgiveness we receive which enables us to pursue a life of love!

### **III. Protecting Life**

Now that we understand what it means to avoid murder, in our last point we will seek to protect life. Keeping this commandment means that we will be dedicated to defending life. Protecting our own life and that of others. An example of this includes driving carefully, speaking kindly and being generous towards the needs of others. Yes, we should speak out against laws and vote as citizens in such a way as to defend the lives of the vulnerable. But in our daily life, we can seek to do good. As QA 107 puts it, the negative presupposes the positive. Avoiding murder means that I will love my neighbor and seek their good. So with

our words, we will speak the truth in love- letting our words be seasoned with salt and full of grace. Our words should build others up instead of tearing them down. That those who listen may be benefitted. Speaking the truth is one of the most loving things that we can do. But even in what we think. We will put the needs of others before our own- fixing our thoughts on what is true, honorable right, pure and lovely as Phil. 4 puts it. Learning to be patience, loving and a peacemaker. And with our actions- we will see to do good to all- especially within the household of faith as Gal. 6 says. But avoiding murder also means doing good to our enemies as Jesus says in Mt. 5:44. So to summarize the positive of this commandment we really need to summarize the entire 2<sup>nd</sup> Table of the Law- to avoid murder is to love your neighbor as yourself. This kind of love was put on display by the good Samaritan- rendering assistance and protecting the life of someone whom God has put in your path. As we serve and pray for others, we are pursuing what is good for them. Now this requires a little clarification- doing good to others does not mean that you enable them to sin. Feeding someone's addiction is not doing them good- it is only causing further harm. So this does call for wisdom and not just an indiscriminate giving everyone everything they ask for. We also need to acknowledge the limitations of our emotions. We must do good to others even if we do not feel like it- even when we do not feel like loving them. Praying for your enemies and giving them a cup of cold water is not easy- but when we do this we find that our hearts slowly change. Do you have an enemy? Have you prayed for them? The more we serve our enemies, the faster our hearts begin to reflect the love that we are called to have.

Before we close, the 6<sup>th</sup> commandment really exposes how unloving we all are by nature. We all struggle with selfishness, envy, unjust anger, pride and desire for revenge. It is good to remember that Jesus came to die for sinners- for murderers like us! Jesus had his blood shed by unjust men- He was murdered by his brothers! He gave up His life so that we who are murderers by nature might be forgiven! As we read in I John 3:16, He laid down His life for us, so we are to serve others as well. Jesus Christ forbids murder as He teaches us to love our neighbor. So may we all in this week to come be committed to loving our fellow man. Seeking their good and Jesus taught us.