

EXODUS

תּוֹמַשׁ רַמֵּס

40

Exodus 20:13

The Sixth Commandment - Do Not Murder

We are going to Exodus 20 and looking at verse 13 today.

We've been walking one at a time through the ten commandments.

You'll notice this week that we're skipping the fifth commandment, "honor your mother and father." We're not against that one, but we will still be in the ten commandments on Mothers' Day, so we'll come back and do that one then.

The first four commandments were about how we relate to God (have no other Gods before Him, don't worship Him in images, don't take His name in vain, and keep holy the sabbath day.) Then the next 6, beginning with honor your mother and father, are about how we relate to people.

Jesus said all of the law hangs on two great commandments:

Matthew 22 "And one of them, a lawyer, asked him a question to test him. 36 "Teacher, which is the great commandment in the Law?" 37 And he said to him, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. 38 This is the great and first commandment. 39 And a second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself. 40 On these two commandments depend all the Law and the Prophets."

So all of the commands of God can be summed up in these two, love God and love people. We've covered all four of the "love God" commandments, and today we start on the 6 "love people" commandments.

So today we get to the sixth commandment in Exodus 20:13, which is just four words in English, two in the original Hebrew¹:

Exodus 20:13 "You shall not murder."

This is a good rule. And it is part of the moral law just about everywhere that people have tried to come up with a moral law. This is clearly a good command, a cornerstone

¹ In Hebrew, it is "lo ratsach," literally "not murder." From Kevin DeYoung, [The 10 Commandments](#). (Crossway: Wheaton, IL, 2018) 93.

of how we relate to other people. Part of being a good neighbor is not murdering your neighbor.

Of all the commands, this one we can read with a certain sense of ease. I'm doing this one. This one makes us feel like we're obedient. Most of us, on the surface, feel good about this one.

Murderers, we know, are bad people – worthy of God's judgment. And it makes us feel pretty good, because we keep this command. The other 9 we don't feel good about, but most of us have not broken this one.

But Jesus is never one to let us feel smug and self-sufficient. He never lets us get away with feeling superior. He never lets us miss our need for a Savior. So if you could turn to Matthew 5...

In Matthew 5, Jesus's famous sermon on the mount, he teaches the commandments. But in each He explains the heart of that commandment, and uses that to expose how much we've actually fallen short and how serious our problems really are, and calls us to keep the deeper meaning.

And the danger in Christianity is that we come to believe that God wants us to become box-checkers. We love rules and commands sometimes because we are control-freaks, and rules can set boundaries for us over how much God can command. Rules and commands can make us feel smug and OK and can be big distractions from our real need if we don't see what's at their heart.

But Jesus is after the hearts of His Sons and Daughters, He is not out to create an army of poindexter-esque religious box-checkers.

So he repeats the command and then show's what's at its heart:

Matthew 5:21 "You have heard that it was said to those of old, 'You shall not murder; and whoever murders will be liable to judgment.'

And I'm sure everyone is breathing a sigh of relief because, at least in this part of the sermon, they won't feel guilty. They can breathe easy.

22 But I say to you that everyone who is angry with his brother will be liable to judgment;

But here Jesus says, "But if you're angry with your brother, it is just as bad."

Anger? How can it be just as bad?

If someone you love is murdered, you are not going to say anger is just as bad. You're

going to say, "I wish he was only angry at him."

Jesus is NOT saying anger is just as destructive as murder - obviously murder does a lot more damage.

But Jesus is getting at a heart issue here: A murderer is someone with anger in his heart that overflows.

If you have that same anger in your heart but it hasn't overflowed into murder, is what is in your heart any better? You have the heart of a murderer, it just hasn't overflowed.

Is sewage in a pipe any less disgusting than sewage on a floor?

No, its just as disgusting, but it is contained.

So Jesus here says that, "Maybe your pipe isn't leaking, so it is not causing as much damage, but its still full of the same crud that a murderer's heart is."

And God isn't only after cleaning up the outside. Jesus got in the faces of people who had clean surfaces but corrupt hearts:

Matthew 23:25-28 "Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you clean the outside of the cup and the plate, but inside they are full of greed and self-indulgence. 26 You blind Pharisee! First clean the inside of the cup and the plate, that the outside also may be clean. 27 "Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you are like whitewashed tombs, which outwardly appear beautiful, but within are full of dead people's bones and all uncleanness. 28 So you also outwardly appear righteous to others, but within you are full of hypocrisy and lawlessness.

Jesus is completely against facades. He doesn't want to clean the surface. And in exposing the heart of the commandments, He gets at our hearts. He doesn't want surface-obedience religious types. He wants outward obedience that reflects an inward change.

When I was in youth ministry, we had a big teen night every week that hundreds of kids would come to. And one of the characteristic smells of that night was teenage boy who hasn't showered in awhile, but who is not sparing in his use of Axe body spray.

Somewhere along the line he came to believe that if you haven't been able to get a shower this week, Axe body spray is just as good. As long as you use plenty of it.

And if you're familiar with that aroma, you know he believed a lie.

And despite the fact that the whole storyline of the Bible is that a Savior is coming to give us a new heart so there can be inward change that flows to the outside, we often

come to believe that outward obedience to some commands and rituals is just as good. As long as you spray on plenty of religious rituals and some rule keeping, you will be as good as clean.

But Jesus is after repentance and faith in the gospel to get the sin out at its source, which will then change the exterior in far more significant ways than just giving commands could ever do.

So Jesus goes on in Matthew 5:

(Matthew 5:22 continued) whoever insults his brother will be liable to the council; and whoever says, 'You fool!' will be liable to the hell of fire.

The word "insults" is the greek word Racca. Racca is a strong word, probably one of the strongest words in their language.

A dictionary definition of "Raca" is... a term expressing contempt, scorn, or disdain. The Greek word "raccaa" means empty, vain or worthless one, signifying a lack of intellect (i.e. Imbecile or blockhead). "

I know nobody here calls anyone a blockhead, unless you're Charlie Brown. But he wants to drive out from us any thought that people are worthless. But if we think that, He says, we are liable to be judged.

The word for "you fool" there is the greek word "MOROS", where we get our word "moron."

It's not calling someone a moron, but the deep-seated belief that people are worthless and people are less valuable than us.

And Jesus puts it in the same category as murder because the heart is the same.

And he says those who are full of this disdain for others are liable for the hell of fire. Even if they haven't murdered on the outside, murder on the inside is the same sewage, and will be judged the same way.

To carry disdain for someone and to believe they are worthless is to disbelief the whole Christian story.

We believe that people, all people, exist because God created them in His image, and they have a dignity above all other created beings.

Genesis 1:27 "So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them."

Everybody on earth bears God's image. And how we treat God's image says something about how we feel about Him.

If you have a picture of someone in your office hanging on your dartboard, people will know how you feel about that person. And you can't say, "It's just a picture, everything's fine with me and him. It's just a piece of paper." No, it's his image. And how you treat his image is how you feel about him.

And while we might feel pretty good about not being murderers, there are all kinds of ways we disregard people, made in God's image, and expose that we have the same thing in our hearts.

We do this with racism, when we treat a whole group of people made in God's image like they are less valuable than others.

We do this when we treat the elderly like they are less valuable now, as if their value comes from youth and vitality and then goes away.

We do this when we treat the poor with less respect than the rich.

We do this when we ignore the sick or people with disabilities. When we act with disdain or disregard for people who are weaker and more helpless, believing they somehow bear less of the image of God than I do, we have toxic hearts.

We do this when we treat the unborn as if they are not made in God's image. And I don't think we could talk about the command not to murder without realizing that this one is broken in a horrible way every day in our culture. We treat the most defenseless among us, babies in the womb, like they are not made in the image of God and we take their life. 60,000,000 times since 1973.

This past January, the NY Senate cheered as they passed a law allowing abortion until birth under certain circumstances. And when challenged on it, the governor said that he understands the church's position, but "I'm not here to legislate religion."

But in passing these laws, we are legislating a religious viewpoint. It certainly isn't a scientific one. Science says that is a human baby. We know this because we save the lives of babies that are 22 weeks along, but then abort the lives of others far beyond that. We do life-saving surgery on a baby in the womb while a baby at the same stage of development is aborted across town.

And we say *that one* wasn't a person. That's a religious view, not a scientific one, one being forced on those babies. It's a religion that says a person gets their worth and gets their humanity when they are wanted by a parent, but before that they are a cluster of cells. And it's a false religion. It's pagan transubstantiation - that a parent can pronounce worth on a child and unless they do it isn't a child at all. So the state has accepted a

religious viewpoint and made it law.

The Christian view is that when a child is conceived, that child has dignity and worth because that child is made in the image and likeness of God.

And I hope someday we as a society look back on what we've done the same way Germans were able to look back on the holocaust and weep over what happened under their noses. I hope God brings enough of a revival and restoration of a soul in our country so we can one day repent of this.

And that we, in the meantime, work to cherish all life. We work to support mothers who keep their children in difficult circumstances. Who celebrate all life, even when it was conceived under situations that may have been sinful. And who become a people who never say "No" to anybody, especially the weakest and most frail and most dependent and most vulnerable.

The image of God is in everybody.

And it is important to know that the image of God is not something that's only possessed by Christians who are living the right way.

Being in the image of God isn't a virtue we can obtain, it's an innate quality in every person, however tarnished and marred by sin.

This gives us the grounds for respecting all of our neighbors, even our neighbors we know are living in rebellion to God and His design for life. Everybody gets treated with respect that the image of God in them deserves.

Knowing everybody is made in the image of God means we are always talking to someone who is fascinating, who is worthy of respect and dignity, and even when it seems their whole life is spent trying to tarnish the image of God in them, we know it is still there and treat our neighbors with respect. And we show interest in them:

"It is a serious thing to live in a society of possible gods and goddesses, to remember that the dullest most uninteresting person you can talk to may one day be a creature which, if you saw it now, you would be strongly tempted to worship, or else a horror and a corruption such as you now meet, if at all, only in a nightmare. All day long we are, in some degree helping each other to one or the other of these destinations. It is in the light of these overwhelming possibilities, it is with the awe and the circumspection proper to them, that we should conduct all of our dealings with one another, all friendships, all loves, all play, all politics. There are no ordinary people. You have never talked to a mere mortal. Nations, cultures, arts, civilizations - these are mortal, and their life is to ours as the life of a gnat. But it is immortals whom we joke with, work with, marry, snub, and exploit - immortal horrors or everlasting splendors."

– C.S. Lewis, The Weight of Glory

Now again this is not to say everybody is living the right way or is honoring God's image with their lives.

But when we meet people that are living in rebellion against God's designs, we remember that when we were like that, Jesus came and laid down His life for us.

At our core is the belief that, while we weren't living according to God's design, Christ came for us and laid down his life for us.

Romans 5:8 puts it this way, "but God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us."

To deny people around us our love and care is to say that we are so far superior to them that they are not worth our time.

But Christ, who is infinitely superior to us, laid down his life for us.

When we say, "I'm going to cut off all of the difficult people in my life," we are doing the opposite of what our savior did.

If Jesus, who is perfect, thought it was worth the time and effort to lay down his life for a sinner like me, how much more should I who am imperfect be willing to lay down my desire to feel superior to people around me who are just like me?

In other words, there is very little difference between me and any other person. We're all sinful, we all have the same filth in the pipes, it just leaks in different places for everybody. So there's no room for me to look down on anyone and think they are worth less than me.

The only one who was actually qualitatively different than all other people was Jesus. But he didn't spit in our direction, even though only in his case that could have been justified, he came to redeem us. And so the new testament is clear that his attitude should be our attitude:

Philippians 2 3 Do nothing from rivalry or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves. 4 Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others. 5 Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, 6 who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, 7 but made himself nothing, taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. 8 And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.

Nothing from rivalry.

Nothing from conceit, or arrogance.

Count others as more significant than yourselves.

Don't look out for yourself first.

Make yourself nothing.

Serve people like Jesus, who went as far as giving his life.

People who live like THAT are different, and are even different than most professed Christians. Different, not in that they think they are better, but in that they just don't think about themselves that much at all.

And look at how Jesus applies this:

Matthew 5:21 "You have heard that it was said to those of old, 'You shall not murder; and whoever murders will be liable to judgment.' 22 But I say to you that everyone who is angry with his brother will be liable to judgment; 23 So if you are offering your gift at the altar and there remember that your brother has something against you, 24 leave your gift there before the altar and go. First be reconciled to your brother, and then come and offer your gift.

Verse 23 starts with the word "So," meaning Jesus is building on the previous thoughts. So if unchecked anger in our hearts is basically murder contained, we are called to deal with that anger.

But He doesn't have us do that just as an internal exercise. He doesn't say, "Fix that in your heart before you worship." He says, "Go, be reconciled."

And he uses the setting of a person coming to offer a sacrifice - to do an outward religious ritual. And rituals, back then and now, are outward things we do to remind ourselves of Jesus, which isn't bad.

But they can be done without a changed heart. We can check an awful lot of religious boxes and feel pretty good about ourselves, with hearts that are still a toxic stew.

Take for example Going to Church - a ritual we all do. You know that you can sit here for an hour, sing the songs, put money in the box, and all the while be harboring sin in your heart, being angry at someone, refusing to forgive. You can do these good outward things and have them be only outward observances that are not bad, but artificial because the heart isn't there.

And Jesus gives us this great test of our hearts: go reconcile with the brothers and

sisters you have broken relationships with. And if you can do that, as far as it depends on you, then you are showing a genuine change of heart, so now you can sing the songs, do the outward things, not as box-checking but as overflow of a changed heart.

He says when you're going to worship God, and remember your brother has something against you, go and be reconciled to him, then do your religious thing.

So often we think we're doing a good job as Christians if we participate in the religion of our particular church: We go to services, we sing the songs, we serve in the programs, we contribute, etc. And we will even think that this is the heart of Christianity.

But if we participate in any of those things while allowing there to be broken relationships with our brothers, those things are a sham. Our religion is phony and only a surface exercise.

Jesus says that if we're trying to do some religious exercise but continue to neglect mercy and love, we should drop the act and go out and reconcile first because relationships are the heart of Christianity, not religion, not works of service, not involvement in programs or building projects, etc.

Doing religious things like singing songs, giving money – these are good things commanded by God – but they're like the cologne of the Christian life. Cologne is fine, but not as a permanent substitute for a shower.

Then Jesus says, "Go, and offer your gift." Do your works of service, do whatever ritual you want to do, but never neglect the priority of relationships.

So if we're humble and we realize that someone has something against us, we need to go to them and confess our sin and begin a process to reconcile.

Now you might here that and say, "OK, I have that command taken care of. There are people who have something against me, but in my situation it's all because of them and not because of me, so in my case there's nothing to confess."

First of all, if we're humble, it should be difficult to us believe that we don't share ANY of the blame in a broken relationship. It can happen where it's 100% on them, like in cases of abuse. But in most of our day to day brokenness it isn't all them.

And knowing me, when someone has something against me, I need to think, by default, that they're probably getting at something that's at least partially true.

But even if you can reason your way through all of that and say, "My broken relationships are 100% because of the other guy", Jesus says in

Matthew 18, "15 "If your brother sins against you, go"

In other words, in all of our broken relationships, the call to all of us is to be proactive, go, and work to reconcile.

Take the initiative. Be humble. Be willing to listen to what that guy thinks are your faults because there's probably some truth there. Confess to one another, if they're willing pray with one another, and get the relationship restored.

So Christians should be healers of relationships who humbly take the initiative to make peace with others - Jesus said, "**Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God**" (Matthew 5:9.)

When Jesus says, "Blessed are the peace makers," in the Sermon on the Mount, He "refers not to peace-keepers but to peace-makers, people who end hostilities and bring the quarrelsome together." - Leon Morris

God is the ultimate peacemaker - coming to us to restore us to himself even when 100% of the problem was ours and 0% his. We look like his kids if we try to do the same.

His desire is not that we look around this room with suspicion, distrust, and a trail of broken relationships. It's not that we would just live with our bitterness, screw the hatch on it really tightly and hope it doesn't blow so we can make it through a church service. Then leave and go all passive-aggressive on social media. That's not the beauty of the sons and daughters of God who are made one and brought near by the blood of Jesus.

That's AXE body spray on top of pungent BO that isn't fooling anybody, especially anybody in a world that so needs a way to not always be at each other's throats. And according to Jesus, it's murderous.

So really ask yourself, before you take the Lord's supper today, if you're carrying bitterness against someone here. And anger and resentment.

And you know its there if when you think of them, you feel the negative emotions.

You also know it's there if you remember the things they did against you a long time ago in detail. We only remember details of a situation if we rehearse them again and again in our minds. You remember most things in general, and most good experiences you don't remember all the details. But the bad experiences that you play over and over again dig deep trenches in your mind and you remember everything that person said, and did, and the tone of voice, and you are too proud to take the first step to reconcile, and Jesus says, "Please don't spray religion on that." Clean it.

You have all the tools in the Gospel.

1 Corinthians 11 17 But in the following instructions I do not commend you, because

when you come together it is not for the better but for the worse. 18 For, in the first place, when you come together as a church, I hear that there are divisions among you. And I believe it in part, 19 for there must be factions among you in order that those who are genuine among you may be recognized. 20 When you come together, it is not the Lord's supper that you eat. 21 For in eating, each one goes ahead with his own meal. One goes hungry, another gets drunk. 22 What! Do you not have houses to eat and drink in? Or do you despise the church of God and humiliate those who have nothing? What shall I say to you? Shall I commend you in this? No, I will not.

23 For I received from the Lord what I also delivered to you, that the Lord Jesus on the night when he was betrayed took bread, 24 and when he had given thanks, he broke it, and said, "This is my body, which is for you. Do this in remembrance of me." 25 In the same way also he took the cup, after supper, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me." 26 For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes.

Notice how he says, "there are divisions in the church. And that's bad. You are mistreating one another, considering yourselves before others.

But Jesus, on the night he was betrayed, broke bread and said this is my body.

The Lord's body was torn so we could be reconciled to God.

And so we could be reconciled to one another.

So when we got to someone and they confess, but we don't think it's sincere, or we don't know if they really get how significant their sin against us is, or we don't know if they'll do it again, we say at this table, "The Lord died for it." It was put to death in Jesus.

The death of Jesus for us is the satisfaction for all of our sins against God, and for all of our suspicions of one another.

We remember what Jesus did so we can boldly approach God, knowing our sins were covered. And so we can have nothing left at all against one another.

So he gives this warning:

27 Whoever, therefore, eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty concerning the body and blood of the Lord. 28 Let a person examine himself, then, and so eat of the bread and drink of the cup. 29 For anyone who eats and drinks without discerning the body eats and drinks judgment on himself. 30 That is why many of you are weak and ill, and some have died. 31 But if we judged ourselves truly, we would not be judged. 32 But when we are judged by the Lord, we are disciplined so that we may not be condemned along with the world.

This moment of taking the Lord's supper together is to be a moment of self-examination.

Have we been reconciled to God?

"Surely no rebel can expect the king to pardon his treason while he remains in open revolt." - CH Spurgeon.

Have we confessed our sins, all of them. And renounced them all, intending with the help of God's Spirit to make war with them.

Are we clinging to Jesus and his death as our only hope, not our religious self-righteousness, commandment keeping, and box-checking.

If we're despairing of our sin, but clinging to Jesus, we take this supper as a reminder of the Gospel we believe.

And we also ask, Have we been reconciled to one another? With no daylight left between us? Have we confronted, corrected, asked questions, confessed our sin, confessed our suspicion, asked forgiveness?

And if, as far as it depends on us, we are there, we take this supper remembering that the sins that others have committed against us are totally paid for by Jesus.

You don't need to be a member of this church to take this supper, but a Christian who has renounced sin, who has reconciled with brothers and sisters, and whose only hope is Jesus.

Questions for Discussion with Small Groups:

- 1) Why is it not an exaggeration for Jesus to say "**everyone who is angry with his brother will be liable to judgment**" (Matthew 5:22), making these inward emotions the equivalent of murder?
- 2) How is the life of a "religious box-checker" different (internally and externally) than someone whose heart has been changed by Christ?
- 3) What are the signs we are carrying bitterness and anger against another?
- 4) Are there situations in which you should be pursuing reconciliation with others but are not?
- 5) How is the death of Jesus the remedy for our suspicions and lingering brokenness in our Christian relationships?