

The 6th Commandment

The Rev. Greg Kronz – St Luke’s Church – October 20th, 2019

Lord, take my lips and speak through them. Take our minds and think through them. Take our hearts and set them on fire with love for your son, Jesus Christ. In whose name we pray, Amen. Please be seated.

For those of you that may be visiting, we are continuing our sermon series on the 10 Commandments, and we've arrived at the 6th Commandment. You probably have picked it up—“You shall not kill,” or really, what the commandment says, “You shall not do murder.” Now, there's a difference there, isn't there? I mean, if you really think about it, killing is different than doing murder or murdering someone, and in fact that's the word that Jesus uses clearly in the new Testament reading. And there's a couple of principles that are really, really important when you read Scripture overall and in particular when you get to the 10 Commandments. And part of the reason is that when you get to the 10 commandments, we have a tendency to try to restrict the commandments. When Jesus says something, when the Scripture says something, well, He didn't really mean that. You know, we want to come up with our spin. It's very popular today to come up with spin anyway, but we want to come up with our spin on what it's saying when, in fact, one of the key principles in reading and understanding Scriptures and the Commandments is understanding what the whole of Scripture says, not just little parts, not just proof texting or taking something out of context, but rather what does the whole witness of Scripture say. And secondly, when we come to various scriptures, there are nuances and subtleties that, unless we're aware of those because of the whole counsel of God, because of the witness of Scripture in general interpreting scripture, we will miss those nuances and subtleties. We'll want to spin it or make it to some kind of restriction the way that we want to restrict it, and we'll miss it.

People will also, by the way, expand the Commandment to a place that it was not intended to be expanded to. And I'll tell you what I mean by that. That's why not murdering as opposed to not killing are two different things. Because we have a system, and we need a system of justice. It's critical. Also, let's take it to a different direction. War. Scripture never condemns war. That is not to say that war is not a tragedy or something that's awful, but Scripture never condemns war. It's interesting and there's a writer, many of you are familiar with his name, Augustine or Augustan. He was the first one to do it with what's called the “just war theory.” And I know many of you ever read that if you took philosophy, but the just war theory talks about six prerequisites or responding to a situation with war. For example, if there's a genocide going on Germany or Russia, and we see this atrocity going on. We feel compelled by the Lord to step in and defend the innocent. And so, Augustine came up with these six principles that it must be just cause that there must be just intention, that it's a last resort, that there's a formal declaration, there's limited objectives. You're not trying to just obliterate the country, and there's proportionate means. Now, if you really think about what I just read to you, it takes discernment. It takes wisdom, it takes prayer, and that's why our founding fathers in this country were so committed to talking about and writing about how you really can't govern without Biblical principles. Even people that were deists and not Christians talked about the importance of Scripture, the importance of Scripture in guiding. When it comes to justice in a country, guiding domestic problems and challenges, Scripture talks about that, too. Romans 13 talks about the state. It does not wield the sword in vain, that its meant to be there for justice.

So, when we hear “thou shall do no murder”, we can't take it to another area that it's not meant to address. It's very specific in what it addresses, and you know, this is not just a problem here. It's a problem throughout the world obviously, but different people use different rules, different ideas, different thoughts about how justice should be carried out. When I was in Africa, Tanzania this past summer on a mission trip, I would, if I could find it, get my hands on an English newspaper. Most of the papers over there in Swahili, which is very, very difficult for me, because I just know about 10 words. So I would try to find an English paper. And one of the stories that made the paper several times while I was over was about a cabinet member. I had met two cabinet members in my various mission trips over there, and a cabinet member is one of the most powerful positions in Tanzania, besides the president. It is the most powerful group of people. A cabinet member was in traffic in Dar ES Salaam. Now if you know anything about Dar ES Salaam and the traffic, it's horrendous. We think we have gridlock in some of our cities. But see we have traffic rules. They don't really have traffic rules. I mean, you can get in a bunch because everybody's vying, they don't have lights everywhere, they don't have traffic circles everywhere. It's far worse than 278, trust me. And these traffic jams are a lot of times caused by this one particular vehicle known as a dollar dollar. Does anyone know what a dollar dollar is? A dollar dollar is like a small bus that they absolutely pack people in, and they try to get as many trips as they can. So, they're cutting people off, they're riding on sidewalks, they are inserting themselves in traffic because they have semi pull offs. They're not really pull offs. They are incredibly aggressive drivers. And the reason it's called a Dolla Dolla is because it's probably one of the cheapest modes of transportation. You can travel like 30 to 40 miles in one of these for a Dolla Dolla Dolla, twice got a dollar dollar. And this cabinet member was so frustrated by the traffic that day and by one of these dollar drivers that he shot and killed him. And some people were saying, “Well, it was justified.” I mean, I'm not kidding, because everybody experiences the frustration of dollar dollars over there. So, there were some people actually defending him. They're defending him, because he's in a powerful position. He's in a position that meets out justice. He's in a position of saying, “This dollar dollar driver deserved it”, and of course there's the other side of people who want his head, particularly the dollar dollar drivers, and that's what you have. You have people that want to set them free. You have people that want them killed, and you have everything in between. Consider his position, consider he had a bad day, whatever, but what is justice as opposed to what does murder?

It gets down to what is right and wrong, good and evil. I mean that's the question that we ask ourselves, and where do we go? When we begin to unpack what we're trying to determine, for us as Christians, we go to the Scriptures, because that is meant to be our guide. We'll unpack it, if you're willing to look at the whole counsel of God, the whole witness of Scripture, and begin to piece it together. You can understand what God is trying to say about “thou shall do no murder”, and the most important and foundational thing that you need to understand when you think about that is where does life come from in the first place? Who created life? Who created you? God is the source of life. And so, when we just answered that most basic question for ourselves, that God is a source of life, then we look to Him and say, what is life? What is life meant to be about? How are we meant to live life? How are we meant to support life?

Part of the problem in the Western world is how people have begun to think about the questions of life and the principles of life and the commandments with which they live, and one of the foundational belief statements that has changed. Western thought comes from a man by the name of

Descartes, and he's famous for that line. Most of you have probably heard, "I think therefore I am." Instead of saying "I am, because God created me" or, "I think because God made me a reasoning person in His image." See, we step outside of always reflecting on God with that statement, "I think therefore I am." If I am and God is not the I am in my life, then I'm in trouble, because when I think I'm going to think about what serves me best, because if there is no God for my life. Then I'm the God of my life, and I will determine what is right and wrong and good and evil. Period. And that's a problem, and it's a problem today in particular, because we continue to depart from a biblical worldview in the culture, even in the Church. And Jesus wanted everybody to be clear that it's not even just the letter of the law, because you can get hung up in the letter of the law. Jesus addresses the intention, the heart of the law, which is why He said, "You've heard it said of old you shall not murder, but I say to you," and then He lists several aspects of what it means to not murder someone in your heart. Because what happens if you kill someone off in your heart? Think about it. What you will is brokenness, broken relationships, gossip, and slander, which is condemned by Scripture. You will try to kill someone's spirit. You will try to destroy their reputation, and you will kill them out of your life. It's a broken relationship, and that's why Jesus says you really need to understand this is not just the letter of the law. This is about the spirit of the law and impact. So many of the other words and statements and precepts and principles that we hear in Scripture say, "don't do." Why? Because God is about love. If we love the Lord our God with all our heart, soul, mind, and strength, we're going to be open to His Holy spirit teaching us, guiding us, empowering us to live with love, with forgiveness, with bearing with one another. And we're not going to have these murderous thoughts, and murderous words aren't going to be on our lips there. We're not trying to hurt someone physically, emotionally. I mean, think about the abuse and, if you will, the murder of people via the media, social media, bullying. I mean, we can take this in so many different directions, if you really think about the ramifications for your life, and you don't restrict it to physically murdering someone else, but instead consider the whole counsel of Scripture, the whole council of Christ. That's why James says, "Be angry, but do not sin." The anger of human beings does not work the righteousness of God. Why? Because it's often self-centered and instead of being constructive, which anger can do, by the way. Jesus got angry, God got angry. It's often destructive. See, anger can propel us in really helpful directions, such as righteous indignation and protecting innocent people. But it can be so destructive, and we need to go in one other direction, because of our culture today. And if you looked at the sermon outline, you probably know what the topic is, and let me say from the outset, this is a forgivable sin. There's only one unforgivable sin, and that's denying Jesus. But this is forgivable and sometimes we want to be so punitive in a culture that, by and large, really doesn't understand the principle here, that really doesn't understand biblical teaching here, because of what we hear from the media and politicians and pundits. We make political an issue that is not meant to be simply political. It's meant to be moral. It's meant to be spiritual. And that's the issue of abortion.

Abortion is something that is widely accepted, because people use various arguments of rights, of birth, control, of unwanted. This happens when we forget the Scriptures, such as in Psalm 139 when God speaks says, "I knit you together in your mother's womb." Jeremiah 1 where Jeremiah is told, "I knew you were before you were born." I had a call on your life before you were born, and if you really want to understand the teaching of Scripture, you just look to Jesus. Let me ask a question before I talk specifically about this. Who is our model as Christians for what our lives are meant to

be like? Anybody? Thank you. Good job. That's usually the answer. When someone asks a question, you know. It's Jesus, right? Okay. So humanly speaking, when was Jesus Jesus? We say it in the Apostle's creed. We indicate it in the Nicene creed, because in the Apostle's creed, we say He was conceived by the power of the Holy spirit. So, when was Jesus Jesus, humanly speaking? Conception. Let's be clear. Let's not dance around. And if Jesus is our model, that should tell us something. See, we want to play this game of viability. We want to play this game of some time while the baby's in the womb, the spirit enters. The Holy Spirit. The spirit of Jesus was present at conception.

So, if you've ever had a question about when human life begins, look at the creeds. Page 96 page 358 of the Book of Common Prayer. We may not be able to convince a secular world, a world that's not submitted to the Scriptures, submitted to the whole teaching of what the ramification is about this Commandment. But we need to be convinced, because for a Christian with Jesus as our motto, it's pretty clear, and people want to talk about choice and rights. That comes before conception. You have a choice before conception that you need to exercise.

And I've heard people even say, well, what if the child is deformed? You're probably saying that to the wrong person. I have a mentally handicapped little sister who I love, who's transformed my life. My brother and I were talking last night. He took her out to dinner Friday night. He was up in Pittsburgh, and we talked about my little sister, because she's touched our lives. My oldest grandson, Owen, was supposed to be born with Achondroplasia. Some of you know that, it's dwarfism. He wasn't, the doctor came in the next day and said, "Well, I guess he's not a dwarf." They don't know. My younger grandson was born with what was supposed to be a possible brain problem, because he had a tumor here. So, my daughter-in-law was flown to children's hospital in Houston, and it was in a hemangioma, which presumably will be absorbed to go away. Doctors don't know all the time.

See, we need to trust the Lord, and if we've done, because we've listened to culture, because we've listened to the secular arguments, there's forgiveness. God wants to forgive you, and He wants to heal you. This is not about condemnation. This is about God's teaching, so that you know, so that you can address your children, your grandchildren, your friends, not in a condemnatory way, but in a loving way, because God is about love and forgiveness.

You know, when we read the 10 Commandments, oftentimes we get to this one, and we say, "Got that I didn't, I didn't murder anybody. I'm good." And we move on. We really need to look at our hearts. We need to look at our thoughts and the words that we say and how we approach and address people. Are we really doing what we do, out of love and out of forgiveness and out of bearing with other people?

You know, Cain and Abel is such a great story, in so many ways, because of what it says. The Lord said to Cain, "Why are you angry and why has your countenance fallen? If you do well, will you not be accepted? And if you do not do well, sin is lurking at the door. It's desires for you, but you must master it." See, that's why God sent Jesus, so that we can have that salvation, we can have that forgiveness, we can be transformed in a world that does not do anger well, that does not do conflict well. We can. See what happens is anger leads to resentment and resentment leads to bitterness and bitterness leads to alienation, and we have many resentful and bitter people, and we can't be that

person. We can get angry. Then we learned to deal with it. We learn to deal with it God's way. We turn it into something productive and constructive. We turn it into something that allows us to reconcile with other people and be that loving, forgiving person and to break down walls. So, you can't write this Commandment off. You have to look at it and say, what about my life? Where do I need to be forgiven? Where do I need to forgive and bring reconciliation? How am I going to love my neighbors myself? Because that's the message of the cross. Jesus came that we might have life—abundant life, John 10. Eternal life, John 3:16. Because He is about life. That's why He made us in the first place. That's why He went to the cross—to redeem us, so that we might have life. Let's pray.

Lord, we live in a fallen world where sin abounds, and we are all defective. Lord, we need Your forgiveness. We need Your Grace. We need to be open, to look into our hearts and our minds and our lives and see where our thoughts might be murderous. Our words might be murderous, as well as our actions. Lord, help us to take the life that You've given to us, the gift of eternal life and the power of the Holy Spirit working in us, to be people who speak life, who share life. Because we share love, and we share Jesus, and we share forgiveness, because we've been forgiven. And we pray this in Jesus's name, Amen.