

Sermon for A Year with the Catechism The Fifth Commandment

Date: October 10, 2021

Location: St. John's Lutheran Church, Austin, MN

Old Testament: Ezekiel 34:11-24

Epistle Reading: James 2:14-26

Gospel Reading: Matthew 25:31-46

Sermon Text: Exodus 20:13

Sermon Title: The Fifth Commandment



Introit: Psalm 39:4-5, 7-8, 12a; Antiphon: 2 Peter 3:13

Hymns:

LSB 851 – Lord of Glory You Have Bought Us

LSB 581 – These are the Holy Ten Commands
(v. 1,6, 11-12)

LSB 550 – Lamb of God

W&P 122 – Seek Ye First

LSB 706 – Love in Christ Is Strong and Living

Liturgy:

Divine Service III, p. 184

Songs:

Forgive - This Hope

By Our Love

Grace Like Rain - Todd Agnew

Brothers Sisters Let Us Gladly - Koine

Healing Begins - Tenth Avenue North

Liturgy:

Creative Worship



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Text: Exodus 20:13
“Never murder.”

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Pronunciation for difficult words are contained in { }

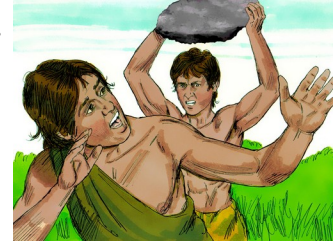
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In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Open please your Catechisms to p. 85 and your Bibles to Matthew 25. It might also be helpful to keep a place marked at Colossians 3.

You know what the first recorded murder, in the Bible, is. It's when Cain, the first son of Adam and Eve, killed his brother Able. Cain did that because He was doing things that did not please God, while Able was pleasing God. Cain in a jealous rage killed his brother.



The Fifth Commandment

You shall not murder.

What does this mean?

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.

We might think this is a commandment we can ignore. No one here is going to kill someone. Right? No one who goes to church would do something like that. Right?

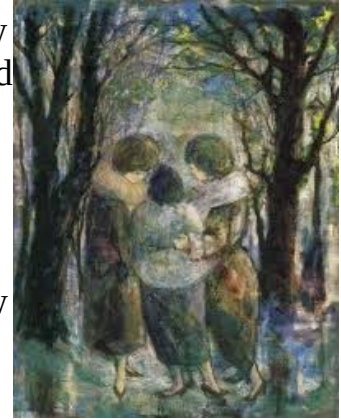
We never know when the specter of Cain and Able will show itself. Yet we know it happens all the time. It's not always with rock, knife or gun. Sometimes it's with the tongue, in gossip and lies, but killing is killing, be it someone's life or reputation.

We never know when the specter of Cain and Able will show itself. Many of you have probably heard of Jeffery Dahmer, but how many of you know he was raised in a Lutheran Church?

We never know when the specter of Cain and Able will show itself. I wonder if any of you remember 'The BTK killer.' He would tie people up, torture them, and then kill them. He was a leader in his Lutheran congregation when he was arrested for murder.

With news like that you might get a little nervous about going to church. You might start asking questions like, "How could a Christian act like that?" A more serious question might be: Could God forgive someone like that? Someone who grew up going to church and knew what they were doing was wrong, but did it anyway.

It's one thing to break God's Laws when you don't know what you are doing, but isn't it worse when you do know and do it anyway? Yet we know it happens all the time. It's not always with rock, knife or gun. Sometimes it's with the tongue, in gossip and lies, but killing is killing, be it someone's life or reputation.



Here's another question: How many people do you know that could name all ten Commandments? If I stopped right now and asked everyone to write them down, how many remember all ten? The truth is most people, even people who go to church regularly, can not do that.

My point is: there is one Commandment that everybody remembers. That is, "Do not kill." That one Commandment seems to be the one most clearly written on the hearts and minds of all people. That is the one everyone remembers.

Martin Luther explained the Commandment this way (*on page 85*):

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.

Which part of that explanation is the easiest to keep? I think the first part is the easiest for all of us here.

We should fear and love God so that we do not hurt or harm our neighbor...

We don't punch, push or bully people. We don't threaten people when we don't get our way. We don't hit or hurt people. We don't spread cruel gossip and lies. We know how to do the right thing. Don't we?

What about the second part of that explanation? That part that says:

...but help and support him in every physical need.

I asked you to put a marker at Colossians 3. Take look at verses 5-10

⁵ Put to death therefore what is earthly in you: sexual immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry. ⁶ On account of these the wrath of God is coming. ⁷ In these you too once walked, when you were living in them. ⁸ But now you must put

them all away: anger, wrath, malice, slander, and obscene talk from your mouth. ⁹ Do not lie to one another, seeing that you have put off the old self with its practices ¹⁰ and have put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge after the image of its Creator.

There is a better way. We were made in the “image and likeness of God.”¹ The saved should reflect that image of God.

What about when people show up at church asking for money? What about people who are truthfully hungry or have no place to live? What if they are asking for gas money to get home. If we say, “I’ll pray for you, have a nice day” are we obeying or breaking this Commandment?

I think the answer to that questions sounds easy, but it’s not. Not really. Suppose someone comes to church asking for money to put gas in their tank so they can get home. I invite them into my office to ask the some questions. Questions like: “How did you plan to get back home when you left there?” “What happened to the money you had?” “What brought you here?” “How did you get into this situation?”

Sometimes people have a legitimate answer. In that case we help them. Sometimes people have wasted their money, and then come to the church to get more money so they can get home. Should we give money to those people? Are we really helping and supporting them, or would it be more helpful to let them suffer a little, endure a little pain, so they realize they have a problem if they spend so much they can’t get home?

There are many ways to help people. Sometimes the best help is not to help. It requires some wisdom,² some life experience, to know the difference. It’s not always easy. Yet, in all that we do, we should listen to Jesus’ words. Flip back to Matthew 25, and let’s take a look at why this matters. Jesus said:

³⁴ The King will say to those on His right, ‘Come, you who are blessed by My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world. For I was hungry and you gave Me food, I was thirsty and you gave Me drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed Me, I was naked and you clothed Me, I was sick and you visited Me, I was in prison and you came to Me.’

1 Genesis 1:27
2 Matthew 10:16

Then the righteous will answer Him, saying, ‘Lord, when did we see You hungry and feed You, or thirsty and give You drink? And when did we see You a stranger and welcome You, or naked and clothe You? And when did we see You sick or in prison and visit You?’ And the King will answer them, ‘Truly, I say to you, as you did it to one of the least of these my brothers, you did it to Me.’³

You see the Commandment: Do not kill, has to do with a lot more than just murder. It has to do with helping and supporting the people who live around us. Could not that same points Jesus made include defending those who find themselves hung out on the gossip vine?

Proverbs 11:13 says:

Whoever goes about slandering reveals secrets,
but he who is trustworthy in spirit keeps a thing covered.

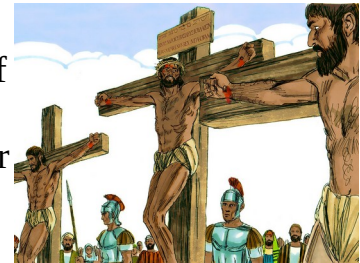
Those who would defend one who is slandered would hear the words of Jesus in verse 40

“Whatever you did for one...
you did for Me.”

We do that because of what Jesus did for us. Jesus left His glorious throne, so that He could come here, walk in the mud and save us. He is our Brother, as well as our Savior and King.



Remember what I said before?
“We never know when the specter of Cain and Able will show itself.”
Cain killed his brother. We killed our Brother, Jesus, on a cross, with our sins.



Yet, Jesus’ death was not the end, but the beginning. His death gives us life. His blood washes us clean. Jesus’ murder is for you, for me, for everyone. It’s even for murders. What did Jesus pray for those who were lying about Him? What did Jesus pray for those who were killing Him? “Father forgive them.”⁴

This commandment has to do with a lot more than just murder. It has to do with being a good Christian man or good Christian woman. It has to do with helping, not hurting, the people who live around us. This commandment has a lot

3 Matthew 25:34-40

4 Luke 23:34

more to do with love than hate. Love that comes to us first from God, who loved us enough to save us, even though we murdered His Son.

It is now, in His name, that we come before the Father to seek wisdom and forgiveness. Seeking forgiveness for our gossiping which is using words to kill. Seeking forgiveness for our inaction, the sin of all the apostles that abandoned Jesus when He was arrested. Seeking forgiveness for not speaking up for Christ, the sin of Peter in denying Jesus.

In all these things, and more, we seek forgiveness knowing that our Lord hears our prayer, knowing that our Lord is willing, even eager, to forgive us who are: murdering, meandering, mean people. Then bathing in Baptismal grace, we seek to live as God would have us live. As a constant example of Christian kindness and grace to all who seek that same forgiveness we have already received.

In Jesus' name.

Amen.

**Proclaim God's Word,
Encourage one another in faith,
Witness to God's love and
Serve all people**

