

“YOU SHALL NOT MURDER, I, YOU SHALL DO NO HARM.”

Rev. Robert T. Woodyard

First Christian Reformed Church

April 23, 2023, 6:00PM

Heidelberg Catechism: Lord’s Day 40

Scripture Texts: Exodus 20:13; Matthew 5:21-22

Introduction.

The 20th century turned out to be a very deadly century. More people were killed in the 20th century than in all previous centuries combined. The 20th century also turned out to be the deadliest century for Christians. More Christians were martyred in the 20th century than in all previous centuries combined.

The future of murder is looking very good as well. The 21st century is off and running at a rapid rate. All the leading indicators are up. Suicide, abortion, euthanasia, terrorism, war, racial cleansing, civil war, serial killers, school violence, violence on TV and in movies.

No previous generation has seen so much killing or done so much killing. We live in a world that is awash in blood and violence. And there is a reason. We live in a world that has rejected God, which is to reject life, so having embraced death, we are in a death spiral with a death wish.

But there is hope and it’s found in the grace of God in His commandments. What this century needs more than any other is two commandments, love God and love your neighbor. The Sixth Commandment shows us love for God by loving our neighbor and loving his God-given life.

What possession do we have that is more precious or valuable to us than our life? It is grace that God should speak to us about that precious gift. It’s the goodness of God that He should seek to guard our lives and urge us to do the same.

You shall not murder.

Four simple little words in English, just two words in Hebrew, “No Murder.” What commandment could possibly be easier to understand. What more needs to be said? Don’t murder.

What about that don’t you understand? God says, don’t murder people. Pretty much covers it don’t you think? We think that’s all there is too it.

Well OK maybe we need a little more explanation. There are two things we need to know about this word murder.

What it doesn’t mean? What it does mean?

What murder doesn’t mean?

Both Hebrew and Greek have a word that means “cause to die” but neither word is used in this commandment in the OT or NT. This word is murder.

All murder is killing, but not all killing is murder.

Murder is the unlawful killing of a human being with premeditated malice.
You shall not kill wrongly.

Murder doesn't include the actions of an individual in accidental death (manslaughter), or self-defense. And it doesn't include the actions of the state in dispensing justice (capital punishment) or defending a nation in war.

Under Jewish law in Israel there were 18 capital crimes, deserving the death penalty though rarely done. To kill a guilt person is not murder but justice. And God frequently called the nation to war. These actions are not murder.

What murder does mean?

By making murder one of the Ten Commandments, God is saying something about the preciousness of human life. First, human beings are made in the image of God, and as image bearers, to take a life is an assault on God, against God.

Second, God is the Lord and giver of life. He has absolute authority over it and to take a life is to usurp God's authority. It is an act of rebellion.

The HC expands on our understanding of this commandment.

Heidelberg Catechism:

105. Q. What does God require in the sixth commandment?

A. I am not to dishonor, hate, injure, or kill my neighbor by thoughts, words, or gestures, and much less by deeds, whether personally or through another; rather, I am to put away all desire of revenge.

106. Q. But does this commandment speak only of killing?

A. By forbidding murder God teaches us that He hates the root of murder, such as envy, hatred, anger, and desire of revenge, and that He regards all these as murder.

In other words, even the cause of murder is murder.

The every first murder on earth was a double murder in a sense. It was anger which is murder that then lead to the act murder.

Of course we know from the Sermon on the Mount the Pharisees thought they had this commandment nailed, and Jesus showed them otherwise. There is more here than meets the eye.

Let me show you from Scripture a myriad of ways in which we can commit murder and violate the sixth commandment.

Thomas Watson, a Puritan pastor from England wrote a book on the Ten Commandments in 1692 that is still one of the best books on the Ten Commandments. In it he lists at least a dozen ways we can murder another person.

Murder by hand:

Genesis 4:8 Cain spoke to Abel his brother. And when they were in the field, Cain rose up against his brother Abel and killed him.

Exodus 2:11-12 One day, when Moses had grown up, he went out to his people and looked on their burdens, and he saw an Egyptian beating a Hebrew, one of his people. 12 He looked this way and that, and seeing no one, he struck down the Egyptian and hid him in the sand.

Suicide, self murder, also rebellion against God.

Murder with the mind:

I John 3:15 Everyone who hates his brother is a murderer, and you know that no murderer has eternal life abiding in him.

Heart murder, hatred, wishing evil.

Murder with the tongue and words:

Matthew 5:22 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.

John 18:30 They answered him, "If this man were not doing evil, we would not have delivered him over to you."

James 3:8 No human being can tame the tongue. It is a restless evil, full of deadly poison.

Psalm 57:4 ... the children of man, whose teeth are spears and arrows, whose tongues are sharp swords.

Murder with a pen (e-mail):

II Samuel 11:15 In the letter [David] wrote, "Set Uriah in the forefront of the hardest fighting, and then draw back from him, that he may be struck down, and die."

I Kings 21:8 So [Jezebel] wrote letters in Ahab's name and sealed them with his seal, and she sent the letters to the elders and the leaders who lived with Naboth in his city. **9** And she wrote in the letters, "Proclaim a fast, and set Naboth at the head of the people."

Murder by witchcraft or sorcery:

Deuteronomy 18:10 There shall not be found among you anyone who burns his son or his daughter as an offering, anyone who practices divination or tells fortunes or interprets omens, or a sorcerer **11** or a charmer or a medium or a necromancer or one who inquires of the dead.

Murder by guile or under the pretense of something else:

Matthew 2:8 And he sent them to Bethlehem, saying, “Go and search diligently for the child, and when you have found him, bring me word, that I too may come and worship him.”

13 Now when they had departed, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream and said, “Rise, take the child and his mother, and flee to Egypt, and remain there until I tell you, for Herod is about to search for the child, to destroy him.”

I Samuel 18:17 Then Saul said to David, ... “Only be valiant for me and fight the Lord's battles.” For Saul thought, “Let not my hand be against him, but let the hand of the Philistines be against him.”

Murder by consenting to it, accomplice:

Acts 22:20 And when the blood of Stephen your witness was being shed, I myself was standing by and approving and watching over the garments of those who killed him.

Murder by cowardice:

John 18:38 Pilate said to him, “What is truth?” After he had said this, he went back outside to the Jews and told them, “I find no guilt in him. **39** But you have a custom that I should release one man for you at the Passover. So do you want me to release to you the King of the Jews?”

Pilate found no fault in Jesus, he was innocent, but he did nothing to stop them killing him.

Matthew 27:24 So when Pilate saw that he was gaining nothing, but rather that a riot was beginning, he took water and washed his hands before the crowd, saying, “I am innocent of this man's blood; see to it yourselves.” **25** And all the people answered, “His blood be on us and on our children!” **26** Then he released for them Barabbas, and having scourged Jesus, delivered him to be crucified.

Murder by not intervening when you could stop it:

Proverbs 24:10 If you faint in the day of adversity, your strength is small.

11 Rescue those who are being taken away to death; hold back those who are stumbling to the slaughter.

12 If you say, “Behold, we did not know this,” does not he who weighs the heart perceive it? Does not he who keeps watch over your soul know it, and will he not repay man according to his work?

One measure of our sin in this area is by our response to the commandment being broken by others. Do we care about the life of another to speak up when they are breaking the commandment meant to preserve and protect life?

Murder by envy:

Matthew 27:18 For he knew that it was out of envy that they had delivered him up.

Murder by hardheartedness:

Deuteronomy 24:6 “No one shall take a mill or an upper millstone in pledge, for that would be taking a life in pledge.

Similar to taking a cloak in pledged, it must be returned by sundown.

This is like taking his only means of livelihood.

By intentionally, maliciously withholding the means of sustaining life.

Murder by failing to keep the law against murders:

Genesis 9:5 For your lifeblood I will require a reckoning: from every beast I will require it and from man. From his fellow man I will require a reckoning for the life of man.

6 “Whoever sheds the blood of man, by man shall his blood be shed, for God made man in his own image.

When God says you shall not murder, He means by any and every possible means, literally or figuratively, passively or actively, physically or mentally, by cause or effect.

To this list I would add driving while under the influence alcohol or drugs, this is a clear violation of the Sixth Commandment. It is a careless disregard for life, yours and others.

Also taking foolish, dangerous risks, the “here hold my beer” kinds of risks.

Also we could add spiritual murder, failing to warn someone in spiritual danger or eternal danger.

Ezekiel 33:7-9 So you, son of man, I have made a watchman for the house of Israel. Whenever you hear a word from my mouth, you shall give them warning from me. 8 If I say to the wicked, O wicked one, you shall surely die, and you do not speak to warn the wicked to turn from his way, that wicked person shall die in his iniquity, but his blood I will require at your hand. 9 But if you warn the wicked to turn from his way, and he does not turn from his way, that person shall die in his iniquity, but you will have delivered your soul.

Overall this we can say, do no harm with your words. Guard your lips from cruel words, words meant to inflict pain, including slander and gossip.

Application and Conclusion.

There but for the grace of God go I.

The only thing that has restrained me from murder is the grace of God. Because thought I can never imagine ever actually murdering a person, all the causes of murder are in my heart and yours. And those causes are called murder by Jesus: anger, envy, fury, fear, hate, conceit, callousness, greed, malice, jealousy, revenge and rage.

This is an everyday kind of commandment. It speaks to how we relate to each other day in and day out. It speaks to our thoughts, words, deeds, attitudes and actions at home, at work, at

school, at church, in social settings, at the mall or store, at the Senior Center or care home or coffee gather or hanging with the guys at Dutch Treat.

None of us escape its implications or applications.

It also stands as a guide in our culture of death. Let us pray like *Daniel*, for the judgment of God is upon us. Let us cry out in repentant prayer:

Daniel 9:5 *We* have sinned and done wrong and acted wickedly and rebelled, turning aside from your commandments and rules.

Not just I, but we have sinned. We are complicit with our nation, we have committed abortion, infanticide, euthanasia, genetic research, lawlessness in the streets, glorified murder in our entertainment. Let's be proactive in repentance for the sins of our family, church, community and nation. We are under judgment, the hand of the Lord is heavy upon our land.

Let us pray like *Isaiah*:

We are of unclean lips among a people of unclean lips, we are a people guilty of blood shed and murder in every form. We have condoned it when we have done nothing to stop it, we have voted for those who have made abortion and euthanasia common.

We kill with the hand, with the tongue, with our hearts and our eyes, with the pen, and with e-mail. And when we don't stop others from doing the same we become accomplices or accessories to the crime of murder.

This is a call to repentance. This is a call to pray for the conversion of our hearts and tongues. This is a call to heart religion. This is a call to love God and each other.

If we desire a pure heart and a right relationship with God, then we should be glad to examine our hearts and sincerely ask if there be any sinful way in us and then quickly and freely repent and turn from it.

You all know how you have been deeply hurt by someone else's words, and we have wounded and hurt others by our words. We need help, we need to take it seriously and we need to ask for help. Confess your sin of anger to the one you have sinned against.

Is your mouth a means of grace or a means of murder? A means of kindness or a means of killing? This is a call to speak life to others. Who can you speak life to today and this week?

Don't think like a Pharisee and just keep from doing the worst and think you are justified or righteous. Go beyond, go to the heart and go for the heart of others. Speak life and love.

This week give five compliments or words of encouragement to five different people. And hold your tongue five times this week. And forgive five hurts or offenses or words of anger spoken against you. See what difference it makes.