

“Freedom makes love possible” (Exodus 20:13)

Today we will study the sixth commandment, “You shall not murder.”

In this world, we see images of violence everywhere. In many movies and dramas, there are battle scenes where people shoot one another, and houses and cities are destroyed with bombs. There murder is described as if it was nothing serious. Among video games, fighting games are shooting games are especially popular. If you kill one person or just a few people, you are a criminal. But if you kill thousands of people, you are a national hero.

In a time like this, what is this commandment speaking to us?

The Bible says “You shall not murder.” You shouldn’t harm other’s dignity. Not only that, you shouldn’t lose your own dignity. And we should respect each other’s dignity as God’s greatest masterpiece.

“You shouldn’t murder.” That is to say you shouldn’t mistreat God’s greatest masterpiece. We should treat one another in a worthy manner, because each of us are God’s greatest masterpiece.

God requires us to love each other as ourselves, to show patience, gentleness, mercy, and friendliness toward others, through which we reflect our dignity, the image of God.

Today we will study the sixth commandment, “you shall not murder.” The title is “Freedom makes love possible.” First, we will look at what kind of being human is. Then we will look at the meaning of murder. And I’ll talk about how we can observe this commandment.

## **1. Created in the image of God**

Life is holy. It must be cared for dearly. This is because we are created in the image of God. And God is the author of life and life is the precious gift from God. Life belongs to God.

### Genesis 1:27 NIV

So God created human beings in his own image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them.

God created us in His image. This isn't talking about our appearance, but about our inner nature. As we are God's masterpiece made in His image, we have dignity and we are precious. So we must not hurt, or end this precious life by force.

When we kill another person, we take the life of someone who was made in God's image. God doesn't allow us to do that, because life is so precious to Him.

### Genesis 2:7 NIV

The Lord God formed a man from the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and he became a living being.

Life is given by God. So it is very precious.

There is nothing that is not precious among things God gives us. God entrusted us with this precious life, so we will not waste this life. It is the same with our bodies. This is the body God made by his hand just for you and for me. There are no two bodies identical. We must take care of it.

Life belongs to God. It cannot be under any human's command. If someone ends life by force or deprives its worth, this is to break into God's territory. God won't allow this.

God is the author of life and he alone has the authority to give life or take it away. When we take someone else's life, we not only damage the person's dignity, but we also sin against God's authority.

## **2. The meaning of Murder**

Murder here means "the intentional and violent killing of a person." "The willful, premeditated killing of an individual out of hatred, anger, desire, or greed." "The idea of murder here is a personal and individualistic concept."<sup>1</sup>

It's natural for us to take this law legalistically. You may think, "Of course, I have never killed anyone. So at least I am not guilty of breaking this law." That's a good news. You never ever murdered before.

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<sup>1</sup> Mark Mitchell, "Ten: How the Commandments Set Us Free," Kindle, 2016, Location 680, 682, 723.

Do you know about the first murder in the Bible? Was it a war between two great nations over their territory? No. Was there a struggle for power over a throne? No. Was there a fight between two men over a beautiful lady? I am sorry, but that was not the case.

The answer is recorded in Genesis 4. An older brother killed his younger brother.

The older brother, Cain was a farmer. One day, he brought some of the fruits of the soil as an offering to the Lord. His younger brother Abel was a shepherd. He brought fat portions from some of the first-born of his flock. The Lord looked with favor on Abel and his offering, but on Cain and his offering he did not look with favor.

So Cain was very angry.

Then the Lord said to Cain, "Why are you angry? Why are you looking so sad? Do what is right. Then you will be accepted. If you don't do what is right, sin is waiting at your door to grab you. It longs to have you. But you must rule over it."

But Cain didn't listen to him. He lured his brother Abel out, and there in the field he attacked him and killed him.

When others are more favored than ourselves, then our pride is hurt. "Why they don't favor me?" We become jealous, we become envious. Or we may feel inferior. "If he was not here, I wouldn't have to feel like this." "What's wrong with me?" We become very angry, and finally kill him.

#### Matthew 5:21-22 NLT

"You have heard that the law of Moses says, 'Do not murder. If you commit murder, you are subject to judgment.'<sup>22</sup> But I [Jesus] say, if you are angry with someone, you are subject to judgment! If you call someone an idiot, you are in danger of being brought before the high council. And if you curse someone, you are in danger of the fires of hell.

This is Jesus' explanation. He says anger and insult are the same as murder. Jesus explains that the word "murder" can be actual killing a person, but also can be denying someone in our thoughts, or attack someone with our word.

Murder starts by hating someone in our hearts. Sooner or later, the hatred will manifest in our words. And it will come out in our actions.

Hidden murder: We secretly kill another person by envy, hatred, anger, and the desire for revenge, gossip, slander, back-biting.

Slow murder: We slowly kill another person by thought, word, gesture, or attitude.

Before God, getting angry with someone or insulting someone is the same as killing the person, even if we haven't actually done the murder.

Have you ever had any bitterness against someone? Have you ever secretly wished something bad to happen to a particular person or wished him to be sad? Have you ever become really upset and wished such a fellow to disappear? If we are honest, we know that this commandment points out that we are all sinners and murderers.

#### Gal 5:19-21 NKJ

Now the works of the flesh are evident, which are: adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lewdness, <sup>20</sup> idolatry, sorcery, hatred, contentions, jealousies, outbursts of wrath, selfish ambitions, dissensions, heresies, <sup>21</sup> envy, murders, drunkenness, revelries, and the like.

Hatred, fighting, jealousies, envy are listed together with adultery, idol worship and murders. Not only murders but all works of the flesh can damage human dignity, and destroy our relationship with one another and hurt the body of Christ.

### **3. Love is the Fulfilment of the Law**

We tend to think about commandments legalistically. We think we are all right because we don't break the law on the surface. But God is more interested in how each of us think of one another, and relate to one another, than how we observe the rules and regulations.

“Love does no harm to its neighbor. Therefore love is the fulfilment of the law. (Romans 13:10)”

Love is described like this in the Bible.

### 1 Cor 13:4-7 NIV

Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. <sup>5</sup> It is not rude, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. <sup>6</sup> Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. <sup>7</sup> It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres.

Love does not have a “how to”. We cannot love according to a manual. It’s not like, if you follow this rule you are loving, or if you meet this requirements, this is love.

Even though you follow the rules, if your heart is not there, it’s not love at all. For example, love is patient, love is kind. Are we loving if we keep smiling although the other person is rude or forget his promise? What if your heart is filled with complaints, though you are smiling, don’t say anything? What if you despise, belittle and judge the other person, though you remain polite on the surface? It’s not loving, it’s empty, just surface. Isn’t this right?

Love is a relational concept. How we look at, think of and relate to the other. Love wants to respect and care for the other person, wants to do something that benefits the other, forgetting about self. And with love, these thoughts will become action. It is said, “To love is to risk not being loved in return.”

When we love others, we naturally fulfil the law. If we are bound by the thought how to avoid breaking the law legalistically, then essentially we are missing the point although we may appear to be observing the law.

We must know who each of us are. Each of us are made in the image of God. Each of us are precious. If we relate to one another as precious person, we wouldn’t destroy, or insult one another.

## **4. Freedom makes love possible**

How can we observe this commandment? The key is freedom. Freedom makes love possible. I’ll give you three points.

(1) Be free from legalism

As we have just learned, as soon as we become legalistic, love disappears. We must be freed from legalism.

One reason why we become legalistic is the fear of making mistakes. If we initiate to do something, we might make mistakes, we may fail, then there will be problems. If we just do what we are told to exactly, we wouldn't get scolded, nobody complains. At home, at school, and in the society, we learn to live like that. This is a kind of the secret of getting along in life. And without realizing, we apply this to our Christian walk. And we become legalistic.

How can we be set free from this? Just with this one theme, a series of sermon can be made. But I just want to mention one thing.

You are in the grace of God. All your sins are forgiven. There is no sin that cannot be forgiven through the cross of Jesus. You are loved by God, not because you observe the law strictly, nor your conduct is good, nor because you cried and apologized.

You are made righteous because of your faith in Christ. While we were still sinners, Christ died for us on the cross. By this, God clearly showed His love to us. Through Christ, by faith, we now stand in this grace.

Because we are forgiven and loved by God, we can love Him in peace, without worrying. Our days of worries, reading His reactions and fearing His judgement are over. Now is the day of grace, the day of salvation, the day of peace, the day of rejoice. We have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.

## 2) Be free from the worldly standard of value

This commandment is not simply commanding us, "Don't kill someone," but it commands us, "Don't destroy dignity and worth of each person," "Respect others as persons created in the image of God."

The world measures the worth of a person with various criteria. And it decides the person's worth. This person has money, he has this kind of occupation. He is in that position. He is from this kind of family. She has this academic background, and this qualification. She looks like this, with this face, this figure, skin color, and hair style. And she speaks like this.

With these criteria, we compare the person with ourselves. And we respect those who are higher than ourselves, and acknowledge their worth. And

for those whom we consider lower than ourselves, we think they are pitiful, miserable, and disadvantaged.

One Myanmar pastor said this, "You foreigners probably think charity is good. But it is possible for those who receive to feel their dignity impaired." We need to think about this seriously.

How can we be set free from the worldly standard of value?

We must value ourselves and others according to the Bible.

The Bible says this; every person is made in the image of God. It doesn't matter what they do. They are created in the image of God. It doesn't matter what they say about you, how they treat you. You are created in the image of God.

We are to look at the image of God in the person. And whatever we did for the person, we did for Christ (Matt 25:40). Relate to the person, as if we were relating to Christ (Eph 6:7). We are to relate to the person so that they can realize they are a precious person with dignity made in the image of God. Then we will naturally relate to them, acknowledging their dignity and worth.

### 3) Be free from the work of the flesh

As we have looked at earlier, the works of the flesh can damage human dignity, and destroy our relationship with one another and hurt the body of Christ.

If we try to control and stop this by our own strength, this is the very worldly way of life. Actually it has no effect (Col 2:20-23). Rather it will get worse.

Then, how can we be set free from the work of the flesh?

#### Romans 8:13-14 NRSV

for if you live according to the flesh, you will die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live. <sup>14</sup> For all who are led by the Spirit of God are children of God.

It is not the matter of our will power. Jesus in us is the only way by which we can truly observe this commandment. Jesus is the life. And he gives us life. Jesus is the way, by which we can experience the true life, the actual life, the eternal life. The Holy Spirit embodies this in our life specifically. When we are led by the Holy Spirit, listen to His voice and rely on Him, we will naturally bear the fruit of the Spirit.

“But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, <sup>23</sup> gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law.”  
(Galatians 5:22-23 NIV)

The next time, we will study how we can apply this commandment positively in a practical manner.

For LifeNet groups and personal reflection

1. Read 1 Corinthians 13:4-7. Think of the situation where you observe the commandment “Don’t murder” legalistically, but you are not loving like in 1 Corinthians 13:4-7.

2. In Galatians 5:19-21 the works of the flesh (sinful nature) are listed. How do these works of the flesh hinder us from loving?

3. (1) How do you see people and evaluate them? What are your criteria? How did you learn those criteria?

(2) When we look at someone as one made in God’s image, how will this change our evaluation of the person?