

## **Make Much of The Lord of Life**

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### **Deuteronomy 5:17**

*You shall not murder.*

God's people uphold the lives of others by giving life rather than taking life from God's image bearers.

### **Introduction:**

Matthew 22:34-40

*34 But when the Pharisees heard that he had silenced the Sadducees, they gathered together. 35 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."*

Church, as we continue our endeavor into the second tablet of the 10 commandments, Let us not forget this great summary.

The first couple commandments are to fulfill what Jesus describes as the first great commandment, which is to (1) love God with all of our heart, and with all of our soul, and with all of our mind.

But Christ follows up this first commandment with the second great commandment, which is to love your neighbor as yourself. What we heard last week in honoring your father and mother, what we are going to hear today from God's Word in relation to murder fall under the second great commandment. You want to know what it means to love your neighbor as yourself? First understand what it means to love God, then understand the command that we are reading this morning.

Not only does "Do not murder" fall under the second great commandment given by our Lord. Christ also describes the 10 commandments, as summarized in the first and second great commandment, as being the coat hangers for everything else written in the Old Testament. *"On these two commandments depend all the Law and the Prophets."*

If you want to understand your Bible, you must understand the 10 Commandments, or it will not make sense. As we see with Christ teaching this Pharisee. This religious man, seeking to maneuver around our Lord, to trick him, to show dominance and supersede Christ's authority is humbled.

Brothers and sisters, in this short section of Matthew's Gospel, we are the Pharisee. We are that religious person looking to find a means to get as close to disobedience without crossing that line. To show dominance and to supersede the authority of our Lord.

Matthew's Gospel particularly takes a heavy knock at the religious community. He was writing this work to first-generation Christians in version 1.0 of local churches. He writes this to inform his readers that the Pharisees did not die. But rather, to lovingly and pastorally inform us that the church is the second coming of the Pharisees. The church is the Pharisees 2.0.

As people who are within God's covenant community, we have a particular temptation to be OK with a particular form of righteousness.

As we look at the text and the larger teaching of Scripture of do not murder, I want to murder the thoughts that are in our minds right now regarding this commandment.

*"I'm not a murderer so this will just be a doctrinal recalibration, an intellectual exercise."*

*"I am not an angry person, On the contrary, my best friends think that I'm very patient and soft-spoken, that I'm a kind person. So, this commandment is more for other people and their struggles."*

**Illustration:**

As an exercise when I feel self-righteous or the Lord graciously reveals this to me, I rehearse the great commandments and I say Caleb are you perfectly following this?

Are you perfectly loving the Lord with all your heart, soul and mind? No. Caleb you need the grace and mercy of God in Christ.

Caleb, are you loving your neighbor as yourself perfectly, at this very moment? No. Caleb, you need the grace and mercy of God in Christ

Our need is ever-present and never fleeting.

Church, I am not trying to say that we're all a bunch of religious hypocrites when I say that the church is the second coming of the Pharisees.

What I'm saying is that when I open my Bible to this command, I'm tempted to say really really quickly I'm good. Somehow I'm excluded, or above, or am perfectly fulfilling this commandment. As if there's no space for the Holy Spirit to work further in my life regarding this text.

What I am hoping to convince you of is that the question of the perfection that Christ commands us to have in the sermon on the mount and the righteousness that is supposed to exceed that of the Pharisees comes from a realization that we need the grace and mercy of God in Christ.

*Blessed are the poor in spirit for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.*

Family, This text is so much more than a mere prohibition to not kill someone or to deal with your anger. It is the prizing, honoring, upholding, and protecting of life. It is the giving of life to others. This is no less than the fulfillment of the second great commandment, to love your neighbor as yourself. The heart behind this commandment is to love others because God first loved you.

This morning's text comes from Deuteronomy 5:17. Hear God's Word kindly addressing us this morning: "You shall not Murder."

*God's people uphold the lives of others by giving life rather than taking life from God's image bearers.*

**Outline:**

1. The Prohibition of Murder
2. The Protection and Promotion of Life
3. Our State and the Hope of the Gospel

**1. The Prohibition of Murder:**

Moses uses 1 of seven possible words for the word "Murder" we find in our text. This command of course has implications to several areas of life and to ethics. Ranging from

political implications and judicial practices. But out of the seven words that there are for the word “Murder,” he chose this one particular one.

The word that Moses uses excludes that of judicial killings and death through civil service such as military or law enforcement. Though this passage can aid us in understanding the Bible's ethic on those matters, it falls outside the purview of this text. If you have any really tough ethical questions about the death penalty or just war theory, Matthew would love to talk to you after the service.

(A) The idea behind this Hebrew word for murder is that of the unjustified taking of human life. What we would classically put in murder or homicide category.

(B) This also includes manslaughter, which is the unintentional taking of human life. The point, as we will get to in a moment, is that we value and protect life. We honor God by protecting life via crosswalks. We don't want anyone to unintentionally die!

(C) This also includes self-murder what we would call suicide. This world frames this category as a person who is the “Victim” of suicide over the historical definition of committing suicide. Scripture would see this as a real authentic choice with ethical implications. God is not prohibiting you from something you are the victim of, but rather, something you have the authentic choice to obey.

So what did this mean for Israel? It meant that you're not to unjustifiably take the lives of others or unintentionally take the lives of others. You are not permitted the choice of self-murder.

**New Testament Reality of this Command:**

The heart of this command and the actions that are prohibited are just as relevant for us today. Remember, Christ came to fulfill the law, not abolish it. And out of the 10 commandments, this is one of the nine that are repeated.

We see this command repeated by our Lord in the sermon on the mount in Matthew chapter 5, read with me:

Matthew 5:21-26

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; whoever insults his brother will be liable to the council; and whoever says, ‘You fool!’ will be liable to the hell of fire. 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. 25 Come to terms quickly with your accuser while you are going with him to court, lest your accuser hand you over to the judge, and the judge to the guard, and you be put in prison. 26 Truly, I say to you, you will never get out until you have paid the last penny.

What we see here in the New Testament, in this text is that murder is a matter of the heart, and the heart of murder is hatred.

True righteousness is a righteousness that externally and internally matches. It is a whole person's righteousness. When Jesus says be perfect as your heavenly father is perfect the idea behind perfect is integrity. The idea is that what rings true externally matches internally.

The Pharisees had a false righteousness. A righteousness that did not ring true in their hearts, but externally they looked great. So when Christ says that your righteousness must exceed the Pharisees it's saying it goes further than your externals. It regards your heart, the heart of the matter.

When we seek to not murder, when we seek to rid our souls of hatred. We are seeking to be wholly righteous and we need the grace of God because we naturally cannot do this.

Our natural, depraved state as human beings is not to love our neighbor. As much as our culture would say that is and that we are oppressed by systems and circumstances to manipulate our good and innocent hearts. Scripture attests over and over again that it is not someone else's problem, but that I am personally responsible. My heart is wicked and apart from the grace of God I will never truly love someone.

A healthy summation of what this command means in light of all Scripture can be found in the Heidelberg Catechism:

**What does God require in the sixth commandment?**

That neither in thoughts, nor words, nor gestures, much less in deeds, I dishonour, hate, wound, or kill my neighbour, by myself or by another: but that I lay aside all desire of revenge also, that I hurt not myself, nor wilfully expose myself to any danger. Wherefore also the magistrate is armed with the sword, to prevent murder.

**But this commandment seems only to speak of murder?**

In forbidding murder, God teaches us, that he abhors the causes thereof, such as envy, hatred, anger, and desire of revenge; and that he accounts all these as murder.

**But is it enough that we do not kill any man in the manner mentioned above? (Note the false righteousness being add)**

No: for when God forbids envy, hatred, and anger, he commands us to love our neighbour as ourselves; to show patience, peace, meekness, mercy, and all kindness, towards him, and prevent his hurt as much as in us lies; and that we do good, even to our enemies.

Do you know the verses that precede that command to be perfect as our heavenly father is perfect? Let's read it together:

Matthew 5:43-48

43 "You have heard that it was said, 'You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.' 44 But I say to you, Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, 45 so that you may be sons of your Father who is in heaven. For he makes his sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust. 46 For if you love those who love you, what reward do you have? Do not even the tax collectors do the same? 47 And if you greet only your brothers, what more are you doing than others? Do not even the Gentiles do the same? 48 You therefore must be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect.

Let our righteousness be like that of the God that we image. A God whose sun and rain falls on the just and unjust. Yet, here I am giving sun to those I love and rain to those who I believe have done me wrong. May it not be so of us.

Therefore, when we read this command: brothers and sisters, God is telling us that to know him and follow his commands is not to hate our neighbor:

- (1) in our thoughts, through our desires, and by our actions
- (2) and that murder is at it's root, hatred.

So, if God's law demands that we not live by hate, what is being guarded in this command?

## **2. The Protection and Promotion of Life**

What is being guarded is the value of life, grounded in the image of God of whom every human bears.

What is being promoted in hate's place is the love of neighbor.

The reason why we cherish, honor, uphold, and protect the lives of our neighbors is because they are made in the image of God.



All persons without exception are image bearers, and thus have value, dignity, and worth.

To be made in the image of God is to be made for a relationship with God, and to represent him.. Man when he was made in the garden was made different from the elephants or the ants. God gave man the breath of life. We were created for a unique relationship with the Creator in a way no other living thing in creation was.

We were also made to represent God. To image him in how we live, only properly done by properly relating with him.

Therefore, Christians are the only people that can authentically say that every person has value, dignity, and worth with integrity. In our culture, people are valued based on their actions, what they look like, where they come from, how much money they make, how useful they are, and so on.

Christians believe that people have the uncompromising value, impervious to change because they bear the image of the Lord of life:

- the rich, the poor, the homeless, politicians, prisoners, Muslims, stay-at-home moms, unborn children, the elderly, those who identify with the LGBTQ+ community, pedophiles, Nazis, racists, bigots, rapists murderers, vaccinated and unvaccinated persons, policemen, teachers, the citizen, the immigrant, social justice warriors, MAGA Republicans, mean parents, hurtful or wrong spouses and jerk bosses. The guy who is going 30mph in the left lane who IS factually in the wrong. The friend that betrayed you and the abuser who was never brought to justice. Those who are guilty of murder, had an abortion or had an unethical IVF procedure. A person who committed suicide which left a spouse and kids behind.

There is a slew we can say about any one of these groups, their merits or demerits. We can discuss how to act as one who is as wise as serpents and innocent as doves. But one thing we cannot say is that they are any less valuable in the sight of God or his people.

That, my friends, is a heresy to our culture. But it is the heart of the gospel, the good news of Christ is for all persons without exception. Every person who is made in the image of God has value, dignity, and worth. There is no one whom we get to write off as beyond the good news of Jesus or the Lord's command to love as yourself.

O'Mathúna helpfully writes regarding the grounding for this prohibition that, *"The Pentateuch holds the lives of men and women, slave and free, Israelite and foreigner, born and unborn, to be of utmost value. Each is an image of God, to be respected, protected and actively loved.*

After God flooded the earth and made a covenant with Noah, he reiterated the Creation mandate to Noah. But, he also clearly prohibits the taking of life. Look with me at Genesis 9:6

Genesis 9:6

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

The value comes not from something subjective, but from the truth that the Creator proclaims and instills in man whom he made in his image.

This means that Christians "Lean into" loving neighbor at all stages of life and all walks of life. We are to give life, protect life, and uphold life from cradle to grave.

To love someone is to look out for their eternal betterment. Calling a wayward saint to repentance is looking out for someone's eternal betterment. Calling a sinner to Christ is loving them. Anticipating the needs of those in our church is love. Praying as a church is love. Encouraging one another is love. Valuing the less fortunate in our community through the Food Pantry is love by giving bread to make much of the bread of life. Care group leaders prayerfully leading groups through discussion questions is love. Being more concerned about the lives of others is love. Talking less and listening more...the list goes on. Love in this passage is the antithesis of hate. Rather than leaning in with a knife, we are leaning in with a hand.

We, in light of this command, living in a culture of death, are to be the salt and light. That testifies to the worth of all life in a Christ-centered manner

The church does not just herald life because we are merely against death, though we do care. The church does not herald life from cradle to the grave because we are trying to implement some moral obligation for all persons as if this is some moral reform program.

The church treasures all life in a sin-sick world because God in Christ gave our sin-sick soul life-abundantly through the work that was declared "Finished" on the cross.





As JI Packer states so well, “Only restraining and renewing grace enables anyone to keep the 6th commandment.”

We lay off the old hate in all its forms and we put on love, but only through the grace of God in Christ and through his Spirit.

And this brings us to Point 3:

### **3. Our State and the Hope of the Gospel**

Our Need and Christ’s Provision

If we hope to properly understand and apply God's word as declared here in Deuteronomy 5, it must be Christocentric. Christ must be the center, the dead center of our understanding in its application. If we see this as a mere perspective change, or moral reform we are trading the righteousness of Christ for rags.

But for us to get to Christ we must see our need for Christ, turn with me to James 2.

James 2:10-11

*“10 For whoever keeps the whole law but fails in one point has become guilty of all of it. 11 For he who said, “Do not commit adultery,” also said, “Do not murder.” If you do not commit adultery but do murder, you have become a transgressor of the law.”*

Church, the posture we ought to have when we read this text in Deuteronomy. The posture I should have had when I first read this text and was dismissive of its call on my life, is not “I got this, let me move on.”

Rather, a posture that I come with great spiritual need. And again, what does Christ call and promise to those who are poor in spirit? He says they are blessed for theirs is the Kingdom of heaven.

Our need, contrary to our natural inclinations, qualifies us for salvation. Think about the Gospel of Matthew how he sits and dines with tax collectors, sinners and the Pharisees just could not understand why. And Christ tells them to go back to the prophets and learn what it means to have compassion.

Who was it that Christ had mercy on in the Gospels generally speaking, the religious leaders who were “Righteous,” or the self-proclaimed sinners?



Brothers and sisters, our righteousness is unimpressive. Our righteousness when we choose to stand on that leg is like the righteousness of the Pharisees: it's a false righteousness lacking integrity.

As James 2 describes, if you've broken any of God's Law you are not a righteous or good person. You are a transgressor of the Law. Which puts you in the position of needing a savior.

Romans 3:23

*"23 for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God"*

So, I've fallen short of the glory of God. Why do I need a savior?

Romans 1:18

*"18 For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men,"*

If we have broken one of God's laws, we have broken all of God's Law. If we are lawbreakers, we are transgressors against the law which makes us according to God's standard of righteousness: unrighteous.

And as we see in this text, the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against those who are unrighteous.

Every person in this room is or was at one point under the wrath of God. The difference between those under wrath and those under love is not a works-based righteousness, but an alien righteousness. A foreign righteousness. A righteousness having nothing to do with you, yet applied to you.

Gospel Call:

If you are here today and Christ is not the Lord of your life, you stand on your own merits before God. If you were to die today, Scripture clearly teaches that you are an enemy because of your trespasses. God's law is proclaiming to you the dim state that you are standing in, but it doesn't stop there. God's word also unquestionably, with all clarity, points you to the free gift of eternal life in Jesus Christ.

Friend, you do not have to sit there and wallow under God's wrath. The free offer of salvation in Christ is offered to you this morning. All you must do is repent of your sin and trust in Jesus as Lord and Savior.



Get off the throne of your life, ruling a kingdom of sand, and come kneel before King Jesus and accept the invitation to be his beloved son and to commune with your Creator in his eternal kingdom.

Church family, this is not only the gospel message that we proclaim, but the daily reminder of our great need for Christ. We never move past the gospel. Our hearts are inclined to hate not love and we need a supernatural work of God. Not based on any merit we bring to the table but because of his grace. Getting something we don't deserve, and his mercy not getting what we do deserve.

If you are sitting here and you love the Lord but you are struggling with anger, remind yourself of this truth: he never said you could in and of yourself. Free yourself from those shackles. You dine at God's table because of the blood of Christ and no other reason.

The Empowerment of the Gospel:

The same miraculous grace that moved us from death to life through the ministry of the Holy Spirit is the same grace that gives us life abundant. This comes through the ongoing ministry of the Holy Spirit; the ability to love our neighbor. To turn from inward self-love and outward hate to a healthy distrust of self and a love of others.

Romans 5:5

*"Because God's love has been powered out into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us."*

To love others, you must know the love of God.

Church, for us to be image bearers of God as we care for the image of God in others means we know God.

When we understand who God is and what he has done. Being moved by what the Lord of Life did in conquering death on the cross, we love others. God's grace comes to fruition through the visible, loving heart of his people. Our affection for God is directly correlated with our affection toward others.

If you are lacking love, or if you love for the wrong reasons, do you know the love of God?

Like what Matthew said, if your team wins the Super bowl like mine did that will come out in your emotions. If you love God and his love has been poured out into your hearts through the Holy Spirit then you ought to be loving people.



That's not legalism. I'm not saying love people then God will pour out his Holy Spirit. What I'm saying is that saved people enamored by the love of God love people. Grace precedes it, so there's no legalism. The Bible calls us to good works.

Know God, Love Others

1 John 4:19-21

*"19 We love because he first loved us. 20 If anyone says, "I love God," and hates his brother, he is a liar; for he who does not love his brother whom he has seen cannot love God whom he has not seen. 21 And this commandment we have from him: whoever loves God must also love his brother."*

(1) Brothers and sisters, no doubt there are people here who are discouraged, beaten up, and are bearing themselves up over not perfectly following this command. I want to encourage to pause your deep reflection on what your hands and mouth are doing or not doing. Instead lift your gaze to God through his Word and behold him for who he is.

Illustration: One of the most fascinating "Ask Pastor John" questions I've heard was a discouraged young man asking what he should do given that he was struggling with an addiction. John Piper responded by telling a story of a guy he was discipling that was struggling with the same addiction. His answer was to give him Grudem's systematic theology book and to read it from cover to cover and he said when you've read this and you've steeped yourself in the knowledge of God you won't be struggling anymore.

If any of you know John Piper you know that man is not a legalist. That is not his first option in the counseling room, and that's not something that we would ever practice at Kingsway. But I found the point interesting because instead of John Piper describing things to do or actions to take, or accountability groups to join...the essence of his counsel was to treasure God, look to God and enjoy him.

(2) And for those who would say, "Well you don't know my mother-in-law" or "I hate police officers," Philippians 4:8 is God's gift for you:

Philippians 4:8

*"Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence, if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things."*



When you struggle with the persons God has sovereignly placed in your life, start a treasure hunt for evidences of grace in their lives. When possible, share them with that individual.

Our action or lack of action in the Christian walk correlates to our knowledge and affection of our Lord.

**Conclusion:**

It is common in our culture to write people off, because they hurt us or because they believe differently than us.

How quick we are to put people in categories and whittle them down to size through social media or casual conversations. Much of hate is devaluing God's image, making the other person a monster and removing all value. Then and only then, do we squash them like a bug with hate.

In our world today you're encouraged to be angered, embittered, and to hold malice in your heart toward persons or groups of people because you are a "victim" and they are an oppressor. In our world today we are encouraged to a pseudo-love, a love that is out of self-interest.

But for God's people, we rise above hate and false love, and as 1 John says: the command that we've been given is to love, and we love all persons without distinction and exception because they are made in the image of God and because "While we were still sinners, Christ died for us."

When God lacks his proper place in our lives, when we resist his gracious rule in our lives, there are many good and justifiable reasons to hate someone else.

But when we realize just how kind God has been to us in Christ, lives change.

Oh how our lives are different because of God's love for us. Oh where we would be apart from the love of Christ.

May the Lord of Life bless *your* life and endeavors as you give life to others this week!