

"LIFE IN THE LAND"

THIS WEEK: The 6th of 10 **Exodus 20:13** "You shall not murder."

This is the law that forbids us from intentionally killing one another. So it promotes life. It is "pro-life". It increases the hope of "living long in the land" which reminds us of last week's look at the 5th commandment about honoring our parents. **LAST WEEK:** A "positive" commandment about parents → "You shall..." → positive = more demanding. By contrast, this 6th commandment is stated negatively → less demanding/ *Just don't kill anyone!*

WHAT TO SEE: what happens to this commandment in the New Testament: God's new covenant with the people who come to him through faith in Christ

As with the previous, lots of room for controversy here too. It doesn't forbid "capital punishment" → a civil response to this sin. It doesn't forbid every sort of war → war can also be a group response to this sin. ("Just war"? "Justifiable war?") It does, I think, forbid suicide. It does, I think, forbid "abortion." (But seems to me we don't advance the "pro-life" agenda by using the word.)

NOTES:

1. The N.T. intensifies the O.T. ban on murder by also forbidding "hating" one another.

Matthew 5:21-22 You have heard that it was said to those of old, 'You shall not murder; and whoever murders will be liable to judgment.' 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. "Hating one another" proves that our faith is false. **1 John 2:9-11** Whoever says he is in the light and hates his brother is still in darkness. Whoever loves his brother abides in the light, and in him there is no cause for stumbling. But whoever hates his brother is in the darkness and walks in the darkness, and does not know where he is going, because the darkness has blinded his eyes. As clearly as loving one another proves that our faith in Christ is real. And this idea is tied back to this commandment.

1 John 3:15 Everyone who hates his brother is a murderer, and you know that no murderer has eternal life abiding in him. And we are just getting going!

2. The N.T. *further* intensifies the O.T. ban on murder by commanding us to love one another as Christ has loved us. [So this becomes a Valentine's Day sermon after all!] **John 15:12** This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you. There always was a moral obligation to love. **Leviticus 19:18** You shall not take vengeance or bear a grudge against the sons of your own people, but you shall love your neighbor as yourself: I am the Lord. But this N.T. commandment is stronger! And stated emphatically in a number of places. **John 13:34-35** A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another: just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another. By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.

And the transformation to a positive (therefore more demanding) commandment keeps going!

3. The N.T. intensifies the O.T. ban on murder *even more* by commanding us to love our enemies.

CONGREGATIONAL READING

Luke 6:27-36 I say to you who hear, Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, pray for those who abuse you. To one who strikes you on the cheek, offer the other also, and from one who takes away your cloak do not withhold your tunic either. Give to everyone who begs from you, and from one who takes away your goods do not demand them back. And as you wish that others would do to you, do so to them. If you love those who love you, what benefit is that to you? For even sinners love those who love them. And if you do good to those who do good to you, what benefit is that to you? For even sinners do the same. And if you lend to those from whom you expect to receive, what credit is that to you? Even sinners lend to sinners, to get back the same amount. But love your enemies, and do good, and lend, expecting nothing in return, and your reward will be great, and you will be sons of the Most High, for he is kind to the ungrateful and the evil. Be merciful, even as your Father is merciful.

NOTICE: we should love our enemies because God our Father loves his enemies!

"*Loving our enemies*" is attached by *Jesus himself* to the idea of being *like God*:

being kind and generous to our enemies as God is kind and generous to his enemies:

being merciful to our enemies as God is merciful to his enemies!

And if we notice that we are being asked to do a hard thing, well, good for us to notice that!

We do well to notice: Sometimes it costs something to love people the way Christ has loved us!

John 15:13 Greater love has no one than this, that someone lay down his life for his friends.

4. The most extreme version of Christlike love is to "lay down our lives."

Sometimes, love demands that we "lay down our lives" metaphorically.

1 John 3:16-18 By this we know love, that he laid down his life for us, and we ought to lay down our lives for the brothers. But if anyone has the world's goods and sees his brother in need, yet closes his heart against him, how

does God's love abide in him? Little children, let us not love in word or talk but in deed and in truth.

Notice, the apostle isn't thinking of actually dying for somebody. He's thinking of open-heartedly giving some of your stuff to him to meet his needs. [Back to Valentine's Day!] Let's talk about how we married men love our wives!

Ephesians 5:25-27 Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her, that he might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, so that he might present the church to himself in splendor, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, that she might be holy and without blemish.

The purpose of such great love should always be moving people closer to Christ. If his wife's Christlikeness is not the husband's motive, maybe it's not really his wife he is loving. Maybe it's only himself that he is loving! [Happy Valentine's Day!] But clearly, I think, this desire of a man to help his wife become pleasing to God ["without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, that she might be holy and without blemish"] ought not to be entirely unique. This man should want the same for his daughters. And his sons. And the people that they will some day marry. And so the parents of the people that his children some day marry. And actually all his neighbours. Actually, everyone he has any opportunity to influence. Right? So back to the words of Jesus:

John 15:13 Greater love has no one than this, that someone lay down his life for his friends.

5. The greatest purpose for showing the greatest love is to move people closer to Christ.

In other words, to be properly "pro-life" is to be actively committed to helping people get into a life-changing relationship to Jesus. **John 17:3** And this is eternal life, that they know you the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent. Look at it from another angle. **1 Timothy 1:5** The aim of our charge is love that issues from a pure heart

and a good conscience and a sincere faith. And where do hearts get purified? How does a conscience become good? What sort of sincere faith is Paul writing about? In other words, the opposite of murder is love because while murder creates death, love *promotes* life. Love means helping people. And the most effective way to help a person is to help him/her move closer to Jesus. That's because the essence of life is attachment to Christ. **Colossians 3:4** Christ who is your life ...

ACTIONS:

a) Be done with every form of hating people.

1 Peter 2:1 So put away all malice and all deceit and hypocrisy and envy and all slander.

b) Let the love you show be great love by "laying down your life" to move people closer to Christ.

1 John 3:16-18 By this we know love, that he laid down his life for us, and we ought to lay down our lives for the brothers... Little children, let us not love in word or talk but in deed and in truth.

NOT that there sometimes isn't a need to love "in word and talk"!

c) Let the love you show be great love by speaking of Christ when and where it is wise to do so.

Colossians 1:27-29 ... Christ in you, the hope of glory. Him we proclaim, warning everyone and teaching everyone with all wisdom, that we may present everyone mature in Christ. For this I toil, struggling with all his energy that he powerfully works within me.

Where would it NOT be appropriate? **Matthew 7:6** Do not give dogs what is holy, and do not throw your pearls before pigs, lest they trample them underfoot and turn to attack you. When we know that speaking about Christ will only provide people with opportunity to insult Christ.

A part of wise conduct is knowing when and what and how ... **Colossians 4:3-6** At the same time, pray also for us, that God may open to us a door for the word, to declare the mystery of Christ, on account of which I am in prison— that I may make it clear, which is how I ought to speak. Walk in wisdom toward outsiders, making the best use of the time. Let your speech always be gracious, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how you ought to answer each person.

And surely in this important issue, with life and death at stake, we can count on God to give us the wisdom required. **James 1:5** If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask God, who gives generously to all without reproach, and it will be given him.

Next commandment: (February 28) "IN LOVE" IN THE LAND

Exodus 20:14