

## EXTEND LIFE, MT.5:17-24

Ten STEP Program #6

- **Intro:** I wonder if you've heard this news in the last few weeks.

Abortionists have been rallying for abortion even after birth. They propose to call this practice "after-birth abortion" rather than infanticide. So on Feb.4, 2019 senator Ben Sasse proposed the Born Alive Abortion Survivors Protection Act in order to outlaw infanticide in our country. After it was blocked by democratic objection Sen. Joni Ernst of IA lamented:

- "There is nothing great, there is nothing moral, or even humane about the discussion that we have before us today,... "Over the past week, we have witnessed the absolutely ugly truth about the far-reaching grasp of the abortion industry and its increasingly radicalized political agenda. Politicians have not only defended aborting a child while a woman is in labor, but have gone so far as to support the termination of a child after his or her birth. A child. A baby. Rationality, decency, and basic human compassion have fallen by the wayside."

- Against this backdrop, President Trump spoke passionately about the right to life in his SOTU address:

- *There could be no greater contrast to the beautiful image of a mother holding her infant child than the chilling displays our Nation saw in recent days. Lawmakers in New York cheered with delight upon the passage of legislation that would allow a baby to be ripped from the mother's womb moments before birth. These are living, feeling, beautiful babies who will never get the chance to share their love and dreams with the world. And then, we had the case of the Governor of Virginia where he basically stated he would execute a baby after birth.*
- *To defend the dignity of every person, I am asking the Congress to pass legislation to prohibit the late-term abortion of children who can feel pain in the mother's womb. Let us work together to build a culture that cherishes innocent life. And let us reaffirm a fundamental truth: all children — born and unborn — are made in the holy image of God.*
- This is our country today, friends. And here we are looking at the sixth step in God's Ten Step Program for healthy humanity: You must not murder. Now, it would seem that everyone knows murder is wrong (at least one

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would think). Nobody's "coming out" to demand equal rights for murderers. Society as yet does not tolerate the notion that "I have to be true to myself. I like killing. It's just in my genetic makeup to kill." No we don't say this yet. We have other names for it. It's been a dark time in our nation

- I need to tell you something else dark... the potential to do or think this murderous way is within every person in this room.
- **1. Each of us have the roots of murder inside our chest.**
- **A.** While we may not have pulled a gun or a knife on someone, everyone of us has the underlying cause of these things inside.
- Adam blamed Eve rather than admit wrong. Can you imagine? Eve! His babe! The first and, most likely, the most gorgeous women ever! Adam threw her under the camel (didn't have busses)!
- One generation from the first man came his son who *killed* his brother. Talk about fast generational change! And don't think we've escaped the stain just because of all the generations since. The Heidelberg Catechism QA106 puts it: *By forbidding murder God teaches us that he hates the root of murder; envy, hatred, anger, vindictiveness. In God's sight all such are murder.*
- Tough definition. Anyone want to pretend you've never felt heat when someone calls you a dirty word? Anyone want to claim you've never felt your insides boil when scapegoated for a problem by a person who actually was the problem?
- This is what Jesus is talking about in our text when in his Sermon on the Mount he equates anger with murder, and gives cursing with the same punishment as killing.
- **B.** Lets not get hung up on the terminology. The term "raca" (v22) may not hurt our feelings today. But in Jewish society, calling someone a

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"blockhead" landed you in the Superior court. Jesus here says that thinking despicably about another person is worthy of landing you in hell!

Jesus is pointing out that just because God gives grace and salvation does not negate the laws of God. They are still true. They still need to be obeyed if you want a fighting chance at health. And the sin of breaking them is serious enough to disqualify us from being allowed to live! (v19) Are you or I one of those? (v20) Do you think you have a prayer of reaching that kind of righteousness? Jesus is reminding us that there is a moral code to the universe: Gods. And it does matter what we do and are. Did we think it mattered a little? Well, it matters a lot more than we ever imagined.

- So Jesus takes the commandments in Matthew 5 and intensifies them.

In our text its the 6<sup>th</sup> Command and oh so much more than man-slaughter.

He's talking about what's cooking inside you when it bubbles out in your words or actions. For example,

- When you've discovered your friend cheated you and in astonished contempt you refer to the offspring of a stray, female canine –that's the feeling, the emotion that feeds murder. And it's around.
- When you dream of all the great come-backs you could use next time you see so-and-so, you are blowing gently on the coals of murder.
- Here's another shocker according the Bible that will help us look deeply into the commandment against murder: when you fail to attend to your child's maturity, when we are too busy to be interested, or avoid disciplining our child, we are helping to kill him or her.
- *“He who spares the rod hates his son, but he who loves him is careful to discipline him.” Proverbs 13:24, NIV.*
- That's right, for you see, the root of murder and hate is to be found in the

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soil of our self-centeredness. We want to live, and let die. But God asks for us to live and cause to live. There's a difference. (More on that in point two.) As followers of Jesus, we aim to create, to cause, to promote life at every turn. Not just at abortion clinics, but in the halls at school, and in our own homes.

- How do we get a culture that kills? It's not because there are guns. It's because we are so proud of ourselves. We are too self-concerned to allow another to wound OUR honor without finding a way to pay her back. We are too weak to *suffer* for another person's well-being. My father used to tell us to "be the bigger man". By that he meant, be kind in the face of evil. It takes a bigger man to do that. Anybody can fly off the handle and retaliate. Ask this: Am I strong enough to suffer for another's well-being?

- **C.** Somewhere between the spectrum of ending life on one side, & wanting to on the other, falls series of other areas of murder
  - Suicide, violence that stops short of actual death, child abuse, battered wives, homes that are private torture chambers (emotionally or physically) such that kids can't wait to grow up and leave.
  - We praise athletes who speak jubilantly of "pounding his head in." We are fans who leave hockey games disappointed if we see no brawl.
  - We pay people millions to make movies that chill us with true-to-life horror; that glorify revenge and turn violence into entertainment on our Xbox, or our movie channels.
- *Oh but we don't kill, and we're surprised at people who do. Jesus is showing us that you and I are guilty of murder thousands of times over. In other words, you and I are deeply and thoroughly lost.*

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- Philip Yancey tells about a World War II soldier who was part of the liberation of the Nazi concentration camp at Dachau, Germany, where thousands of Jews had been exterminated. The man told this story
- "A buddy and I were assigned to a boxcar. Inside were human corpses stacked in neat rows, exactly like firewood. The Germans, ever meticulous, had planned out the rows, alternating the heads and the feet, accommodating the different sizes and shapes of bodies. Our job was like moving furniture. We would pick up each body--so light--and carry it to a designated area. "Some fellows couldn't do this part. They stood by the barbed wire fences retching. I couldn't believe it the first time we came across a person in the pile still alive! But it was true. Incredibly, some of the corpses weren't corpses. They were human beings. We yelled for doctors and they went to work on these survivors right away. "I spent two hours in that boxcar; two hours that for me included every known emotion: rage, shame, pity, revulsion. Every negative emotion, I should say. They came in waves...all but the rage...it stayed, fueling our work.
- "After we had taken the few survivors to a makeshift clinic, we turned our attention to the Nazis: the SS officers in charge of Dachau. Our captain asked for a volunteer to escort a group of a dozen SS officers to the interrogation center, and a guy named Chuck...his hand shot right up. Chuck claimed to have worked for Al Capone before the war, and not one of us doubted it. "Well, Chuck grabbed his machine gun and prodded the group of SS prisoners down the trail. They walked ahead of him with their hands locked behind their heads, their elbows sticking out on either side. A few minutes after they disappeared into the trees we heard the rattling burp of a machine gun

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and three long bursts of fire. "Soon Chuck came strolling out, smoke still curling for the tip of his weapon. 'They all tried to run away,' he said with a kind of leer.

- "It was that day that I felt called by God to become a pastor. First, there was the horror of the corpses in the boxcar: I could not absorb such a scene. I did not even know that such absolute evil existed! But when I saw it, I knew beyond a doubt that I'd spend my life serving whatever opposed such evil...serving God. Then came the Chuck incident. I had a nauseating fear that the captain might call upon me to escort the next group of SS guards; and even a more dreadful fear that if he did, I might do the same thing that Chuck had done! The beast that was in those guards was also in me. The beast within those guards, the beast within Chuck, the beast was also in me."
- *Read HC.105 with me...What is God's will in the 6<sup>th</sup> commandment?*
  - *I am not to belittle, insult, hate, or kill my neighbor*
  - *not by my thoughts, my words, my look or gesture,*
  - *and certainly not by actual deeds*
  - *and I am not to be a party to this in others;*
  - *rather I am to put away all desire for revenge.*
  - *I am not to harm or recklessly endanger myself either.*
  - *Prevention of murder is also why government is armed with the sword.*
- Now contrast the reality in each of us, the average human being, and the degradation we are capable of- with God's original will for mankind.
- **2. God made my life to help create more life for others.**  
To bless people; to build up; to engender this marvelous thing called love. Remember that I said at the beginning of this series that the Catechism

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insightfully treats the commandments in two ways: 1) what needs to die off in us, and 2) what needs to come to life in us.

- A. The opposite of murder is love and protection of the sacred human being. We'll call this command the Extend Life command, because in it God tells us how unutterably cherished is a human being. Every human being. In spite of how utterly wayward we are. And let me add here, that God's cherishing of you includes those of us who have broken his commands! Namely all of us.
- God is giving us his vision for a peaceful society. He's saying, "Don't you see? I have a good plan for how my children experience life. I don't want women to have to carry mace in their purses. I don't want fathers feeling wound like a spring and sleeping with pistols under pillows. Think of how cool a neighborhood would be where deadbolts were not necessary."
- This, friends, is why Christ-followers ought to be pro-life. Ought to fight sex-trafficking. In an ironic way, this is the only really valid reason for a godly nation to go to war; that is, to kill in order to preserve the sacredness of human life. This commandment is what democracy fights for. This command is the command to produce peace, not just on a national level, but on the school yard, in the back yard. "You must not kill" is where the concept of mercy comes from.
- B. If much of our daily murder comes more from our mouths than our hands, then this is also a command to build people up with our mouths. You'll notice that Jesus joined the murder commandment to the verbal expressions of our insides in our text as elsewhere.
  - *““Don't you see that whatever enters the mouth goes into the stomach and then out of the body? But the things that come out of the mouth come from the heart, and these make a man 'unclean'.*

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*For out of the heart come evil thoughts, murder, adultery, sexual immorality, theft, false testimony, slander.” Matthew 15:17-19, NIV.*

- One of the best ways to kill murderousness is to practice mercy and forgiveness, especially with our mouths. Forgiveness after all, is more about affecting the injured than the offender. It is choosing not to hate someone for their wrong and hurt against you.
- In addition, one of the best ways to become a forgiving person is to notice your own need for it. And one of the best ways to notice your own need for it is through an ancient spiritual discipline we call confession. AA calls it a personal inventory. I don't mean a quick, “forgive our many sins” tacked onto the end of a prayer, for we only feel and mean things as specifically as we speak about them. No, God's forgiveness and love are sensed best when we name our sins for what they are. So then, careful confession can help me be a life-giving citizen.
- **C.** A true following of the extend life command means I am also called to be concerned about my neighbor's anger. This is a radical instruction. But look at the text again.
  - V23 There is a subtle shift in the person in this verse. Previously Jesus had been talking about you, your anger, your roots of murder. So we might expect here for him to say, “Now if you're off to worship and you remember that you're mad at your brother for being such a \_\_\_\_\_ last week, go forgive him!” But what Jesus says is, “...if you're off to church and you recall your brother is mad at you, YOU need to go and at least try to cause reconciliation.” That, says Jesus, is more a Sabbath need than a worship service.
    - *“Live in harmony with one another. Do not be proud, but be willing to associate with people of low position. Do not be*



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*conceited. Do not repay anyone evil for evil. Be careful to do what is right in the eyes of everybody. If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone. Do not take revenge, my friends, but leave room for God's wrath, for it is written: "It is mine to avenge; I will repay," says the Lord."*

*Romans 12:16-19, NIV.*

- Hostility is so damaging that getting rid of it even in other people is a god-follower's primary responsibility! So, say you find out someone is perturbed with you. Many of us would shrug off the culprit saying, "That's her problem." But Jesus is saying, "No shrugging off other people's hurts." They might be wrong. Or at least just as at fault. Or maybe confused. You might be innocent! Doesn't matter. Healthy society doesn't happen with people who only care about their own needs and well-being.
- Now let me ask you, "Are you a person who avoids addressing tension you feel with other people? Are you the type that doesn't want to deal with it? Are you always waiting for the other person to come and make things right with you? Would you prefer to write people off?"
- Lets see how the HC wraps it up.
  - *QA107: "Is it enough then that we do not kill our neighbor in any such way? NO. By condemning envy, hatred, and anger God tells us to love our neighbor as ourselves, to be patient, peace-loving, gentle, merciful, and friendly to him, to protect him from harm as much as we can, and to do good even to our enemies."*
- **Conclusion:** I don't know about you, but what we've been considering in our text this morning seems like too much of a mouthful to swallow very well. Maybe like me you're beginning to admit, "I shattered the 6<sup>th</sup> Command millions of times! I have killed, maybe even literally! Who then

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can be saved? I'm hopelessly unable to be the healthy person God desires." And if you are thinking that, you are right. This my friends is why we rejoice in the saving blood of Jesus the Anointed One! Bow your head and turn your sin & life over to him. You've haven't a prayer of a righteousness this grand without his merit being credited to you. You haven't a prayer of defeating murder in your own heart today without his power in your life. You haven't a prayer of arriving at the gates of heaven unblemished unless he cleans you. But he desires you anyway. He invites you home no matter how far you've strayed.

- Jesus came to show us life. Jesus died to earn us life. Jesus rose to establish eternal life!
- *"When you were slaves to sin, you were free from the control of righteousness. What benefit did you reap at that time from the things you are now ashamed of? Those things result in death! But now that you have been set free from sin and have become slaves to God, the benefit you reap leads to holiness, and the result is eternal life. For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord." Romans 6:20-23, NIV.*