

“The Perfect Ten #6: Celebrate Life”
Deuteronomy 5:17 (Exodus 20:13)

Attention: Tomorrow I'm going to the Summer camp where I grew up. Many of my memories of it are attached to “the channel”, an inlet to Lake Luzerne where we would swim.

There were some early fears there, as I did not learn to swim as young as many of my peers.

But later on, it's where I took a Senior Lifesaving Course. Recently I learned that my Dad was once the lifeguard at Peniel.

I wanted to be a lifeguard, a life Saver. I didn't succeed at the aquatic version, but by the grace of God I have done so and continue to try to do so.

The Bible says God wants all people to be Life Savers, but we are not born that way naturally.

In considering “the Perfect Ten”, last week, we began the “second table” with the fifth and seventh, “honor your family”.

ILL: A third-grade Sunday school teacher was giving a lesson on the commandment, “Honor thy father and mother.”

“Now, does anyone know a commandment for brothers and sisters?” she asked.

One sharp girl raised her hand and said, “Thou shalt not kill.”

This reminds us of the challenge of the sixth Commandment. We do not begin life as Life Savers, but as life Takers. God's plan was for us to be Life Savers, and you and I can be by the transforming power of Jesus Christ.

1. You and I come into the world as life takers.

It began with the first family. It took a long time for disease and aging to bring physical death to Adam's family, but the spiritual death in their hearts had tragic results within a few years:

Genesis 4:3-8 (ESV) In the course of time Cain brought to the LORD an offering of the fruit of the ground, and Abel also brought of the firstborn of his flock and of their fat portions. And the LORD had regard for Abel and his offering, but for Cain and his offering he had no regard. So Cain was very angry, and his face fell. The LORD said to Cain, “Why are you angry, and why has your face fallen? If you do well, will you not be accepted? And if you do not do well, sin is crouching at the door. Its desire is for you, but you must rule over it.” Cain spoke to Abel his brother. And when they were in the field, Cain rose up against his brother Abel and killed him.

Notice that murder begins with allowing anger and disappointment to take control.

When you saw what this week's text was, you may have thought, "Well, here is one commandment I don't have to worry about. I have never killed anyone, and have no desire to do so."

We are all opposed to murder. At least we say we are, but there is a murderous spirit in us all.

When God tells us to not murder, He is telling us to destroy our tendency to take life, and to become people who are more interested in giving life to others and saving their lives. Humanly speaking, this is something we are powerless to do.

There is something in the human heart that seeks to take life from those who are stronger, smarter, more athletic, more admired than we are. There is an natural desire to improve our own position or possessions at the expense of others.

As we look at the commandment, consider what God forbids us to do, what He requires us to do, and how it is possible to become what He asks us to be.

2. God requires you and I to stop taking lives and start saving them.

The word for "kill" in Exo. 20:13 and Deu. 5:17 is "ratsach", a comparatively rare word that "usually implies violent killing of a personal enemy" (Hyatt).

ESVSB: It includes both the unlawful or immoral killing of another human being (the specific meaning of the English word "murder") and also causing the death of another human being through careless or negligent behavior (as in Deut. 19:4–6; cf. Num. 35:22–25). This verb is never used in the OT of killing in war. The exact opposite of murder is commanded in Lev. 19:18, "You shall love your neighbor as yourself."

A. The commandment requires us to stop taking lives.

The Baptist Catechism: Question 75: What is forbidden in the sixth commandment?

Answer: The sixth commandment forbids the taking of our own life, or the life of our neighbor unjustly, including whatever acts tend to this loss.

Murder is an offense against the Creator. When Cain murdered Abel, God said, Genesis 4:10-11 (NKJV) "What have you done? The voice of your brother's blood cries out to Me from the ground. So now you *are* cursed from the earth, which has opened its mouth to receive your brother's blood from your hand."

God revealed to Noah the reason:

Genesis 9:6 (NKJV) "Whoever sheds man's blood, By man his blood shall be shed; For in the image of God He made man."

By the time of the New Testament, the Jews had externalized the commandment, so he said, Matthew 5:21-22 (NKJV) "You have heard that it was said to those of old, '*You shall not murder*, and whoever murders will be in danger of the judgment.' But I say to you that whoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgment. And whoever says to his brother, 'Raca!' shall be in danger of the council. But whoever says, 'You fool!' shall be in danger of hell fire."

Jesus is going back to the story of Cain, where the root of murder is anger.

ESVSB: "Anger typically entails a desire to damage or destroy the other person, either in some personal way or literally in the form of murder. Calling someone a fool is closely related to anger, in that it represents a destructive attack on one's character and identity. Thus Jesus warns that the person who violates another person in this grievous way is **liable to the hell of fire.**"

Jesus' understanding of the Sixth Commandment is supported by the Old Testament.

The "Perfect Ten" begin and end with Commandments that pertain to the heart, and not long after Gen. 5:17, we find the saying that most sums up the faith of ancient Israel: Deuteronomy 6:4-6 (NKJV) "Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one! You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your strength. "And these words which I command you today shall be in your heart."

So the Westminster Larger Catechism Question 136, "What are the sins forbidden in the sixth commandment?" Answers, "*The sins forbidden in the sixth commandment are, all taking away the life of ourselves, or of others, except in case of public justice, lawful war, or necessary defense; the neglecting or withdrawing the lawful and necessary means of preservation of life; sinful anger, hatred, envy, desire of revenge; all excessive passions, distracting cares; immoderate use of meat, drink, labor, and recreations; provoking words, oppression, quarreling, striking, wounding, and: Whatsoever else tends to the destruction of the life of any.*"

ILL: On the Sunday nearest Memorial Day, a wreath was placed at the front of a church. During the announcements the minister made his attempt at recognizing the givers: "This wreath is in memory of Corporal Frederick Scott, who was killed in action, by his brothers and sisters."

B. So the commandment requires us to stop taking lives, and start saving them.

The Baptist Catechism: Question 74: "What is required in the sixth commandment?" Answer: "The sixth commandment requires all lawful efforts to preserve our own life and the life of others".

Life is Sacred ... because God made it.

- It was created by God: Gen. 1:27 "So God created man in his own image, ... male and female he created them."

Col. 1:16 "For by him all things were created"

- It is protected by God. Job 10:12 "You gave me life and showed me kindness, and in your providence watched over my spirit."

Psa. 91:11 "For he will command his angels concerning you to guard you in all your ways;"

- Life is valued by God. Isa 49:16 "See, I have engraved you on the palms of my hands"

Jer. 31:3 "The LORD appeared to us in the past, saying: "I have loved you with an everlasting love; I have drawn you with loving-kindness."

Jer. 1:5 ""Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, before you were born I set you apart

John 10:10 "I have come that they may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly."

Life is Sacred ... because God made it.

So Psalm 82:3-4 (NKJV) says, "Defend the poor and fatherless; Do justice to the afflicted and needy. Deliver the poor and needy; Free them from the hand of the wicked."

And Proverbs 24:11-12 (NKJV) Deliver those who are drawn toward death, And hold back those stumbling to the slaughter. If you say, "Surely we did not know this," Does not He who weighs the hearts consider it? He who keeps your soul, does He not know it? And will He not render to each man according to his deeds?"

So the Westminster Larger Catechism, Question 135 "What are the duties required in the sixth commandment?" Answers, "*The duties required in the sixth commandment are, all careful studies, and lawful endeavors, to preserve the life of ourselves and others by resisting all thoughts and purposes, subduing all passions, and avoiding all occasions, temptations, and practices, which tend to the unjust taking away the life of any; by just defense thereof against violence, patient bearing*

of the hand of God, quietness of mind, cheerfulness of spirit; a sober use of meat, drink, physic, sleep, labor, and recreations; by charitable thoughts, love, compassion, meekness, gentleness, kindness; peaceable, mild and courteous speeches and behavior; forbearance, readiness to be reconciled, patient bearing and forgiving of injuries, and requiting good for evil; comforting and succoring the distressed, and protecting and defending the innocent.”

In short, we obey it by protecting the bodies, spirits and reputations of those around us and of ourselves as well.

“A mighty tall order” we might say. Who is up to it?

3. You and I become Life Savers by the Reconciliation of Jesus Christ.

Becoming a life preserver, protector and saver is something that begins in the heart. How do you change your heart? You don't. God changes it.

Begin by admitting we are killers with our minds, our hands, our tongues, our keyboards, our apathy, our materialism, etc.

And when we sin, we participate in the murder of Jesus Christ, the Lord Himself.

III: J.I. Packer in Lord, I Want to Be a Christian: “As murder storywriters assume, and as most of us learn in experience, we have in us capacities for fury, fear, envy, greed, conceit, callousness, and hate which, given the right provocation, could make killers out of us all—baby-batterers or Blue-beards, professional thugs or amateur hit men. G.K. Chesterton's Father Brown explained his method of detection by saying, “You see, it was I who killed all those people”—in the sense that he looked within himself to find the mentality that would produce the crime he was investigating, and did in fact discover it there

“Brown, though fictitious, states fact. When the fathomless wells of rage and hatred in the normal human heart are tapped, the results are fearful. “There but for the grace of God go I.” Only restraining and renewing grace enables anyone to keep the sixth commandment.

The only possible way to stop the killing is through the Savior, Jesus Christ.

The law of God finds us all guilty. We must begin by repenting of all our actions, words and evasions by which we have injured ourselves or others.

Then heed Jesus' prescription: Reconciliation: Matthew 5:23-26 (NKJV) “Therefore if you bring your gift to the altar, and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your gift

there before the altar, and go your way. First be reconciled to your brother, and then come and offer your gift. Agree with your adversary quickly, while you are on the way with him, lest your adversary deliver you to the judge, the judge hand you over to the officer, and you be thrown into prison. Assuredly, I say to you, you will by no means get out of there till you have paid the last penny.”

Reconciliation with others begins with reconciliation with God: Romans 5:10 (NKJV) For if when we were enemies we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, much more, having been reconciled, we shall be saved by His life.

Once reconciled to God through Christ, we become Life Savers, bringing reconciliation: 2 Cor. 5:18 (NKJV) “Now all things are of God, who has reconciled us to Himself through Jesus Christ, and has given us the ministry of reconciliation,”

Life Savers reverse the sin of Cain: 1 John 3:11-12 “For this is the message that you heard from the beginning, that we should love one another, not as Cain who was of the wicked one and murdered his brother. And why did he murder him? Because his works were evil and his brother's righteous.

1 John 3:14-16 (NKJV) We know that we have passed from death to life, because we love the brethren. He who does not love his brother abides in death. Whoever hates his brother is a murderer,

and you know that no murderer has eternal life abiding in him. By this we know love, because He laid down His life for us. And we also ought to lay down our lives for the brethren.

1 John 3:18 (NKJV) My little children, let us not love in word or in tongue, but in deed and in truth.

We do not begin life as Life Savers, but as life Takers. God's plan was for us to be Life Savers, and you and I can become them by the transforming power of Jesus Christ.

Action: Ask God to show you areas where you have “taken life” from others or yourself.

Repent of your sins and failures in such things.

Ask Jesus, in faith, and by His grace, to make you more of a “Life Saver” for His glory.