

THE TENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST – August 1, 4 & 5, 2007
St. Mark's Evangelical Lutheran Church – Watertown, WI

LIFE IS PRECIOUS – Exodus 20:13

We have been told that the law of God is outdated and no longer relevant to our advanced society in the 21st century. As you watch TV, listen to commentators and read various articles on society and culture, you are led to believe that we have evolved and advanced so far that we know much better and are far more intelligent than the primitive peoples of the past. The Ten Commandments we are told no longer apply and need to be updated and changed to conform to the thinking and knowledge of our day.

For the next several weeks we are going to take a look at the second table of God's law, that table which deals with our relationships with one another. We will be listening to sermons and Scripture readings which focus on the fifth through tenth commandments of God's law. Today our focus will be on the fifth commandment, "You shall not murder." As we consider God's Word to us I would like to center our thoughts on this truth – **LIFE IS PRECIOUS**. We know from the Bible that **I) God Created Life; II) Sin Destroyed Life** and **III) God Forbids Murder**.

GOD CREATED LIFE

Life is precious. It is a gift from our heavenly Father and Creator. God is the author of life. We know in the beginning that God created the first human being, Adam, from the dust of the ground and breathed into him the breath of life. He then formed the first woman, Eve, from the rib he had taken out of Adam. He then told them to increase in number and fill the earth. They followed the Lord's command and that's why you and I are here today. If our first parents had not procreated the human race would have ceased to exist. However, human beings have been having children ever since and the human race has continued to grow and increase in number. God intended human beings to live forever in a perfect world and in perfect harmony and union with our Creator and with each other.

Many today still consider life precious and special. Often when a child is born there is great joy and celebration as God gives life to another person and brings that person into this world. The family rejoices and celebrates with the new parents at the birth of their child. We don't want to let go of life either. Death is unnatural and God never intended that any of us should experience death, the ripping of our soul from our body. For centuries people have been looking for the fountain of youth, some source that would allow us to live forever. The Spanish explorer, Ponce de Leon, searched for that fountain which would give you eternal youth in Florida during the early 1500's. Today we don't have people running around looking for a special pool of water that will give us eternal youth. However, you think of how medical science continues to search for ways to eliminate and cure every illness and disease that we might encounter. The purpose is so that we can live longer and longer. Why? Because no one really wants to die. Life really is precious and special and a gift from God as the Apostle Paul said in his sermon on the Aeropagus in Athens, Greece. "The God who made the world and everything in it is the Lord of heaven and earth and does not live in temples built by hands. And he is not served by human hands, as if he needed anything, because he himself gives men life and breath and everything else." (Acts 17:24-25)

SIN DESTROYED LIFE

Even though life is so precious and special, it has been ruined and corrupted. How did that happen? It happened when Satan, a fallen angel, deceived Eve and she ate from the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. She then gave some of that fruit to her husband, Adam, who was standing there beside her and he also knowingly ate from that which God had forbidden them to eat. Immediately upon their disobedience death entered this world just as God had warned them. Life as they had known it was destroyed. They were

filled with guilt and shame. In fear Adam and Eve hid from God when he came into the garden looking for them. The close loving relationship they had with their Creator had been broken. They had destroyed it by not believing what God had said and trusting Satan and his words to them. Their unbelief then led them to eat from the tree they were told not to eat from. The result – death. Now life is a mess. Human relationships are no longer perfect. There is physical pain and suffering. There is selfishness and blaming. Work is no longer pleasant but full of all kinds of difficulties and problems. And there is physical death, the separating of one's soul from his body. Who would have thought that believing one little lie could bring such harm to the human race? But that's exactly what happened.

Our Creator, however, still loves us and he loved Adam and Eve. The first thing that God did when he confronted our first parents and brought them to admit what they had done was to promise them a deliverer. He promised them someone who would destroy the power of Satan and death and obtain for us eternal life. We know who that is. It is the God-Man, Jesus Christ. He has brought life from death. He has brought us immortality after death. He has brought us pardon and forgiveness. He has restored life by his perfect life and innocent death. He now offers forgiveness to everyone and assures us that all who believe have eternal life and will not be condemned, but have crossed over from death to life. Every person's life in this world is their time to come to know and trust Jesus as their Savior and Lord and have everlasting life with him in glory.

GOD FORBIDS MURDER

Our time on this earth is our time of grace. It is our time to come to faith in Jesus as our Savior and be assured of eternal life in heaven. It is our time to grow in our knowledge of Jesus and to be restored in the image of our creator.

Since life is now our time of grace, God says to each and every one of us, "you shall not murder." We do not have the authority to take someone else's life or our own life. We do not have the right to bodily hurt or harm ourselves or others. Rather we are to help each other in all our needs.

This is not the culture in which we are living in 2007. For over 30 years we have legally murdered the unborn in this country and called it pro-choice. The longer this has been done and accepted, the less we as Christians seem to be appalled at what is going on. We just accept it and say it's the mother's right to choose, rather than clearly and simply saying, "Abortion is murder." Now that we have lived for a generation with the legal murder of the unborn we are turning our attention to the elderly and terminally ill. We are being told that it is humane to put someone out of their misery and kill them if they have a terminal disease. And why not? We have been told for decades that we are merely animals that have evolved from a lower life form to a higher one. When a dog becomes ill and there is no cure, we put him to sleep. When a horse breaks its leg and is no longer useful, we shoot him. So why don't we do the same with human beings? Just this past week an elderly gentleman in his 80's was given five months in jail for stabbing his wife to death while she was in a hospice center dying of cancer. Our laws no longer seem to see this as such a great crime. In addition to the murder of others we see the great number of suicides that continue to take place. Suicide is glorified in some of the popular songs of our day and then when youth who listen to this music take their own lives, people are shocked. Why? They have been convinced that life isn't worth living. Life is useless and meaningless so you might as well end it all. These are all the lies of the devil who as the Bible says is a liar and the father of lies and he has been a murderer since the beginning.

Today more and more of us are being faced with difficult and troubling questions regarding life and death. This occurs when we have to make decisions about life support systems for ourselves or for an elderly parent or relative. We don't want to murder our loved one nor do we wish to impede and hinder their dying and leaving this world to be with our Savior in heaven. At such times it is good to sit down and talk with the doctors and your pastors about the situation and then prayerfully make a decision with the information that you have to go on. But always remember our life and times are in God's hands. We may choose to do one thing and God may still do something else. It is good for us as families when we are well and healthy to discuss these issues with

one another so that we know what our loved one's wishes are. Also so that we don't have brothers and sisters fighting and accusing one another of trying to end their mother or father's life.

Another issue that we often face today is hurting and harming our bodies through the abuse and misuse of drugs, alcohol and food. Our bodies are the temples of the Holy Spirit and we are to take care of them as best as we are able. Now that does not mean if I exercise carefully, watch what I eat, don't abuse drugs and alcohol; that I won't fall over dead of a heart attack or stroke. That is not the reason why I am taking care of my body. I am doing it in obedience to God's command because he loves me and he knows what is best for me. But I also realize that God can take me from this life suddenly from a heart attack or stroke or I may die of the infirmities of old age or from some terminal disease. All that is in God's hands not mine.

Another aspect of the fifth commandment is helping others in their bodily needs. We saw an excellent example of the keeping of the fifth commandment this past week when the I-35W bridge collapsed into the Mississippi River in Minneapolis. People rushed to help those who were in danger. They didn't know these people. They had never met them. But they cared. They were concerned about saving the lives of others. That's a keeping of the fifth commandment. Too often we only hear about those incidents where people see someone hurt and bleeding and pass by and don't help.

In our day and age we need to remember this command of God; "you shall not murder." It still applies. Life is precious. God has given our life on this earth as our time to become connected with him and come to know true life, life that is everlasting. God help all of us to value and treasure life. For Jesus Christ died for every human being on this planet and his desire is that all come to the knowledge of the truth and be saved.

Amen.