

“Do not Kill” 6th Commandment

Exodus 20:13 Matthew 5: 21 -26

On Friday a woman in Belgium went on trial for killing her friend.

(Yahoo news 09/24/2010)

It's a story all over the news in Europe.

Apparently two women friends both wanted the love of their skydiving instructor. One weekend the younger woman - a teacher 26 years old cut the pull cords on her friend's parachute.

The next week the older woman plunged to her death as she parachuted from 14 000 feet up.

This story reminds us again of the power of anger.

Everyday the news casts tell us about the devastating results of uncontrolled anger that often results in death. Stories of Murder, Suicide, abortion, weapons of mass destruction, war, terrorists, capital punishment, road rage, children killing parents, husband killing wife, gangs an drive by shooting, and now this woman killing her rival.

On Friday night Donna, and Adriana and I visited the youth authority prison.

As we shared the bible and pizza with them we asked some of these youth inmates, “what is the most important thing you have learned in prison.” The number one answer was dealing with my anger. Learning anger management. For many of these youths learning to deal with anger will save their lives.

This anger that kills began with the first family.

The bible tells us that in the beginning, after sin entered the world, Adam and Eve started a family.

Cain was their first born son and
Abel was his younger brother.

Adam and Eve put a lot of hope on their children.

They hoped that they would make them proud,
that they would bring love and greater
community to their broken lives.

They hoped that somehow through their children
God would undo the curse of sin,
the curse of their pain and disappointment and failure.

But one day, the Bible tells us (Genesis 4:5),

Cain, the older brother, became very angry and
his whole complexion changed.

And God came to Cain and said, “Why are you so angry?
Watch out, Cain, with that kind of anger in your heart
sin is crouching at your door.

Sin is ready to take over your life and ruin it.

You must master this anger (7).

You need to deal with this anger or you will
explode and ruin your life and the life of others for good.

In other words, God came to Cain and said “do not murder.”

But Cain didn't listen to God; he didn't deal with the anger.
He harbored it and nursed it and held on to it.
And by holding on to that anger he allowed a
terrible sin to crouch at the door of his heart.
And one day when they were in the field
Cain murdered his younger brother Abel (8).
And that started the cycle of anger, and revenge, and
violence and murder that we still see today.

All of us in our heart of hearts long for friends and
community and harmony in our relationships.
We desire to have relationships that bring joy and intimacy and love.
One of the most pervasive problems and sources of
unhappiness in life today is loneliness and lovelessness.
The other day I spoke with a person who told me she
had never had a friend in her life,
but wanted one with all her heart. How sad?
One of the youth inmates at the prison on Friday asked us if
we could maybe visit him on the weekend or on a Sunday after church.
No one ever visits him, his family doesn't care and doesn't love him.

To be without friends
without a community to build you up and
give you what you need is awful?
Friends are such a delight. Friends make our joys
more joyful and our sorrows easier to bear.

God gives us the Ten Commandments not as killjoys
but as a guide to help us
find the things we really need and want and hope for.
We all long for life and joy and happiness.
We all want close family and friends and community.
That is how God made us.
And God in his Word gives us directions for finding this
true friendship, this true community,
this true family, this true peace.
And God says:
this is how you will find what you are looking for.
Love God above all and love your neighbor
(your spouse, your parents, your children,
your brothers and sisters, the people you work with
and live with) love them as you love yourself.

The Ten Commandments are divided into these two tables
– these two sets of instructions.
Four directions showing us how to love God,
and the six directions – six commandments –
helping us love our neighbor.
Love begins at home by honoring and respecting our
parents. And from there love multiplies and

ripples its effects into the ways we deal with
our brothers and sisters and neighbors.
Do you want a few good friends?
Do you hope for a solid supportive loving community?
Then God says, "Do not murder." Do not go the way of Cain.
The way of Cain leads to a life of lonely
wandering and empty lovelessness.
Allowing anger to have its way in your heart could end in
killing your father or cutting the cords on your friends parachute.

Now, most of us cannot relate to actually killing someone.
We may understand the emotion, and maybe even the reaction.

The bible, however, means more than
actually taking someone's life when it speaks about us not killing.
When the bible tells us not to kill
it teaches us that life, especially human life, is sacred.
We are all created in the image of God.
When God created us he breathed into us his own breath.
We have something of God's spirit in us.
The life within us, the life in our neighbor, is sacred.
And not only is that life sacred;
if we nurture that life and respect that life
we will find friends and love and community.

In his commentary on this commandment
Jesus says in Matthew 5:21,
"You have heard that it was said to the people long ago
"Do not murder".
Anyone who murders is subject to judgment.
But I tell you anyone who is angry with their brother
or sister will be subject to the judgment of the court.
And anyone who says to his or her brother or sister Raca,
- you moron, you jerk – is answerable to the Supreme Court.
And anyone who says "You fool – you idiot – will
be in danger of the fire of hell."

Notice, that in Jesus explanation of this commandment
he shows that there is an escalation moving from
the serious to the more serious.
Jesus starts with nursing our anger.
Then he moves to the casual sarcastic remark, Raca.
And then he moves to the deliberate insult, you idiot.

And Jesus says, there is also an escalation of the
consequences and the degree of judgment.
Nursing anger is subject to the judgment of the lower court.
Uttering a sarcastic remark is subject to the
judgment of the Supreme Court.
And speaking an intentional insult is subject
to the judgment of hell.

“You shall not murder ... but I say to you.”

Jesus is not saying that nursing anger or uttering a sarcasm or insulting remark is the same as murder.

Anger is not murder. Sarcasm is not murder.

Anger and insults are ugly symptoms of a desire to get rid of someone who is in the way.

They are forms of character assassination.

What Jesus is saying is that behind, beneath, and before the act of murder is the act of nursing anger, which spills over into sarcastic remarks and then insulting words.

Jesus is telling us that murder and violence comes out of a deep reservoir of unresolved anger, unmastered anger.

Jesus is telling us that nursing anger is just as displeasing to God as murder, just as damaging to our relationships as murder, and just as deserving judgment as murder.

In the church's text book on the Christian faith

The Catechism asks this question on page 911

Does this commandment refer only to killing? Q&A 106

And the answer is No.

By forbidding murder God teaches us that he hates the root of murder:

envy hatred, anger and vindictiveness.

In God's sight all such are murder.

What is God asking us then in this sixth commandment? Q&A 105

God is asking I do not to belittle, insult, hate, or kill my neighbor – not in my thoughts, my words, my looks, or my gestures, and certainly not in my actual deeds.

Is it enough then that we do not kill our neighbor? Q&A 107

No. By condemning envy, hatred and anger God is telling us to love our neighbors as ourselves, to be patient, peace-loving, gentle, merciful, and friendly to them, to protect them from harm as much as we can, and to do good even to our enemies.

So what do we do about the anger and the tendency in our hearts toward violence?

Jesus gives us two examples of what we are to do.

1. Therefore (because of the severe consequences of anger) when you are offering your gift at the altar (when you are worshipping, when you come to church), and there remember that your brother or sister has

something against you, (is angry with you in any way)
leave your gift there (forget about worshipping).

First go to be reconciled to your brother or sister;
then come and offer your gift.

2. Settle matters quickly with your adversary
who has something against you.

Reconcile with them while you are on the way to
court or you may end up in prison.

I tell you, says Jesus,
you will not get out till you have paid the last penny.

Leave worship, says Jesus, to deal with
the person who is angry with us.

That is how serious Jesus takes our unresolved anger.
Because uncontrolled anger turns into a poison that
destroys friends and ruins community.

Seek reconciliation quickly before
the sun goes down on your anger.

Deal with anger before it turns into a reservoir
of bitterness and resentment.

Let me end by suggesting four ways we can
follow this direction God gives us.

Four sure ways of finding true friends and true community.
Ask the Holy Spirit to help you

ONE: Reprogram your mind – change your perspective about people.

See everyone as persons created in the image of God
So respect everyone, respect their life and do
everything you can to enhance their lives.

Jesus said pray for your enemies and
those who persecute you.

SECOND: Revisit your growing up experiences and your
home, your family of origin.

Deal with the anger that lives in your heart.

Make that a top priority.

Maybe read a book like Smedes Forgive and forget.

THIRD: Pray for the ability to forgive.

Forgiving is often humanly impossible. Pray for a miracle.

Maybe get someone to help you to forgive and let go of
the hurts and disappointments you have experienced.

Sometimes these growing up experiences go deep.

Confess your anger, acknowledge your tendency to violence.

FOUR: And finally seek healing. Seek healing of the heart.

Seek healing of that place where sarcastic remarks
are born and where insults originate.

Seek healing of those memories where anger and violence
were directed against us and scarred our soul.

Pray for healing.

And for that I suggest we go to the cross of Jesus.
The cross is a source of healing and forgiveness.
Jesus was the target of much unresolved, unmastered,
uncontrolled anger.
People made sarcastic remarks about him, insulted him,
Called him a moron and an idiot.
They directed their violent emotion towards him.
they hit him, falsely accused him and finally
they murdered him.
Yet when he hung on the cross
Jesus prayed to God and said,
“Father, forgive them for
they do not know what they are doing.”
Jesus puts us in touch with a power
that is able to change our hearts.

At the cross God breaks the power of anger and
our tendency to a violent response.
At the cross God takes on the insults
and the shot gun wounds, and the missiles,
we desire to hurl at others.
And by his wounds, the bible tells us, (Isaiah 53)
we are healed.

Are you harboring any resentment against anyone today?
Are you holding a grudge?
Are you letting anger fester?
Are you bitter about how someone treated you?

Deal with it now. NOW.
Do not let it crouch at the door of you heart.
Bring it to the cross, bring it to our friend Jesus.

It is the failure to deal with anger and
our tendency to violence within
that makes our world such a volatile place,
such a dangerous and scary place.

We may not be able to do anything about
the violence out there.
But we can do something about
the anger and the violence in here.
We can bring it to the cross.

Begin Praying right now.