

**Sun., April 19**

**2020 Ten Commandments Series:** Set Free to Live Free: The 10 Commandments

Second Series: Love Others

Second Series Memory Verse: "I will always obey your law, for ever and ever. I will walk about in freedom, for I have sought out your precepts." -Psalm 119:43-44

Second Series Text: "The second is like it: You must love your neighbor as you love yourself.

All the Law and the Prophets depend on these two commands." -Matthew 22:39-40

Second Series Scripture: Exodus 20:1-21 and Psalm 16

Message: Live Free: Do Not Murder

Memory Verse: "The second is like it: You must love your neighbor as you love yourself. All the Law and the Prophets depend on these two commands." -Matthew 22:39-40

Scripture: Genesis 1:26-17, Exodus 20:13

Blurb: The Sixth Commandment is just two words in the Hebrew, "no" and "murder." Yet these two words together change our whole frame of life itself. This Sunday we'll cross political, ethical, social, and societal boundaries and enter into the realm of controversy. God's path of life, however, provides a way through, if we open ourselves to listen!

**Welcome:** -Pastor David

**Memory Verse:** -Pastor David

"The second is like it: You must love your neighbor as you love yourself. All the Law and the Prophets depend on these two commands." -Matthew 22:39-40

**Worship Music Set:** -Sanctify

*I Love It When You Speak to Me*

*Hymn of the Holy Spirit*

*Show Me How to Live*

Worship Prayer -Pastor Andrew

**Apostles' Creed:** "My Version of the Apostles' Creed, by Aimire Lloyd"

**"I believe in God the maker of heaven and earth, the powerful and strong, the father and almighty.**

**I believe in Jesus Christ His son our Lord: who was brought down by the Holy Spirit and born of the virgin Mary, was tortured by Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died, and was buried; He descended into hell. On the third day He was lifted from the dead; He ascended into heaven and sits on the right hand of Father God Almighty; from there He will come to judge the living and the dead.**

**I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy catholic church, the rebirth of the body, the community of saints, the forgiveness of our sin or wrong doings, and life everlasting. Amen."**

**Offering**

**Grow Moment:** Spiritual Assessment Tool - Zoom video (Teresa Gruber)

**Prayers:** -Pastor Andrew

**Generational Bridge:** "Lemuel the Lion" -Pastor Andrew & Vicky

**Call to Focus:** “Psalm 16:1-2, 5-11” -Pastor David

L: Protect me, God, because I take refuge in you.

**P: I say to the Lord, “You are my Lord. Apart from you, I have nothing good.”**

L: You, Lord, are my portion, my cup; you control my destiny.

**P: The property lines have fallen beautifully for me; yes, I have a lovely home.**

L: I will bless the Lord who advises me; even at night I am instructed in the depths of my mind.

**P: I always put the Lord in front of me; I will not stumble because He is on my right side.**

L: That’s why my heart celebrates and my mood is joyous; yes, my whole body will rest in safety.

**P: You won’t abandon my life to the grave; you won’t let your faithful follower see the pit.**

L: You teach me the way of life. In your presence is total celebration.

**P: Beautiful things are always in your right hand.**

**Message:** 10 Commandments “Live Free: Do Not Murder”

Ten Commandments: Set Free to Live Free: Love Others. Genesis 1:26-27 “Then God said, ‘Let us make humanity in our image to resemble us so that they may take charge of the fish of the sea, the birds in the sky, the livestock, all the earth, and all the crawling things on earth.’ God created humanity in God’s own image, in the divine image God created them, male and female God created them.”

Today, we decide who lives and who dies!

So, we’re right in the middle of the Ten Commandments. Again, these are not legal rules we must obey in order to please God. This is the path that God offers for us to live well. They come as a gift to us from God, who wants to give us our best possible lives. Hear that again: *they come to us from God*. We don’t get to decide if we like this way or if it feels right. We claim God knows best, has a wisdom greater than ours. We trust God!

So far, we’ve stayed friends, you and I. We even got through last week together. But today, and the next four weeks, things get dicey. We hit “the short ones.” My message today is on just two words. Now, it’s a commandment that seems obvious. Nearly every culture contains this commandment. But when we stop to let God in, He takes these short ones and cuts us to the heart.

So, church, I ask for you to open your ears, your hearts, and your lives to God’s Holy Spirit. I will try my best to present what I believe is God’s truth. But its not really about what I think. That doesn’t matter. What matters is embracing what God says is true. I need to ask you to be open, be willing to be challenged. Let the Holy Spirit use my humble attempt at preaching today to speak to you.

You know, perhaps it is best that we’re not gathered all in person right now. When you get mad at me, you can shut me up by simply clicking the end button. And, I don’t have to watch you get up and leave in protest!

So, Exodus 20:13, “Don’t murder.”

First word: “don’t.” God claims there is a right way and there are wrong ways. We can’t just do whatever we want, if we want God’s life. Things are not necessarily the way we may want them to be. If you don’t turn the steering wheel in the car, you will crash into the tree.

In the movie *Indiana Jones and the Last Crusade*, they are on a quest to locate the fabled Holy Grail. But they must go through a set of protective traps. The first clue is that “only the penitent man will pass.” At the last second, Indy reasons a penitent man is *humble before God*, kneels before God. Indy kneels down, and the decapitating saw blade misses him.

This is a great metaphor for how we are to receive God’s instruction. We humbly accept that what God says will spare us the trap of death. If we argue and resist, we suffer the consequences. If we accept and comply, we are spared. We need to say this again and again, “God’s path is my best life.” Say that with me, “God’s path is my best life.” Ultimately, it’s about trusting God and obeying His “don’ts.”

Now, if you’re still with me, we can go to the next word: murder.

Hebrew, like English, has two distinct words: one for “kill” and another for “murder.” The English and Hebrew word for murder means manslaughter, violent and unauthorized killing, personal vengeance and revenge, and so wanton disregard for life of another as to snuff it out.

The word here, in the Ten Commandments, is not “kill.” It’s murder. All modern translations render this correctly. Yet back in 1610 when the King James Bible came out, the word “kill” generally meant murder. So, they used it correctly back then, but over the centuries our language has evolved.

So, the commandment, actually, is “Don’t murder.” It doesn’t prohibit the ethical killing of other humans. If God had meant that, He would have used the other Hebrew word that meant that. So, this commandment does not anchor pacifism. And, from my study, I do not find radical pacifism in the Bible. Some Christians do, but from what I can tell, they select just a few passages from the New Testament to make their claim, and they also ignore others. Now, I support an individual’s religious right to pacifism. But as a Minister of the Gospel, I must say, the Bible doesn’t argue for it.

The Bible does allow certain instances for killing another human. These include self defense when necessary, a soldier under proper orders fighting a just war, and an agent of the government keeping order (in our day, think of a police officer returning gunfire).

How about suicide? Physician-assisted end of life, euthanasia, abortion, or even acts of terror to bring a greater good? Are these allowed killings or murder? Okay, we need to look at a biblical view of why murder is wrong. Time to reorient our thinking.

We live in a culture based on situational ethics. There are no absolute truths that bind everyone. It may be right for you, but not for me. I determine what is right, based on my situation. And the greatest good is the individual. Whatever preserves the individual life is right. If I need to do something in order to live, then, it’s justifiable, if it doesn’t harm anyone. If I need to do it in order to thrive and be happy—to my understanding—then it is right for me. This is culture. Not the Bible.

In the Bible, when God addresses the Israelites, He does so from the top of Mount Sinai. He claims that He is a higher authority than the individual human life. He claims a justice, a holiness, a rightness, that individuals must bow to. In fact, in extreme cases, when individual humans violate that rightness, they face death. So, culture says individual human on top, everything else conforms to her. God says, His holiness is on top, and everything else—including individual human life—conforms to it.

Our greatest struggle today, I think, in American culture, is that we do not comprehend the higher authority of God’s holiness. We are baffled by higher claims than the individual. We are like drivers of cars who fail to see the tree in front of us. We deny it’s reality. We claim that we can drive wherever we want, not matter what. If going that way makes me fulfilled, then going that way is right, tree or not.

God is trying to point out the tree! This is the path of life. It takes you *around* the tree! The tree is more real than your desire to drive that way while wishing there were no tree. Don’t go that way!

God is explaining that He is life. He is the author of life. He is the giver and remains sovereign over life itself. Remember His name? Yahweh! What is that name? It is life! It is the verb of being. It is existence. Through Him, and only Him, all life came into being Trust Him on all matters about life!

Now, all living things are sacred. They get their life from God. So, God says, respect all of creation. Yes, you can kill grass, and mosquitoes, and snakes, and fish, and chickens, and cattle, but you must do so respectfully. We must care for creation, be stewards of it. It is in our charge.

Human life, however, is different. Humans are given a special gift. Our lives are made uniquely in the image of God Himself. And that changes everything! People are image-bearers of God. We are to treat human life in a separate category.

The founder of P.E.T.A., People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals, had a famous phrase: “A pig is a dog, is a rat, is a boy.” That’s not biblical. I love animals, don’t get me wrong. But only people have souls and go to heaven. No matter how much you love Fido, no dogs go to heaven!

So, for God, there is something greater than the human life at stake. Yes, that's what I said. Our American ears have a hard time hearing that. More important is God's image in that human life...for that is why God made humans! To murder a person is not only to do violence against the person, it is to do violence against the God who made her. Murder is so bad, because it is killing God's image.

This is why evolution cannot be how God created people. God's image does not arise out of the struggle for survival. It's not the strong who survive, the survival of the fittest. No. God's bequeaths His image special on people and calls all humans to respect and preserve it. God commands it to be protected for the weak, the poor, the elderly, the infirm, the struggling, the burdens on society. Without the Bible, I struggle to find any decent basis for justice, equality, dignity, and value for human life.

God is the author of life. We must not intervene to shorten human life. We kill a horse with a broken leg, calling it a "humane killing." *But, there is no such thing as humane killing of a human life.* Yes, perhaps for the physical body, to spare it pain and disgrace, but the body also has a soul. It has God's image attached to it's life. So, we must preserve it!

Yes, it is difficult that God allows some people to suffer, terribly. But don't forget...God draws close to those who suffer. God helps those in pain and suffering. God carries them. Avoiding pain is not the greatest good. Honoring God, and God's image in people, is greater.

Now, does this mean we must prolong life as long as humanly possible? No. The body does wear out. We can let it go. But it is not in our authority to hasten it's ending, even when it may make sense to do so. I see no biblical basis for euthanasia, or doctor-assisted ending of life, or suicide. Suicide is always awful, and it is never God's plan. But we must also realize, people who resort to it are suffering in a way that they are not in their right mind. I believe that God does not hold the individual responsible when we are not in our right minds. People who tragically commit suicide, I believe, can go to heaven.

But also, it is actually *because* of the special sanctity of human life that God does allow and even mandates the killing of humans. Self defense must protect the sanctity of God's image in the innocent life of the victim. Just war is killing to protect God's image and intended flourishing of life for all humankind. Government action is killing to protect God's authority for people to live. It is always tragic. It must always be the last option. But in extreme cases it is justified and required.

In Genesis 9:6, in the covenant God makes with Noah after the flood, God enacts capital punishment for the most egregious of sins: "Whoever murders another human, by humans shall his blood be shed, for God made humans in His own image." The sanctity of God's image in humans must be honored.

Now, such extreme and tragic punishment must come only by proper authority. God charges the state with the authority of capital punishment. Romans 13:1-4: "Let every person be subject to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and those that exist have been instituted by God. Therefore whoever resists the authorities resists what God has appointed, and those who resist will incur judgment." Now, remember, Paul is writing to Christians who are being persecuted and killed by their governments! "For rulers are not a terror to good conduct, but to bad. Would you have no fear of the one who is in authority? Then do what is good, and you will receive his approval, for he is God's servant for your good. But if you do wrong, be afraid, for he does not bear the sword in vain." The sword here is capital punishment.

All authority comes from God, and is under God. The government's job is to bring justice and create the context so God's sacred life and image can flourish. Now, governments are imperfect and mistakes are made. But God still gives governments capital punishment in order to push back vice, to quell human sin, to curb violence, to subdue injustice. People are sinful, and discipline—up to capital punishment—are given to governments by God in order to promote overall welfare. Yes, you can point out abuses and exceptions. But that still doesn't nullify the whole. You may prefer forgiveness and second chances, but God mandates punishment in order to protect the holiness of His image in people!

Jesus tells *individuals* to turn the other cheek, but not governments. To governments, God demands they keep justice.

Same with just war. War is always bad. But, if God is holy and just, and people are sinners and do evil, then there are times it is regrettably necessary to stop and push back evil through war.

Biblical scholars have compiled what is called “just war” protocol to show biblical cases for when war may be necessary. 1. Sanctioned by a legitimate authority, a government, not just a band of rebels. 2. It’s defensive, not offensive. 3. It must be for a noble cause...not just economic benefit. 4. It must be proportional...you can’t drop a nuclear bomb to take out just one building. 5. You must not target innocent lives. 6. It must preserve more lives than it takes. And 7. It must be the last resort.

Now, there are faithful Christians on all sides of the war issue. But, I must say, from my reading of the Bible, it does sanction just war.

God is the Father of life. Satan is the father of murder. It’s a demonic issue, not just a social issue. Jesus says in John 8:44 of a certain group that wants to murder Him, “You’re like your father. Your father is the devil and he’s been a murderer since the beginning.” God makes life, and Satan takes life. Don’t take life...unless you have no other recourse. In Proverbs 8:36 God says, “All who hate me love death.”

So now, I must tackle one more: abortion.

Once again, there are faithful Christians on all sides of this issue. But I must tell you, from my reading of Scripture, I find that the Sixth Commandment prohibits most abortions.

Now, before you hit the “end” button, I want to ask you to hear what the Holy Spirit may be trying to say to you.

Regardless of what science or medicine may suggest, Scripturally, life begins at conception. Psalm 51:5 says that we are sinful *from our mother’s womb*. So, before we are born, we are already a human and sinner. Psalm 139:13-14 says, “For you, [O Lord] formed my inward parts; you knitted me together *in my mother’s womb*.” We’re not just a fetus: God’s direct involvement forms us in our mother’s wombs. Isaiah and Jeremiah both tell us that they were called for their prophetic ministries from their mother’s womb. Luke 1:15 tells the story of how the pregnant Mary goes to meet the pregnant Elizabeth, and the baby in Elizabeth’s womb—John the Baptist—jumps to announce the presence of the Savior in Mary’s womb. Both are already people.

Just two chapters after the Ten Commandments is this law: if someone harms a pregnant woman, causing her child to die, that person is to suffer capital punishment. Scripturally life begins at conception.

We have that law, you know, on our books, too. If I shoot a pregnant woman, I would be charged with two accounts of murder!

Now, objections: What about birth defects? Well, what about them? The abnormalities of the body do not affect the image of God on the soul. Raise them up as your beloved child! The church, and even the state, offer assistance, for they do have extraordinary struggles in life. But struggles are not reason to judge the worth of a life. God lifts us and helps us in our struggles. Talk to the parent of a Down Syndrom child. Look them in the eye and tell them that their child does not bear God’s image!

What about terrible conditions in the home, the parents being too young, too poor, too abusive? This is looking at things only from our human eyes, not God’s. Our God is present. He promises to step in the gap, provide help. No, He may not take the struggle away or even ease the pain. He may allow humans to be terrible and do terrible things. But that is not a reason to end life. It may not be easy, or preferred, but we all know people who had difficult beginnings who have thrived in life. Some say, it’s better if that child not grow up in hell. But biblically, there is no such thing as humane killing of humans.

What about rape? I realize that as a man I cannot adequately address this. But as a pastor to rape victims, I do know that God can bring healing. Life is always sacred, regardless of its inception. And I can say that biblically, it is not about the right of the woman over her body. Yes, I just said this! Now hear me, this in no way means that men have rights over a woman’s body! But this is about God’s right

over a woman's body freely given to God. We—women and men—give ourselves to God and choose to live God's way. We give our bodies as offerings to God. We conform our bodies to God's plan, not to our personal choices. Wow, even across the video I can sense the resistance to this. Anyone still watching? I might be by myself! This just so flies in the face of how we think.

Is abortion ever permitted? For sure: if there are two lives at stake—not welfare of the mother, the life of the mother. Life verses life. But which one should be saved? That is a choice each mother must make. The rest of us, if we are pro-life, need to seriously consider giving ourselves to provide foster care and adoptions.

Now, I realize that of the few viewers still watching, there are probably viewers who have had unnecessary abortions or have assisted in abortions—fathers, this includes you!

I must say, you have broken the Sixth Commandment. But, so have I. You see, my wife and I used birth control in our early marriage. I didn't bother to learn how it worked, how it aborted any fertilized egg in her system. I don't know for sure, but I could have more kids waiting in heaven!

You also need to hear, that we are all equally guilty before God. And what's more, Jesus says that if we hate our brother, we have committed murder! (Matthew 5:22) Wow! This commandment is not about identifying offenders, or producing guilt. It is about protecting the best way of life, and that way is treating all human life as sacred. Murder is never allowed. It is evil. It is sin. And sin brings death.

But it is not unforgivable. We all need to hear the Good News! God offers you forgiveness.

God became the man Jesus Christ, and He started as a baby in His mother's womb. He grew up, and then gave Himself to hang on a cross and be murdered. And as He was earning our forgiveness even for the most egregious of sins, He specifically forgives murder. While on the cross, Jesus looked up into heaven and said, "Father, forgive them," those who crucified Him. Jesus died so that murderers—you and I—could be forgiven and changed.

Then, He rose, conquering death! God's final word is resurrection! It is new life, redeemed life.

Some of us, we need to get honest before God. We may think this is the one commandment that we have not violated. But I have. Most likely you, too! And until we get honest and confess it to God and ask for forgiveness, the painful consequences of this sin will drag us off the path of life. You don't lose the path of life if you break these commandments. You lose it if you don't confess your sin and seek forgiveness. Then, the Holy Spirit comes into you to remove death's sting in your life, makes you whole again, and gives you the power to live differently in the future. Then, you have the ability to not violate this path of life going forward.

This message is not about pointing a finger at you saying, "guilty!" It is pointing a finger up and saying, "Seek forgiveness!" It can be yours. God wants you on His path of life. He has set you free so that you can live free!

Happy Easter! Christ is risen! He is risen indeed!

Amen.

**Closing Song:** *Take My Life and Let It Be* -Sanctify

**Announcements:** -Pastor David

**Memory Verse:** -Pastor David

"The second is like it: You must love your neighbor as you love yourself. All the Law and the Prophets depend on these two commands." -Matthew 22:39-40

**Benediction:** -Pastor David