

Week Four – March 5, 2018

The Fifth Commandment

Commandments are statements which direct us to do or, not to do something. Martin Luther tries to help us look at The Ten Commandments using positive language, as this is how we are to come to know the loving nature of God.

THE FIFTH COMMANDMENT

Do not murder

What does this mean?

We should fear and love God, so that we neither endanger nor harm our neighbor, but instead, help and support them in all of life's needs.

Luke 10: 25-35

²⁵ Just then a lawyer stood up to test Jesus. "Teacher," he said, "what must I do to inherit eternal life?"

²⁶ He said to him, "What is written in the law? What do you read there?" ²⁷ He answered, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your strength, and with all your mind; and your neighbor as yourself." ²⁸ And he said to him, "You have given the right answer; do this, and you will live."

²⁹ But wanting to justify himself, he asked Jesus, "And who is my neighbor?" ³⁰ Jesus replied, "A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and fell into the hands of robbers, who stripped him, beat him, and went away, leaving him half dead. ³¹ Now by chance a priest was going down that road; and when he saw him, he passed by on the other side. ³² So likewise a Levite, when he came to the place and saw him, passed by on the other side. ³³ But a Samaritan while traveling came near him; and when he saw him, he was moved with pity. ³⁴ He went to him and bandaged his wounds, having poured oil and wine on them. Then he put him on his own animal, brought him to an inn, and took care of him.

³⁵ The next day he took out two denarii, ^[k] gave them to the innkeeper, and said, 'Take care of him; and when I come back, I will repay you whatever more you spend.'

³⁶ Which of these three, do you think, was a neighbor to the man who fell into the hands of the robbers?" ³⁷ He said, "The one who showed him mercy." Jesus said to him, "Go and do likewise."

Matthew 25: 31-40

³¹ "When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, then he will sit on the throne of his glory. ³² All the nations will be gathered before him, and he will separate people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats, ³³ and he will put the sheep at his right hand and the goats at the left. ³⁴ Then the king will say to those at his right hand, 'Come, you that are blessed by my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world; ³⁵ for I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, ³⁶ I was naked and you gave me clothing, I was sick and you took care of me, I was in prison and you visited me.' ³⁷ Then the righteous will answer him, 'Lord, when was it that we saw you hungry and gave you food, or thirsty and gave you something to drink? ³⁸ And when was it that we saw you a stranger and welcomed you, or naked and gave you clothing? ³⁹ And when was it that we saw you sick or in prison and visited you?' ⁴⁰ And the king will answer them, 'Truly I tell you, just as you did it to one of the least of these who are members of my family, you did it to me.'

Pastor's Commentary

1- It seems to me that in all the Commandments/instructions God gives concerning how we are to live together as human beings, the driving characteristic that God has in place is mercy, mercy in dealing with each other, treating each other as we would like to be treated, treating each other as God treats

each of us. There are three parables of Jesus which articulate how I understand God, my response to God with my life, and usually where I judge myself most critically when I fall short. The two I cite above, “The Good Samaritan” in Luke 10 and “The Judgement of the Nations” in Matthew 25, I join with the Parable of the “Prodigal Son” in Luke 15 as foundational for me, Chris Christopher. Most, if not all my theological underpinnings for my response to God’s love for me find their home in these three parables.

2- As I contemplate Luther’s meaning for this commandment, he teaches us that “do not murder” encompasses not just not causing physical harm to our neighbor, but to take notice and appropriate action of our neighbor’s overall welfare. That the sacredness of life includes not just the physical allowance to exist, but is the call to be concerned with their life circumstances and situations. It seems to me that we are called to do nothing less than but to help them with opportunities for betterment of their life situation. And that is what being a neighbor in the Good Samaritan does for anyone in need, even someone different or someone we do not know. (The Samaritan, who was a foreigner, is the one who fulfilled the commandment’s intention. FYI, Samaritans were despised, hated by Jews, and vice versa).

3- The word for “stranger” in Matthew 25:35 above is the Greek word “xenos”. It literally means “foreigner, alien, and/or non-resident”. This understanding expands the definition of “stranger” for me tremendously. In it, I would include “different from me by language, customs, religion, skin color, and, so far as the modern usage of alien goes, legal and illegal.”

Ponder This

1- Does Luther’s explanation of this commandment help or confuse you? How/why?

2- How would you define the word “neighbor” in Luther’s explanation? Is it consistent with the definition of the lawyer given in the Parable of the Good Samaritan above? How does that definition impact your understanding of Luther’s explanation?

3- In the Matthew 25 parable above, the “Judgement of the Nations” does the King’s description of those welcomed by their deeds into the Kingdom fit Luther’s explanation of helping and supporting our neighbors in all of life’s needs? Why or why not?

4- In that same parable, the King says “I was a stranger and you welcomed me.” What does the word “welcome” mean to you in the context of the parable?

5- In the Good Samaritan, Jesus ends the discussion with the lawyer by saying, “Go and do likewise” referring to being a neighbor as one who shows mercy to strangers. How can you be better, more faithful at showing mercy to “xenos”? How can Grace be more faithful in this?

6- Using Luther’s 4 Strands of Prayer below, close out today’s exercise.

Luther’s 4 Strands of Prayer

1- *What is God trying to teach me here?*

2- *What does this passage make me thankful for?*

3- *Where have I fallen short and need God to help and guide me?*

4- *Pray.*