

Thou shalt not kill

The 6th commandment, "Thou shalt not kill" Ex 20.13, for the most part, has worldwide acceptance. The Hebrew rendering, as I understand, means to not intentionally take the life of an innocent. Hence, modern versions record the verse, "Do not murder". Killing involving self-defense, punishment for crimes, protection from invasion, war to maintain national existence, were excluded. Laws to punish the one who intentionally kills the innocent, however, remain in effect for most of the world's societies. Abortion, of course, has been the major exception for many nations including the USA. Today, America's record has grown to over 50 million abortions. Those who support abortion do not see or refuse to see this as taking an innocent life while those who oppose abortion see the action as intentionally taking the life of the innocent or murder of the unborn. Jesus elevates the 6th commandment in similar fashion as the other commandments in his teaching known as the Beatitudes. He speaks in Matt 5.21: "You have heard that it was said to the people long ago, 'Do not murder, and anyone who murders will be subject to judgment'. But I tell you that anyone who is angry with his brother will be subject to judgment." The Greek word for "angry" has to do with provoke, enrage, persecute in a continual state of mind. Jesus calls people who hate and refuse to let go and forgive, the same as the ones who shed innocent blood. This is a very sobering message. John phrases the teaching this way, "Anyone who hates his brother is a murderer, and you know that no murderer has eternal life in him" (1 John 3.15). In the eyes of God the ones who murder with their hearts are just as guilty as the ones who murder with their hands. We ask that we not be looked upon as a murderer when we recite in the Lord's Prayer... "and forgive us our trespasses just as we have forgiven those who trespass against us". Jesus concludes that if we do not forgive those who sin against us then our Father, God, will not forgive us (Mat 6.12-15).

Three men have given us almost 50% of Bible scripture and all three committed murder. Moses killed the Egyptian in Gen 2, David has Uriah killed in 2 Sam 11, and Paul persecutes Christians to their death, Acts 22. Moses killed in anger, David killed in passion, and Paul killed in piety. Moses is run out of Egypt and spends 40 years as a desert nomad for his crime, David is forgiven immediately by God, thru Nathan the prophet, but suffers the sword and much sadness in his house for the rest of his 40 years as King. Paul is struck blind with grace on his way to Damascus by Jesus, himself, and after being taught and baptized lives a persecuted life of service for about 40 years in which he "dies daily" and even "no longer lives" but proclaims to all that Christ now lives in him. Almighty God has used the weakness of his created being to deliver the most powerful witness and story that man could ever read and know: The unequalled, true story and message in our Holy Bible about the One and Only Savior of the world.

The event of the cross is surrounded by murderers. Judas hangs himself after realizing he has committed murder---"I have sinned, for I have shed innocent blood" (Mat 27.1-5). Mark records that Barabbas was in prison for murder with others who had committed murder. Thus, the two "thieves" as called in Matthew and Mark are more than likely "murderers" as well. Jesus is hung between two murderers and a murderer is released to satisfy the custom of this feast day. Peter, later, preaches in Acts 3, to the priests and religious authorities that "You handed Jesus over to be killed...You disowned him before Pilate...You disowned the Holy and Righteous One...You killed (murdered) the author of

life...". Satisfaction smiles on the faces of the accusers back at the cross. Their mission has been accomplished. From the opening days in Nazareth to Golgotha's hill, religious piety of keeping the 10 commandments has sought to kill Jesus. One important fact has been missed, Jesus laid down his life freely for everyone born and ever to be born. He had authority to lay it down and authority to take it up. The law of sin and death came thru Moses but grace and truth have come thru Jesus Christ (John 1.15-18). Jesus has now paid the debt and penalty for murder and now says to a world that commits murder..... 'The penalty for murder is death but I have now paid the price'. Paul, the onetime persecutor of the Way, shares what grace and forgiveness has come his way as he rejects his former life and writes about his new life. "Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus, because through Christ Jesus the law of the Spirit of life set me free from the law of sin and death" (Rom 8.1-2).

sj—5/14