

The God of Peace

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[0 : 0 0] Okay, well, today's sermon text is Exodus chapter 20, verse 13. That's on page 61 of the Blue Bibles that our ushers hand out. Exodus chapter 20, verse 13.

13. And so, this is the word of the Lord for us this morning. You shall not murder.

All right, I'm done. It seems pretty straightforward, right? It's actually easy to dismiss this commandment as too obvious, right?

Out of the ten commandments, out of God's law that's laid out in the book of Exodus, this sixth commandment, this is the commandment that you're most likely to find consensus about, right?

You're going to find consensus about this across nearly every human culture and society. I doubt you're going to go out to your neighbors and they're going to say to you, you know, I don't know about that you shall not murder commandment. I'm not sure that should really be there.

[1 : 0 0] I'm not sure if I agree with that. The previous five commandments that we have looked at over the last five weeks, many of those may not be very popular. Many people in our town would disagree with them.

But you shall not murder. That's about as non-controversial as you can get. And yet murder continues to be a flashpoint in Western society, right?

You and I, we shake our heads when we see murder rates, when we see statistics, when we see news stories. We watch the news in horror. We see twice within the last week, both in North Carolina and then over in Spain, we see a terrorist drive a vehicle into a crowd of civilians in an act of racial or religious violence.

And we grieve as we watch our children encounter these dangerous acts, absorb them as they see them taking place. So you shall not murder. It seems obvious to everyone, but yet murder continues to happen.

So what's at the root of this problem? Why, as human beings, do we fail to keep even the most undisputed of the Ten Commandments?

[2 : 1 1] Well, God's Word, God's Word, the Bible, it gives you and me insight into this commandment. And it gives us insight into the commandment that our culture doesn't possess. This insight helps us to understand how murder is a universal human problem.

Murder is a universal human problem. It's not just a problem with a white supremacist or an Islamic fundamentalist or a gang member. Murder is a problem with you and it is a problem with me.

So for the next two weeks, we will be looking at the problem of murder. Today, we're going to get an eagle's eye view of this war zone. The next week, what we're going to do is we're going to get down into the trenches.

We're going to talk about how we do battle on a daily basis against the sin of murder. Now, if there's any act, as we've said, that everyone agrees with a sin, it's murder.

And so if you were to go to a family member who isn't a Christian or a friend or a neighbor who isn't a Christian, and then you were to oppose them, you know, I'm assuming you believe murder is wrong, so it's good that you, you know, do them a favor and assume that they believe that.

[3 : 24] You might then ask them, why do you believe that murder is wrong? Why do you believe it's wrong? And I suspect that they would say something along these lines, that murder harms another person.

It's hard to harm another person more than ending their life. In other words, because murder harms a person, it's wrong. Now, here's the problem with this.

The reason people are able to get around that is everyone agrees harming a person is wrong, and so what you have to do to get around that is to think of the other as not a person. It's easy to dehumanize another human being.

It's easy to think of someone who's got a different skin color than you, someone who's of a different religion than you, someone with a disability, someone who's developing in the womb, to think of that individual as less than human, as unworthy of protection, unworthy of compassion.

And if human beings, if all we are, if all we are is just a bundle of atoms, if all we are is just this sack of bones and meat, a bag of chemical reactions, there really isn't anything at all to make any human being worthy of protection, worthy of compassion.

[4 : 47] Now, that's the dilemma that you face if you buy into the idea that matter and energy is all there is. But we as Christians, we trust God's word.

We trust the teaching of God's word on this matter. The theologian John Calvin pointed out that we find in God's word, we find that it provides what he calls a two-fold equity on which this commandment is founded.

A two-fold equity. So two ways in which other human beings are made to be equals. A two-fold equity on which this commandment is founded.

And the first equity that Calvin points out is this, that our fellow man is the image of God. Our fellow man is the image of God. To be the image of God, that means that every human being represents God, every human being reflects the character and the nature of our creator God.

And so this means that fundamentally, murder is an act of violence against the image of God. Just like destroying a statue of a person is an act of violence against that person.

[6 : 04] The murder of our fellow man is fundamentally treason against our God. It's fundamentally sin against our creator. Now that's why God told Noah back in Genesis chapter 9, whoever sheds the blood of man, by man shall his blood be shed.

For God made man in his own image. For God made man in his own image. And that's why scripture says that a murderer deserves a traitor's death.

The death of a traitor because our fellow man is the image of God. And killing him is treason against God. That's the first equity on which the sixth commandment is founded.

Now the second equity found in God's word is that our fellow man is our flesh and blood. Our fellow man is our flesh and blood. So the first murder recorded in scripture, the first murder is the murder of Abel, the son of Adam by his brother Cain.

So this first murder in human history takes place in Genesis chapter 4. And there we read, when they were in the field, Cain rose up against his brother Abel and killed him.

[7 : 18] Then the Lord said to Cain, where is Abel your brother? He said, I do not know. Am I my brother's keeper? Now notice how the Lord refers to Abel as your brother.

And so what he's doing is he's emphasizing that solidarity between Cain and Abel, that he's his flesh and blood. And Cain responds by denying the solidarity.

Am I my brother's keeper? Am I responsible for him? Cain believes he is not responsible for his brother's life. But the Lord rebukes him.

The Lord places a curse on Cain because he is his brother's keeper. And so are we. Because our fellow man is our flesh and blood.

That's the second equity on which the sixth commandment is founded. And so this two-fold equity, if we combine those two things together, it tells us this. The Lord forbids the murder of our fellow image bearers.

[8 : 22] The Lord forbids the murder of our fellow image bearers. So every human being is the Lord's image bearer. And every human being is our fellow, our flesh and blood.

And so that's the foundation. That's two-fold equity. That's the foundation for the sixth commandment. You shall not murder. That's why we as Christians believe that murder is wrong.

Now as straightforward as that commandment seems, there is so much more to it than just Exodus 20, verse 13. You shall not murder.

Because murder is not a simple and straightforward sin. It's a simple and straightforward commandment. But the way it plays out in real life is never simple. It's never straightforward.

And so that's why the Lord gives his people further case law in Exodus chapters 20 through 23. Now we've been studying the Old Testament book of Exodus this year. And so as we've studied it, we've seen that the Lord has rescued his people, the nation of Israel.

[9 : 24] He's brought them out of slavery in the land of Egypt. The Lord has shown his people that he is great by overcoming Pharaoh, king of Egypt. And now the Lord is showing them that he is good.

Now one of the ways he's doing that is by giving them his law. And he's teaching them how they are to live out their new identity as his people, their new mission as his royal family.

And so the Lord expresses his goodness. He does that by explaining how they're going to put this commandment, you shall not murder, how they're going to put it into practice in the complex, real world situations that they encounter.

So, there's a lot of case law about murder in Exodus chapter 21. Here's some precedence that this case law gives us.

So if we, this is the case law that we encountered that we read at the beginning of the service in verses 12 through 32. So, verses 12 through 14, the case law deals with degrees of murder.

[10 : 30] The word that's translated murder is actually, can be translated elsewhere as simply manslaughter. It doesn't mean just intentional or premeditated murder.

It can mean murder on a moment's notice when you had no previous plans to do so. It can even cover killing someone in self-defense. occasionally.

The precedent here is that there are degrees of murder requiring degrees of punishment. Degrees of murder requiring degrees of punishment. Similar to our own legal system. That's how we get the difference between first degree murder, second degree murder.

We have manslaughter and various degrees of that. That has its foundation here. In modern terms, someone who commits first degree murder in this passage was given the death penalty.

Someone who commits manslaughter is actually offered a place of refuge to run to until a judge determines the appropriate punishment because they would be in danger of someone getting revenge against them.

[11 : 33] So there is a city of refuge to run to. In verses 18 and 19, we learn the sixth commandment, it extends beyond murder. It also extends to cases of personal injury. So there's a new wrinkle.

This isn't just about killing someone's life. This is also causing harm to them. The precedent here is that the injured party should be compensated for physical recovery. Pretty straightforward, right?

In modern terms, the guilty party pays for the medical expenses and pays for the loss of wage. In verses 20 through 21, it covers the murder of slaves.

And this is always really tricky when we get into slavery in the Old Testament. Slavery, that was an institution that was absolutely thoroughly ingrained and embedded in the fabric of any ancient Near Eastern culture.

What the Old Testament does, though, it's really unique, is that it values and protects slaves. It advances their rights. This is so different from most of the other cultures of the time. In those neighboring cultures, a master who beat his slave to death would probably have received at best a slap on the wrist.

[12 : 38] Because a slave's your property. They didn't think of slaves as human. They were lesser. And if you killed your slave over the course of a day's labor, well, that's too bad. The inconvenience of hiring another one.

I'm sorry for you, man. But in verse 20, the Lord insists that the killing of slaves isn't property damage. It is murder. It's murder and the slave is to be avenged.

As for verse 21, the ESV is, there are different translations handle this in different ways and I think the ESV does not have this right. I think a good paraphrase of the meaning is this.

If after a day or two the slave has recovered, the owner should not be punished because it is the owner who has absorbed the financial loss. So it's a similar, actually a very similar to the way that you would deal with someone who isn't a slave.

They are compensated for their recovery and for their loss of wage, but in this case, the owner is the one who caused the damage, so the owner has already absorbed the financial loss.

[13 : 41] If we glance down to verses 26 through 27, we learn that a slave who has suffered permanent injury, unless you think that this gives the master's license to just abuse their slaves willy-nilly, verses 26 through 27 make it clear.

A slave who suffered a permanent injury, damage to an eye or a tooth or something like that, is to be set free. To be set free from the abusive master. Verse 22, it covers the accidental harm of pregnant women.

Now, a lot of controversy over these verses. That would take a sermon in and of itself because the question is, is the Harmon view, is this a woman gets hit and that causes a premature birth?

Or is this causing a miscarriage? Or is this causing damage to a woman's ability to bear children? And this often has bearing on the issue of abortion, the controversy over that in our culture.

So rather than getting into the nitty-gritty details, I think it's better for now to think about the larger precedent that the Lord is setting. Because just like with slaves, a pregnant woman is especially vulnerable.

[14 : 46] And what this verse tells us is that in God's law, vulnerable persons receive special protection. Vulnerable persons, pregnant women and their children, receive special protection.

So this sets a precedent that there is a special protection of women, of minorities, of disabled people, of the unborn. As God's people, we must stand firmly opposed to groups in our culture who wish to dehumanize anyone who belongs to those categories.

We must stand firmly opposed to any groups in our culture that wish to deny compassion to other human beings.

Every human being should be shown compassion and protected from harm. So if we skip down to verses 28 through 32, we see further.

The sixth commandment, it covers involuntary manslaughter, negligent death. So the precedent being set here, you've got an animal's owner. And the precedent being set is this animal's owner is responsible for the animal's actions, unless such actions couldn't have been predicted.

[15 : 59] So this shows us that fulfilling the sixth commandment, it means more than just not murdering. It means more than just not murdering your fellow man. It means that to fulfill the sixth commandment, you and I need to be our brother's keeper.

We need to be watching out for one another, protecting one another from harm. And all of this case law has verses 23 through 27 as its centerpiece, right there in the center of all of these verses.

Verses 23 and 25 especially. This is some of the most iconic teaching in the Old Testament law. If there is harm, then you shall pay life for life, eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot, burn for burn, wound for wound, stripe for stripe.

Now this is often called in Latin, the *lex talionis*. The *lex talionis*. The talon law or the law of the claw if you like things that rhyme.

An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth. Now, let's think about this for a moment. Let's not make the, it's easy to make the simplistic mistake of thinking that's brutal, that's awful.

[17 : 18] An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth, that's so savage. The *lex talionis* is not meant to be understood in this absurdly literal manner. You know, it's not the idea that, you know, if you knock out, you know, if I knock out someone's tooth that then the judge says, okay, hold him down and give him a swift kick in the jaw, get his tooth knocked out.

You know, that's not the idea here. Verses 26 through 27 show us that. They give sort of a specific interpretation. If a slave had his tooth or his eye damaged by his master, you don't knock out the master's eye or tooth.

What you do is you set the slave free. You take away the property of the master and you give the slave compensate the slave by giving him his freedom. Here's the simple point of *lex talionis*.

The simple point is the punishment should fit the crime. The punishment should fit the crime. Now, if that sounds reasonable to you, it's because it is.

It's a basic principle of justice. An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth. The Lord gave his people *lex talionis*. This is a good law. The Lord gave his people this because it gives us many, so many useful precedents for how to respond to murder and injury.

[18 : 34] Think of the implications of this. It means that a violent criminal or a dangerous criminal who does a lot of harm, that person should not be given a light punishment. They should not get off easy.

But neither should they be given an excessive or cruel punishment, a cruel or unusual punishment. *Lex talionis* teaches us that the punishment should hurt the offender just as much as the crime hurt the victim.

And so what that means is let's say, for example, a rich man and a poor man who both commit the same crime. They knock out somebody's tooth, let's say. It would be unjust to find them both the same.

Because the fine would ruin the poor man, but the rich man would barely even notice. Wouldn't hurt him at all. So you would in fact find the rich man much more severely in order to hurt him equally, in order to do justice.

Lex talionis. God's law teaches us based on Lex talionis no favor should be shown to anyone because of their wealth, because of their status, because of their social class, because of their race, because of their ethnicity, because of their gender.

[19 : 57] Lex talionis applies to all. There is no reason to place someone in a privileged group. The law of the law is for everyone.

And so in summary, that sixth commandment, you shall not murder, we see here, man, that is so much broader. It has so many more implications for our lives than what we initially expected. It sets so many more precedents that are valuable today, not only for our legal system, but for our personal relationships with one another.

The Lord forbids the murder of our fellow image bearers, but this commandment teaches us so much more about the value of all human beings. Do you see how that is such an underlying principle behind all of these laws, that human life is valuable, that all human life is valuable?

It shows us that the God of peace, he requires so much more from us than what we first expected. You shall not murder, it first seems like, oh, such a simple commandment, I've done that, easy.

And now we see, oh, maybe not. Living at peace with our fellow man requires more from us than we first expected. And what makes this commandment especially difficult is what God's word teaches us about the murder that's inside of our hearts.

[21 : 15] Any lawyer, any judge, any jury knows that murder always has a motive. Murder always has a motive. And that's been true from the beginning of the world that God created.

when Cain murdered his brother Abel, the motive is given in Genesis chapter 4. The Lord had regard for Abel and his offering, but for Cain and his offering, he had no regard.

So Cain was very angry and his face fell. Cain was very angry and his face fell. In other words, Cain's motive for murder was jealousy. He was jealous of the favor shown to his brother that he did not receive.

Cain's descendant. Can't remember if it was his great-great-grandson or his great-great-great-grandson. A guy named Lamech. He followed in his ancestors' footsteps. In fact, he went to the next step and wrote a song bragging about his murder.

I have killed a man for wounding me, a young man for striking me. If Cain's revenge is sevenfold, then Lamech's is seventy-sevenfold. What a guy.

[22 : 25] Maybe we can make that into a worship song. Cain murdered from a motive of jealousy and Cain's descendant murdered from a motive of revenge.

At their core, in both cases, their murder was driven by anger and by hatred. And that's why in 1 John 3, we read, we should not be like Cain, who was of the evil one and murdered his brother.

And why did he murder him? Because his own deeds were evil and his brother's righteous. We know that we have passed out of death into life, into life, because we love the brothers.

Whoever does not love abides in death. Everyone who hates his brother is a murderer. And you know that no murderer has eternal life abiding in him.

It isn't hard to figure out what the heart of murder is. The heart of murder is hatred. What isn't so obvious is where this hatred and this anger comes from.

[23 : 39] That's where James chapter 4 helps us. We'll see more of this next week. James chapter 4, verses 1 and 2. What causes quarrels and what causes fights among you?

Is it not this that your passions are at war within you? You desire and do not have so you murder. You covet and cannot obtain so you fight and quarrel.

So in other words, the problem isn't actually that we're full of hate. Instead, we need to be full of love. You know, that's sort of the simplistic, naive rhetoric.

These buzzwords that get thrown around by our culture, you know, that we should have love is good, love is bad, end the hate. We talk about it as if we're children. James talks about it as a mature adult.

He gets human beings and human nature. He points out the heart of murder, anger, and hatred against our fellow man. The heart of murder emerges naturally out of our love.

[24 : 43] It emerges naturally out of what we love. Notice the words he uses. Our passions or pleasures. He says that we are desiring. Our desires have gone out of control.

Our desiring has become coveting. In other words, our desires have become demands. Anger and hatred are simply the way that we feel and the way that we respond to something that threatens what we love.

Anger and hatred are the way we feel and the way we respond to anything that threatens what we love. So the problem with anger and hatred is that they're misdirected.

They're misdirected because we love the wrong things. or we love the right things with the wrong intensity or for the wrong reasons or in the wrong way.

The problem is not that we hate. The problem is the way we love. And so you and I respond with a heart of murder, with anger and rage and bitterness and hatred to people who get in the way of our warped and coveting desires, our passions that have burned out of control like a wildfire.

[26 : 13] And we'll talk about this coveting in more detail when we reach the tenth commandment, the final commandment and final for a good reason, you shall not covet. For now, let's suffice it to say that the Lord forbids the murder of our fellow image bearers, prohibiting unrighteous anger and retaliation.

Prohibiting unrighteous anger and retaliation. Now in his famous Sermon on the Mount in Matthew chapter 5, Jesus Christ lays this out clearly for us.

And so what he does is he announces his interpretation, his authoritative interpretation of this Old Testament law that we've been reading. And here's what Jesus has to say about how we obey the sixth commandment from the inside out, from our hearts.

You have heard that it was said to those of old, you shall not murder and whoever murders will be liable to judgment. But I say to you that everyone who is angry with his brother will be liable to judgment.

Whoever insults his brother will be liable to the council and whoever says you fool will be liable to the hell of fire. And Jesus can never be accused of understatement, can he?

[27 : 34] He comes out swinging against the heart of murder, against unrighteous anger, against retaliation. Jesus forbids thoughts, even thoughts and words of anger.

Jesus forbids that desire to punish or harm someone who gets in the way of what we long for. instead, in these following verses, Jesus urges you and Jesus urges me to reconcile with one another rather than insulting, rather than lashing out against each other.

So Jesus is prohibiting unrighteous anger. In his sermon, Jesus not only quotes that sixth commandment as we've seen, Jesus quotes lex talionis as well.

You have heard that it was said, an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth. But I say to you, do not resist the one who is evil.

But if anyone slaps you on the right cheek, turn to him the other also. And if anyone would sue you and take your tunic, let him have your cloak as well. And if anyone forces you to go one mile, go with him two miles.

[28 : 47] Give to the one who begs from you, and do not refuse the one who would borrow from you. Now, we'll get into the details of this next week, how this plays out in the complicated situations that you and I face in our relationships each day.

Here's the big idea. The big idea that Jesus is prohibiting here is he's not only prohibiting unrighteous anger, he's prohibiting retaliation.

He's prohibiting retaliation. We want to take *lex talionis* into our own hands, an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth. I'll get you back. The Apostle Paul explains in Romans chapters 12 and 13, he explains that retaliation, this act of exacting punishment on someone who's hurt us.

This is not our job. Romans 12, repay no one evil for evil, but give thought to do what is honorable in the sight of all.

If possible, so far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all. Beloved, never avenge yourselves, but leave it to the wrath of God, for it is written, vengeance is mine, I will repay, says the Lord.

[30 : 11] So what Paul is saying here is that our desire for justice, you know, sometimes it's warped, but sometimes it's right. We genuinely have been treated unjustly.

It might be right, maybe vengeance and punishment should be carried out, but Paul says, *lex talionis* is not your job. It's God's job.

Leave it to the wrath of God. And in chapter 13, Paul actually lays out one way that God might carry out his wrath. Let every person be subject to the governing authorities, for there is no authority except from God, when those that exist have been instituted by God.

He is God's servant for your good. But if you do wrong, be afraid, for he does not bear the sword in vain, for he is the servant of God, an avenger, who carries out God's wrath on the wrongdoer.

That language is not a coincidence. Paul is making a point. If someone has committed a crime against us, we don't get revenge ourselves. That is not the way that God's people behave.

[31 : 29] We are to defer to God's agent of wrath, to the government that he has appointed over us. if it's not a crime that has been done, or if we encounter a situation where the government fails to provide justice, we still trust that the Lord is an avenger.

We still trust him to carry out the judgment himself, whether in this world or the world that is to come. I remember a time in my life when the words like these were a good warning for me.

There was a job I once held where I was being mistreated by my boss. Not only me, but many other employees as well. And, you know, until that time, I never thought of myself as an angry man.

I found out differently from that experience that there is a lot of murder in my heart. I found myself obsessing over the idea, fantasizing about telling off my boss, putting him in his place, chewing him out.

And, thankfully, the Lord kept reminding me of Colossians 3, verse 25, which I've been memorizing at the time. And there, Paul encouraged Christians who happened to be servants or slaves.

[32 : 50] He encouraged them that the Lord is the one who would rise up on their behalf against masters who mistreated them. The wrongdoer will be paid back for the wrong he has done, and *lex talionis*, and there is no partiality.

And knowing that helped me. It helped preserve me from bitterness and anger, because what it did is it freed me. It allowed me to, first of all, when I did finally leave that job, I left on good terms with my boss.

forgiveness. And I did that because I was free, because I knew that the Lord had him handled. I didn't need to get justice for myself.

Not my job. It's being taken care of. So whenever I was tempted to rage, or attempted to complain against my boss, the Holy Spirit, he used these words to guide me in responding to him with mercy.

I was far from perfect, believe me. But any good, in my response, was the Holy Spirit at work through these words of Scripture. The Lord prohibits unrighteous anger and retaliation, because he is the one who will rise up on our behalf.

[34 : 08] Now next week, we'll talk about times when it is appropriate, when it is right to be angry. Jesus himself expressed anger on a number of occasions.

Christians. We'll see how and why Jesus did that. In the meantime, here's what we can learn from Jesus' interpretation of the Old Testament law.

The Lord forbids the murder of our fellow image bearers, prohibiting unrighteous anger and retaliation, and prescribing righteous love and peace. Prescribing righteous love and peace.

It's not enough, not simply to avoid anger and retaliation. We need to replace it with something. It leaves a vacuum in our souls. Righteous love and peace must fill its place.

And that's what happens when we change what we love. When we love the right things in the right way for the right reasons. When our loves are aligned correctly, when we love what God loves and value him and cherish what he cherishes, our anger will be right.

[35 : 20] And we will respond to our fellow man with righteous love and peace. That's why Jesus tells us in Matthew chapter five in his commentary on Lex Talionis. You have heard that it was said, you shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.

By the way, that the first part, you shall love your neighbor, is in the Old Testament law. That part, hate your enemy? Someone must have added that later. Because that isn't there. But I say to you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you so that you may be sons of your Father who is in heaven.

For he makes his sun rise on the evil and on the good and sends rain on the just and on the unjust. For if you love those who love you, what reward do you have?

Do not even the tax collectors do the same. And if you greet only your brothers, what more are you doing than others? Do not even the Gentiles do the same.

You therefore must be perfect as your heavenly Father is perfect. So the Lord is saying that we are not to respond to those who hate us and hurt us by hating them back and hurting them back.

[36 : 49] If there were ever a statement that applies to the political culture of our times, that's the one. You hate me? I'm going to hate you back even more. You're trying to tear down my political party and my values and ideals?

I'm going to tear down yours. I'm going to get you back. You're my enemy and you're bad. Jesus wants to free us from that anger.

And what happens when you are consumed with that anger and you obsess over it is that you become like your enemies. You become what you behold. The more you are thinking and fixing your eyes on the people that you're angry with, you start absorbing their way of thinking and you start responding and you become like them.

Jesus gives us an escape hatch. He gives us an escape hatch from that cycle of anger and that violence that consume our homes, that consume our communities, that consume our culture.

And that escape hatch that Jesus gives us is righteous love and peace. Love your enemies. Please pray for those who persecute you.

[38 : 08] The Apostle Paul tells us in Romans chapter 12, bless those who persecute you. Bless and do not curse them. To the contrary, if your enemy is hungry, feed him.

If he is thirsty, give him something to drink. For by so doing, you will heap burning coals on his head. The best way to, you know, the best way to really get back your enemy is to love them.

You will deny them the privilege of seeing you become like them. Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.

Verse 21, that's the point. You and I will be overcome by evil. If we respond in anger to those who are angry with us, if we respond in hate to those who hate us, we will be overcome by evil because we will become the very thing that we hate.

The escape hatch is to overcome evil with good. And that is so counterintuitive.

[39 : 27] That's why Jesus points out, you know, this is something that the tax collectors, who are sort of like the collaborators and traders of the day in that culture, they were hated by everyone. And he said, you know what, even tax collectors can love the people who loves them.

You know what's really going to set you apart? What's going to show that you are sons of the living God? As if you overcome evil with good. Because this is contrary to that sinful and murderous nature of those who have not been renewed by the Holy Spirit.

If you don't have the Holy Spirit in you, you can't do this. You can't obey this commandment. It's beyond your ability.

This sets us apart as peacemakers, as sons of God. We'll talk about how we can do this next week in practical terms.

Now, to us, it may look like this sort of righteous love and peace. This is, you know, you look at this, you're like, this is going to cost me. I mean, this might cost me my life if I get into a bad enough situation.

[40 : 37] That might be the case. And that shouldn't surprise us because it cost our Lord and our Master his life. When Jesus was betrayed to the temple authorities in Luke chapter 22, you know what?

His disciples, they grabbed the sword, they sprang to defend him. When those who were around saw, around him saw what would follow, they said, Lord, shall we strike with the sword?

And one of them struck the servant of the high priest and cut off his right ear. But Jesus said, no more of this. No more of this.

End the cycle. And he touched his ear and healed him. Jesus healed his enemy who had come to arrest him and kill him.

While his disciples were taking up that sword and lashing out against the enemies, Jesus was reaching out. Jesus was loving. Jesus was doing good. Because Jesus will not stop caring for, Jesus will not stop loving those who hate him.

[41 : 52] Luke chapter 23, we read, when they came to the place that is called the skull, there they crucified him. And the criminals, one on his right and one on his left.

And Jesus said, Father, forgive them. For they know not what they do. And they cast lots to divide his garments.

Jesus is loving his enemies. Jesus is praying for his enemies. even as they are driving nails into his hands and feet.

Even as they are rolling dice to decide who gets to keep his clothes. They're dehumanizing him. They're punishing him.

An innocent man. And he is praying for them. He's surrounded by enemies who are ridiculing him and insulting him as he is crucified naked in a public place.

[42 : 56] Even the criminals crucified on either side of him join in. You know what? One of them relents and begins all of a sudden to start speaking up on his behalf.

Jesus assures this criminal, truly I say to you, today you will be with me in paradise. Always eager to reconcile.

Always eager to love and to forgive. Jesus was able to do all these things because he entrusted himself to the justice of his father in heaven.

And Jesus perfectly fulfilled the sixth commandment by speaking words of peace from the cross. he ended his life by crying out, Father, into your hands I commit my spirit.

He entrusted his spirit, his soul, everything he was to his father. Jesus perfectly fulfilled that law on behalf of everyone who puts their faith in him.

[44 : 10] Jesus not only lived a life of righteous love and peace, he did even more than that as if you could do more than not harboring hatred and anger, as if you could do more than living a righteous life of love and peace, of perfection.

Jesus went beyond even that because he died in the place of murderous people, people like you and me. And Luke records that when Jesus was being tried, when he was being put on trial and there's a mob of his enemies who are shouting and intimidating the governor.

You know what they want? They want Jesus to die in a murderer's place. They all cried out together, away with this man and release to us Barabbas, a man who had been thrown into prison for an insurrection started in the city and for murder.

Pilate addressed them once more desiring to release Jesus but they kept shouting crucify, crucify him. A third time he said to them, why? What evil has he done?

I have found in him no guilt deserving death. I will therefore punish and release him. But they were urgent demanding with loud cries that he should be crucified and their voices prevailed.

[45 : 30] So Pilate decided that their demand should be granted. He released the man who had been thrown into prison for insurrection and murder for whom they asked that he delivered Jesus over to their will.

You and I, we are Barabbas. You are Barabbas. Guilty of treason, murder.

And murder. Guilty of murderous hearts. Hearts bent on anger, on rage, bitterness, insults, retaliation.

Some of you are perhaps carrying the heavy scars of murder. Whether it's an act of abortion of an unborn child, whether it's an act of violence that you committed, whether it's fierce words that you spoke that tore another person's life apart, whether it's years or decades of bitterness, of spite, you've kept locked away inside of you.

All of us are traitors against our God, murderers of our fellow man. Jesus has been crucified in our place, and you have been set free if you believe in him.

[47 : 08] Jesus has died Barabbas' death, a murderer's death, on your behalf, and now you are free. So believe in him.

Trust him. His sacrifice is enough. There is a new life to be had from the God of peace. Let's pray.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.
Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.