

No.6: Life is Precious

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[0 : 00] So with the Lord's help, we're going to turn to Exodus chapter 20. And this morning, we're just looking at one verse. Exodus chapter 20, and we're reading at verse 13.

For the Lord says to us, you shall not murder. You shall not murder.

As you know, over the past number of weeks, we've been going through the Ten Commandments. And in our study of the Ten Commandments, we referred to them as house rules. And we've called them house rules, not because they teach us and tell us how to be a good person with good values and good morals for life.

But the Ten Commandments, these house rules, they set before us and they remind us that we're all sinners. We're all sinners in need of a Savior. And our Heavenly Father, He speaks to us in the Bible as a family, as a church family.

That's what we are. We're a church family. And as a church family, He addresses us as His children. And as His children, well, we need family rules. We need house rules.

[1 : 22] Because as we've said before, without rules, there's recklessness. Without laws, there's lawlessness. Without commandments, there's chaos. And our Heavenly Father has given us these ten house rules in order to parent us and also to protect us.

But as you know, and as we've said before, it's not good for a child to always get their own way all the time. It's good for a child to be told no.

But when an adult says no, as you know, it's never to spoil their fun. It's to parent them. It's to protect them from hurt or from harm. They're told no out of love for them and in order to look after them.

And that's what we see with many of these house rules. Eight out of ten of them are no's. They begin with that familiar phrase, thou shalt not. Thou shalt not.

But as we discovered in our study, two of these house rules don't begin with that familiar phrase. House rule number four, it began with that parental word, remember, kainich.

[2 : 24] Remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy. And then at the baptism service a couple of weeks ago, we saw that house rule number five, the fifth commandment, begins with another parental word, honor.

Honor your father and your mother. But this morning we're returning to the familiar phrase of thou shalt not. We're returning to the no's. And there's a list of no's.

There's a list of thou shalt nots or you shall not. And when we consider this list of the thou shalt nots, we have to see that our Bible is teaching us or that our Bible is presenting to us a three-dimensional view of these commandments.

The teaching of our Bible is 3D because these commandments, they teach us or the Bible addresses us about our hands, our head, and our heart.

Our Bible addresses our hands, our head, and our heart. It's three-dimensional. And that's what we see with this commandment. And we'll see it as we go on in the following commandments.

[3 : 30] It's three-dimensional. It addresses our hands, our head, and our heart. And there are three headings this morning. Our hands, our head, and our heart. So first of all, our hands.

Our hands. Look at our verse. Verse 13. You shall not murder. You shall not murder. Sadly, in the world we live in today, murder is something that's something we hear about all the time.

I don't think you can watch the six o'clock news without being informed of an attempted murder or even an actual murder. In fact, murder is so common.

And we hear about murder so often that I sometimes think that we're in the danger of becoming numb to it, where it's lost its shock factor, where we just hear about our murder on the news, and then they move on to something totally different.

So murder often loses its shock factor, unless, of course, it's closer to home. I don't know if you remember back in 2005, the World Health Organization.

[4 : 37] They reported that Scots were three times more likely to be murdered than people living in England and Wales. So much so that Glasgow, unfortunately, was given the title, The Murder Capital of Europe.

The Murder Capital of Europe. That was 2005. Thankfully, since 2005, a lot has been done to try and address the problem of violence and murder, which is often sadly fueled by the cycle of alcohol and drug addiction.

But in comparison to the large cities of our nation, we live in a relatively safe place where murder is a rare, a very rare occurrence.

You know, I was looking it up just the other day. You'll remember, it was actually back in 2011. There were the awful circumstances surrounding that 16-year-old, Liam Acheson.

He was murdered by two young boys who are now currently serving life sentences for their actions. I also discovered this week there was a murder which took place very close to home.

[5 : 43] In 1968, there was a woman found murdered in her home in Brew. I don't know much about it, but I read that to this day no one has ever been convicted.

Then if you go further back to the 1830s, there was this said-to-be infamous murderer called Macintronic. I'm sure we've all heard of him.

Now, whether you view Macintronic as a historical hitman or a Lewis legend, you'll know that there are many stories about this outlaw who came from Garve.

Where Macintronic was said to have lived in the moors of Lewis, whether in Uig or on the west side of the Barvis Moor or wherever he was, and he murdered about 20 people and terrorized islanders for years.

And that was before Macintronic was finally caught and executed in Inverness, we're told, in the year around 1836. Of course, there are some who claim that the only truth about Macintronic was that the death penalty was still in use in 1836.

[6 : 46] Some are even of the view that we should bring back the death penalty, because a life for a life would serve as a deterrent to the many murders that still take place today.

But, you know, the thing about house rule number six is that the sixth commandment is about much more than murder. The sixth commandment is about much more than murder. If you're reading from the authorized version, you'll know that verse 13, it says, Thou shalt not kill.

Thou shalt not kill. But the thing is, the Bible permits killing. The Bible permits killing animals for the purpose of eating. That's what the Lord told Peter in Acts chapter 10.

He told Peter, Rise, Peter, kill and eat. The Bible also permits killing within the context of war, where a nation is defending its country and defending its community and defending its civilians.

But we see that at present with the war in Ukraine. And this is why the ESV, it helpfully translates this word as murder. Because murder goes much further than killing.

[7 : 53] Murder is, you could say murder is deep-seated and deep-rooted. Murder is in many ways and in many instances very personal. But as the Bible says, murder is forbidden.

Thou shalt not murder. And this word murder, it not only refers to planning and purposefully causing another human being to die. It also relates and refers to causing another human being to die through carelessness.

Or because of negligence. Which ought to emphasize and explain to us that we're not only to preserve life, we're also to protect life.

As human beings, we are not only to preserve life, but we're also to protect life. We're to keep life safe. Because God is the giver of the gift of life.

God is the giver of the gift of life. God is what you would say, He is pro-life. And this is important to remember because it's God who has given us life in the first place.

[8 : 59] We read right at the beginning of our Bible, Genesis chapter 1 and into chapter 2, it's God who breathed life into Adam and made him a living soul.

And it was all because God is the one who gives life. It's God who gifts to us life. God is the giver of the gift of life. Which is why our Bible emphasizes and why God says here in verse 13, that we are to preserve life.

And we're to protect life. Because God is pro-life. We are to preserve life and protect life. Because God is pro-life.

And you know, it seems that this is why house rule number 6 immediately follows house rule number 5. Because house rule number 5, you remember when we were here two weeks ago looking at, with the baptism, we saw there in house rule number 5 that it teaches us that our children are precious.

Our children are precious. They are the heritage of the Lord. They are the fruit of the womb. They have been fearfully and wonderfully made and shaped in the image and likeness of God.

[10 : 07] Therefore, as we were saying at the baptism, we need to teach and train our children to love and follow the Lord. We need to bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. Because if we don't, the world will teach them something completely different.

But now as we come to house rule number 6, we're not only being told that our children are precious, but that life is precious. And that the life of our children is precious.

Because life is a gift from God. Therefore, life is a gift that we do not have the right or the reason to remove from anyone.

Because life is a gift from God, we do not have the right or the reason to remove from anyone. And you know, this is what makes these house rules so relevant and so realistic.

Because they're touching on topics that are current to our context, current to our culture today. And with this house rule, it touches, because it's pro-life, it touches on the topic of abortion and assisted suicide.

[11 : 21] Because whether we're at the beginning of life, we're at the end of life. Our Bible is teaching us this morning that God is the giver of the gift of life.

Therefore, we are to preserve life. We are to protect life. Because God is pro-life. God is pro-life.

And so we see that house rule number six addresses our hands. But then secondly, it addresses our head. So our hands and then our head. Our head.

Our text says, you shall not murder. Now, murder doesn't often begin with our hands. Murder often begins in our head.

Murder begins in the mind. And as you know, the thing about the mind is that the mind is very fragile. The mind is fragile.

[12 : 19] And it's fragile, I fully believe it is fragile. Because the devil attacks our mind. I don't think we understand the power of the devil.

And when we don't understand the power of the devil, we underestimate the power of the devil. But there's a reason our Bible describes the devil as the diabolos. The divider.

The deceiver. He's the father of lies. He's been a liar since the beginning. He's the tempter and the tormentor who disguises himself as an angel of light.

He is the God of this world, says Paul. And he blinds our minds. He's the God of this world who blinds our minds.

That's why in the whole armor of God in Ephesians chapter 6, it's a great chapter. We were told there in the whole armor of God, put on the helmet of salvation.

[13 : 18] Why? So that we protect our mind. Protect our mind from the power of the devil. And this is important to remember when considering this house rule.

Because house rule number 6, it not only addresses the issue of murdering someone else. It also addresses the issue of murdering self. It addresses the issue of murdering self.

Now, as you know, when talking about a subject like this, especially today, I want to be as pastorally sensitive as possible.

I don't want to hurt anyone. But at the same time, I don't want to avoid this subject. Because it's relevant. It's real. And although it's a difficult subject to talk about, I think it's something we need to talk about.

We need to talk about it. Especially because, as you know, the rate of self-hate and self-harm and suicide, it is rising year on year.

[14 : 23] And although not all, a lot of it has been attributed to social media, to online bullying, to peer pressure, which young people are often faced with.

Other factors relate to the rise in mental health cases. We're all aware of it. We hear about it so often, even since the pandemic. And according to the Samaritans website, which is a brilliant website for dealing and discussing mental health or self-hate, self-harm and suicide, according to the Samaritans website, one in four young women and one in ten young men have self-harmed in their life.

And suicide, suicide is the biggest killer of people under the age of 35, of young people under the age of 35. It's the biggest killer of men, usually under the age of 50.

And you know, they're devastating facts to read, devastating facts to tell you about. But for many families, families that we know, families that we love, suicide is a reality that they're trying to come to terms with.

Now, I don't know about you, but maybe you've read or seen the news and the story of the three dads walking. They were on the news. They've been on BBC News a number of times. The three dads walking.

[15 : 44] It's the heartbreaking story of the three dads who lost their three daughters to suicide. The three dads were called Mike, Andy, and Tim. Mike's daughter was Beth.

She was only 17. Andy's daughter was called Sophie. She was 29. Tim's daughter was called Emily. She was 19. And they all took their own life in 2018 and 2020.

But in 2021, these three dads, they decided to walk 300 miles to raise money and to raise awareness of the dangers of self-hate, self-harm and suicide.

And then last year, if you follow their story, in 2022, the three dads, they walked to our four parliaments, to Belfast, Edinburgh, Cardiff, and also London.

And they walked to these parliaments for the purpose of raising the awareness of suicide. And it needed to be taught and even talked about in our schools.

[16 : 44] To be taught and talked about from a young age. And on their website, the three dads, if you look up the three dads' website, they wrote, Three dads walking gives us, as fathers, an opportunity to try and make a difference.

We are all too aware that there are more young people out there falling into despair and see no way out other than to end their own precious lives. We hope, linking our homes, telling Beth, Emily, and Sophie's very different stories, It will raise awareness and put a spotlight on mental health and ultimately the brutal effects of suicide.

Now, of course, that's only three dads saying that. There are only three dads out of many mums and dads and families who have encountered and experienced the sorrowful effects of self-hate, self-harm and suicide.

But, you know, this is why house rule number six is here. This is why the Bible is so real and so relevant. It's a living word. Because this commandment shows us, and I want you to see that it shows us, Our Heavenly Father loves us and He wants to look after us.

He doesn't want us to cause hurt or harm to anyone else or even to ourselves. He wants to protect us. He wants to parent us.

[18 : 17] Because He knows that family is precious. He's given us life. He knows that our church family is precious. He knows that our children that are currently in creche and Sunday school or maybe not even here today, He knows that they're precious.

He knows that our life is precious. Therefore, we're to seek and strive to preserve life and to protect life because God is pro-life and God is the giver of the gift of life.

And, you know, because we have an enemy whose aim is to attack our mind, which is so fragile, because we have an enemy whose aim is to attack our mind, I fully believe this is what the Bible teaches us.

Our church, the church should be the safest place for people to speak and to share about their struggles. We shouldn't be judging one another, criticizing one another.

No, the church should be the safest place for people to speak and share about their struggles. Whether the struggle is with sin or self-hate or self-harm or suicide, whether the struggle is with abortion or having had an abortion or wanting assisted suicide or struggling with an addiction, whatever it is, the church should be the safest place, because it's Jesus' church, it should be the safest place for people to speak and share about their struggles.

[19 : 46] Because rather than bottling things up, which many of us are very good at doing, rather than bottling things up and putting on the face and the facade to everyone else, we need to talk.

We need to tell people about our struggles. We need to speak and share our struggles. Because as I've said before, and I mean it when I say it, the church is not a museum of good people.

If you have that view, get rid of that view. The church is not a museum of good people. The church is a hospital for the broken.

The church is not a museum of good people. It's a hospital for the broken. And the reality is, whether we want to admit it or not, the reality is we are all broken people, living broken lives in a broken world.

But this is why we come here on a Sunday morning, on a Sunday evening. This is why we come to God's Word, because the good news of the gospel is that this Jesus, He is the great physician.

[20 : 57] And He's the great physician who came to bear our griefs, and to carry our sorrows. And where did He carry them? But all the way to Calvary. He's the great physician who came to bind up our broken hearts, and to heal our wounds.

He's the one who reminds us in His Word that His Father is the Father of mercies, and the God of all comfort. He is the great physician, and He issues to us this great call to come.

It's not what He says to us in the gospel. Come unto me, all you who are weary and heavy laden, and I will give you rest.

I will give you rest. You know, my friend, we don't know what goes on behind closed doors. But as we were singing in Psalm 139, Jesus does.

That's why we need to bring all our baggage, all our burdens, all our brokenness to Jesus. As the hymn writer said, what a friend.

[22 : 02] What a friend we have in Jesus. All our sins and griefs to bear. What a privilege. What a privilege it is to carry everything to God in prayer.

So I want to say to you, my friend, this morning, if you are struggling, don't bottle it up. Speak about it. Share it with someone. Pray about it with them. Because we are all broken people living broken lives in a broken world.

But as we said, house rule number six is 3D. It's three-dimensional. It addresses our hands, our head, and also our heart. It addresses our heart.

Verse 13 tells us, you shall not murder. As we read earlier in the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus taught us that the act of murder doesn't actually begin with our hands or our head.

It begins in the heart. Because murder is a heart problem. The root cause is always sin. My good friend, J.C. Ryle, would always tell us, the heart of the problem is the problem of the heart.

[23 : 15] And the problem of our heart is that there's no sin that we are not capable of doing. There is no sin that we are not capable of doing.

Which is why Jesus explained and expanded upon the sixth commandment in the Sermon on the Mount. And we read that Jesus, and this is what we said to the children, you have heard that it was said, referring back to this chapter, you have heard that it was said, you shall not murder.

And whoever murders will be liable to judgment. But I say to you, not that Jesus is changing the commandment, he's just expanding on it and explaining it. But I say to you, whoever is angry with his brother will be liable to judgment.

And you know, Jesus is clear. We might not be guilty of breaking the sixth commandment with our hands or our head, but many of us can be guilty of breaking the sixth commandment in our heart.

Because the thing about anger is that it can, anger can bubble away below the surface, sometimes for years. But in reality, that anger is gnawing away at us.

[24 : 24] Because anger steals our joy. Anger steals our joy and gifts to us a grudge. A grudge with, sometimes with hatred, with jealousy, with bitterness, resentment, maybe even a desire for retaliation.

Sometimes there's even ridicule. Where Jesus said in the Sermon on the Mount that we'll begin to speak ill of someone if we're angry or annoyed with them. We'll insult them. We'll gossip about them.

We'll speak bad of them. Because as Jesus said, from out of the heart, the mouth speaks. From out of the heart, the mouth speaks. And this is why Jesus teaches that when there's anger in our heart, there needs to be repentance.

There needs to be reconciliation. There needs to be restoration. When there's anger in our heart, there needs to be repentance.

It's reconciliation and restoration. That's what Jesus emphasized in the Sermon on the Mount. He said, don't go to the altar. In other words, we'll apply it in the New Testament or in our own context.

[25 : 32] Don't go to the Lord's table if you are at enmity with your brother or your sister or someone else. Leave your gift. Reconcile yourself first.

Then come. Because when there's anger in our heart, there needs to be repentance. There needs to be reconciliation. There needs to be restoration. And that's not easy. It's not easy. As we're saying to the children, it's not easy to say sorry.

It's never easy to say sorry. It's a small word, but it's a hard word to say. It's not easy, but it's necessary. It's necessary. And it's necessary because Jesus went on to teach about it again in the Sermon on the Mount.

And with this, I'll conclude this morning. When Jesus taught us the Lord's Prayer, a prayer that I love hearing us saying together as a church family.

Jesus taught us to pray in the Lord's Prayer. As we were saying earlier on, when we pray to our Heavenly Father, we say those words, forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors.

[26 : 42] And sometimes in my mind and maybe in my heart, I want to not say those words because I know what they mean. But we have to, we say them, forgive us our Lord, forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors.

Therefore, we need to practice what we pray. And we've all prayed it. So we all need to practice what we pray. There needs to be forgiveness because life is too short for holding grudges.

Life is too short for holding grudges. I know it's so real, it's so relevant to us because life is too short for Christian conflict. Life is too short for community clashes.

Life is too short for family feuds. Life is far too short. We are only here for a moment. Our life, says James, is a vapor.

It's too short for holding grudges. So when there's anger in our heart, there needs to be repentance, there needs to be reconciliation, there needs to be restoration.

[27 : 52] And there shouldn't be he said, she said, this, that, and the next thing. No, when there's anger in our heart, there needs to be repentance, reconciliation, and restoration.

And yes, we might try it and they might say, no, well, if we've tried, we need to try. Because you know, house rule number six, the sixth commandment, you know, I find it amazing that there's so much in one little sentence.

House rule number six teaches us our life is precious and our life is short. Therefore, we're to preserve life. We're to protect life because our heavenly father, he's pro-life.

He's the giver of the gift of life and he promises eternal life to all who trust in him. And that's the beauty of the gospel.

He promises eternal life to us. Your life is precious, but the gospel offers you eternal life by trusting in Jesus, by committing your life to Jesus, by confessing him as Lord.

[29 : 00] Because there's a wonderful verse in the Bible. All the verses in the Bible are wonderful. But this verse, it says, he who has the Son has life.

He who has the Son has life. So, my friend, do you have the Son? Not the Son in the sky, but the Son who is a Savior, a Savior of sinners.

He who has the Son, do you have him in your heart? Do you know him as your Savior? Are you following him as your King? Because he who has the Son has life.

May the Lord bless these thoughts to us. Let us pray. O Lord, our gracious God, we give thanks to Thee for reminding us this morning of how precious life really is.

And we thank Thee, O Lord, for giving us life, for granting us life, even in our mother's womb, and bringing us into this world and bringing us into this world where we can have this opportunity to hear about the gospel of Jesus, a gospel which promises to us eternal life through him and through him alone.

[30 : 22] Help us, Lord, we pray in this world to bear one another's burdens, to pray for one another, to comfort one another, to see one another as those made in the image of God, and to love one another as Jesus has loved us.

O Lord, forgive us, we pray, for the hatred in our heart or the enmity that is often there. But help us, Lord, to love like Jesus loved. Help us to love and follow in his footsteps.

Because Jesus says to us that greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends. You are my friends. If you do whatsoever, I command you.

Bless us then, we pray. Guide us, we ask, and go before us. For we ask it in Jesus' name and for his sake. Amen. Well, we're going to bring our service to a conclusion this morning.

We're going to sing again in Psalm 139. Psalm 139, it's in the Singed Psalms version. That's page 181 that we're singing from verse 14.

[31 : 46] Psalm 139a, as we said, this psalm reminds us that the Lord believes we are precious. We are precious to him. Our life is precious to him.

We sang that in verse 13, how the Lord created us. He wove us on his loom when we were being formed in our mother's womb. And he says in verse 14, because I'm not going to be before my birth, you saw my body yet unformed within the depths of earth.

And all the days that I should live, which you ordained for me, were written in your book, O Lord, before they came to be. It's amazing how the Lord believes we are precious.

So we're singing Psalm 139, in the Singed Psalms version, verse 14, down to the verse marked 18. And we'll stand to sing, if you're able, to God's praise. Because I'm wonderfully made, with all your praise I tell, your workmanship is marvelous, on this I know full well.

When in the secret place my frame was made before my birth, you saw my body yet unformed within the depths of earth.

[33 : 52] And all the days that I should live, which you ordained for me, were written in your book, O Lord, before they came to be.

O God, how precious are your thoughts, I scan them from afar.

And as I seek to grasp them all, how numberless they are, where I took out them, they would be more than the greats of sun.

When I am with you, I am with you, still safe within your hands.

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God the Father, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with you all, now and forevermore. Amen.