

Six!

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[0 : 0 0] We're working our way through the Ten Commandments and we are now on commandment number six here that we read from Exodus 20. One of the helpful frameworks for looking at the Ten Commandments comes to us from just after the Reformation. So the confession that we subscribe to here as ministers and elders at St. C's, the Westminster Confession, in the Catechism they explore every single one of the Ten Commandments and they ask what is forbidden in this commandment and then what is required. And that's because the reformers and many people before them saw that in every single one of the Ten Commandments it's not just telling you what not to do but embedded within that command is also something that is your duty, what you're being asked by God to do, what you should live into. And so one command is do not steal and do not steal also means go and be generous. Don't spend the life of taking instead spend your life giving. So there's two sides to every single one of the commands and that's very much the case with the Six Commandment. You shall not murder, you shall not unjustly kill and the positive side of that is that this command is really about deeply about us seeing that it's giving us something, it's giving us a command that tells us look at your relationships. It's talking to us actively about how we consider and how we deal with the relationships we have in our lives and how every single one of us have so many relationships that are always in need of deep treatment, of repair, of reconciliation and that we've got to be fighting for those relationships. That's the positive side of the Six

Commandment. So let's think about it exactly in that format. What is forbidden and then what is required and how in the world are we going to do it? Okay so first what is forbidden? What is forbidden is murder. Let us pray. It's very simple. Do not murder, right? Some translations say you shall not kill and that's not very helpful because this is a more specific word than just killing.

It's the word murder and it's got three instances in view across the Old Testament and they include premeditated murder, murder in the midst of passion, you know, murder in the midst of sudden anger, rage or extreme negligence that causes death in some way. So these are the way this particular word in Hebrews used across the Old Testament. Never used in the case of self-harm or just war, anything like that. I won't get into any of that tonight but it's got this very specific reference. Okay fine. We all agree. Don't murder people. Actually everybody agrees in the modern world with this. So if you look at the first five commandments like we've been looking at, modern Western people have a really hard time with the first five commandments. But when you come to Commandment 6, everybody's okay. Everybody agrees. All the nations are happy with this for the most part. Part of that is because the modern Western ethic is singular. It's one thing and that's you can do whatever you want as long as you do no harm. And so in the first five they don't apply but when you get to number six, it's obviously a doing harm situation. It's stealing life.

In other words, for modern Western people we think in the language of rights. We think through the lens of rights, individual rights. And so murder infringes upon a person's right to live, to life. And so everybody is okay with this.

Murder is clearly harm at stealing life. Yet, let me give you quickly three ways that this commandment do not murder from the Bible confronts modern people.

[3 : 56] Confronts the modern West in particular. The first is that after the Enlightenment, when we came to the 19th century, the 1800s, Karl Marx was one of the first among many to say that modern people have the possibility and the requirement of seeking utopia. And that utopia, a real place, a real society, was possible. And with that he said that utopia is a time where we reach a social order where there is complete social harmony with no conflict and no violence.

And he said that that was real, that was possible, that we'd finally in a post-industrialized age, we wouldn't need religion anymore, instead we could have utopia. And we could really find that out. Now, two World Wars later, after the Russian gulag and all sorts of other happenings, it came to 1955. And that was the age where we said, you know what, that vision of ideological utopia did not work, and it's not gonna work. But in 1955, a guy by the name of Raymond Aaron wrote a book called *The Opium of the Intellectuals*, where he talked about that and he said this, he said this, he said, ideology is over, it's finished, we've just passed the World Wars. An imperfect and unjust as the Western society is in many ways, it has progressed sufficiently so that reforms appear more and more promising, that one day violence and unpredictable disorder will be gone.

And he said ideology is over and now in the modern West we can now finally get to the place where we put away violence and we get to, not utopia, no, that was silly, but something like it. And what he was suggesting is that the same thing keeps happening to modern people in every single political race, in every single great political moment, in every single rebirth of a nation, at the end of every war, at the beginning of every war, at the end of every revolution, somebody stands up and says, now, now we will get finally to such a state of progress that we will reach a point where there's no longer a land full of violence, no longer a land enchanted, engrossed in things like murder. And the Bible comes along with the statistics and says no. And for a reason that we're going to come to in just a moment, but let me say this, the current world average, the current world average of known keyword, known homicides over the last ten years has held pretty steady at 475,000 per year. So that means that there are 1,300 murders taking place every single day that police across many of the countries that participate in this actually know about. And that means that we haven't really progressed, not really, not really. And we're not actually going to. The second thing that the way this command confronts modern people is that

Peter Singer, he's a bioethicist at Princeton, he's one of the most famous philosophers in the world. And Peter Singer writes this, he says, there is no reason to say that human beings have a right to life any more than any animal does. And he says the reason for that is because you can't say humans have any inherent worth any more than any other creature that exists. And he says that because he thinks that worth is not in what we are, but what we can do, our abilities. And so he says that there are plenty of animals that have more ability than certain humans. And he says, you can never say that a human's life is worth anything more. It's all based on ability. He says that's the only way to say it. And you know why? Because if you don't believe in God, if there is no God, then anything goes. There's no way to ultimately judge worth, the value of a thing.

And if there is no God, then lots of philosophers have come alongside Peter and say, you know what, you're right. How can we really, in other words, how can modern, Western, humanistic society actually say that humans have quote, a right to life?

[8 : 15] What exactly is that right? What are you actually believing in when you say that human life is worth something? It's valuable, it's worth more than anything else. And so we don't live in a progressive society that's a culture of life. We live in a society that's a culture of death. And so we don't protect human life like we think we do from womb to tomb, from abortion to euthanasia.

Now the third way that this command confronts us as modern people, and this one's very short but the most important, and that's this, that we are trained in the modern culture we live in to think of human beings as good people and bad people. You know, there's a qualitative difference. There's the good people, the respectable citizen, and then there's bad people. And bad people are the ones that are prone to commit the great things that do not murder. It's really for them that there's this qualitative distinction that cuts through human beings between the good and the bad. The Bible comes along, Jesus Christ comes along in Matthew 5 and says one big thing tonight, and it's simply this, the lesson, and that's that murder is a problem of the heart. And that's why we're not progressing out of it. And that there's really no such thing as this great division, this qualitative distinction between good and bad. He says that murder is a problem of broken hearts. And you see that in Matthew chapter 5 verses 21 to 24. He says it really clearly right at the very beginning. Now he says, you've heard that it was said to those of old. He's talking about the

Sixth Commandment, but he's talking about it as it's being interpreted through the rabbinic literature, the rabbis in the first century. And for them, they would have said, look, if you've never laid your hand upon somebody else in an act of violence like this, breaking the Sixth Commandment in the most literal way, you're fine, you're obedient, you've observed it. And Jesus comes and says, but I say to you, if you are angry with your brother or sister, you are liable to judgment. And then later we say, well, what judgment he says? It's hell, hellfire.

He takes it all the way to there. And so Jesus comes in and says that immediately, Calvin said, this is the passage where we learn about murder of the heart.

Well, he gets that from 1 John 3.15. And it becomes even more clear there when John says, if you hate your brother or sister or neighbor, you've committed murder against them in your heart. And so we've got to think about how this happens to really understand what Jesus means here. James chapter one, verses 13 to 15 says that evil begins, sin begins in the desire and the deepest desire. So it uses this word in Greek for desire, but it's a word that doesn't just mean things you want, it means your deepest desires, all the way to the depths of your consciousness.

[11 : 06] And then it says, each person is tempted when they're enticed by their own desire and desire conceives and gives birth to sin through the hands, visibly, outwardly.

And you see the metaphor that's being used? James says that the way this works is that first you have a deep, deep desire, like unjust anger, hatred towards somebody, and it grows and it grows and it grows and it conceives. He puts it in the metaphor of giving birth and eventually it can become birth to something much more, a sin that comes out through the hands, not just deep down in the heart. But you see, he's saying that it's all in the same continuum. The distinction is not qualitative, it's just quantity, it's just one of degree that murder starts right down at the depths of who we are, deep down in the heart and it happens when we let anger boil and boil and boil.

So Jesus goes deep here and he says that anger, unjust anger, and hatred, deep down in the depths of the heart, is murder before the Lord. He takes it all the way to that extreme. How does this happen? Now here's how it happens. You'll see in the, we read from the ESV and in verse 22 it says, whoever insults his brother will be liable to the counsel. Older translations usually say whoever says rocker will be liable to the counsel. And the reason that they did that is because rocker is a word that has a powerful and specific meaning. So he's saying here that it's not just rocker, it doesn't just mean that you've got some mere concern for somebody. You know, it's not just when you look at your friend, your brother, your sister, your spouse, and you say you're doing something foolish and I'm concerned about you and I want what's best for you. That's not rocker.

Rocker is when you turn to your brother, sister, friend, neighbor, spouse, anybody in your life and you say, you don't say you're doing something foolish, I'm concerned. You say you're a fool. You say, you know, you're a cretin and there's a word here in this passage that is the Greek word that stands behind the English word moron and it's when you say deep down in the heart, you're, you are a moron. That is what you are, that's who you are. That's what the word rocker means and the way to think about it is it's like James 1, Matthew 5 is saying that the human being is like a tree and when you look at that tree you see the branches furthest extended out and those are like the sins that you see that are most visible but when you follow the branches to their source you go down, down, down all the way you see that something's happened all the way at the root to give birth to the farthest branch that's possible and he's saying that's where you've got to go to find the source for murder. It's deep down in the roots, it's all the way down at the bottom and the way it works is that it starts with unjust anger towards somebody. Maybe you've, you've sinned against somebody else or they've sinned against you and there's a reason to be angry, there's a justice in a certain type of anger but what he's talking about here is when that anger becomes grudge-holding and so you know it starts when you, when you, you become so frustrated with somebody in your life they annoy you you know every single time you're around them the eyes of your, the eyes of your heart are rolling constantly and there's a growing disdain, there's a growing disdain and eventually it creates an awkwardness that you can feel and eventually it creates a silence and finally it gets to the point of separation and that's what he means by the word rocker it's holding on because of an unjust anger a perpetual annoyance and actually separating from a human being because you have a real disdain for them deep down in your heart and you see what Jesus is saying he's saying that thou shall not murder is ultimately about relationships and he's saying that if we're not constantly tending to our relationships like a garden they're going to grow weeds and so anybody who's been married knows that this is one of the helpful metaphors that if you're not constantly working and working and working on your marriage then it's going to naturally grow weeds and there always has to be a pruning and Jesus is saying here thou shall not murder instead thou shall seek reconciliation and repair in all the relationships in your life all the time because without an active pursuit of reconciliation and repair the relationships in our lives are just going to grow weeds that's what he's saying here now let's move on we look at this and we say wow murder of the heart this is searching because any act of sulling somebody's reputation of unjust anger bitterness of grudge holding of saying that person is such a fool of putting forward the gossip train to push their reputation down a little bit more and a little bit more and a little bit more every single one of those provoking acts even if it's quiet even if deep down in the heart Jesus says that's murder of the heart and you and I say tonight how often do I do that oh this is this is a search and command then that's exactly Jesus's point because when you look deep down in the depths of your heart you say how often do I do this do I struggle with this and Jesus is trying to get Pharisees who are standing all around and thinking I've never broken the sixth commandment to realize you break it every day when you when you look at the roots when you look deep down at the bottom of your heart you've got to be willing to say I'm I

have murder in the heart according to Jesus according to 1st John 3 15 and that means that the Bible Jesus is inviting us here to realize something very important and that's it stands against every instinct of modern people and that's that the line between the most visible unjust behavior the most visible thing the most visible violent thing that we can think of the line between that and the simple act of murder in the heart is not one of complete qualitative distinction instead he's saying it's one of degree it's a development and he's saying that that's where it begins deep down in the roots and so Alexander Alexander Solzhenitsyn he was a victim of the evils of the the gulags the Russian gulags and he wrote a book about it the gulag archipelago and Alexander later became a Christian and when you read it you expect him at the very beginning to disparage of course the people that were responsible and he starts off an introduction very interesting he says you know don't don't think that I'm going to say that the architects and the actors of the communist gulag are the epitome of evil and then the rest of us are good he starts that way and he says no and this is a very famous line that's been quoted many many times he says no I've learned he says that the line between good and evil passes through every human heart and if Jesus is right here and he is we've got to say it passes through my heart it's very searching now what are we gonna do what is required of us how can we how can we survive secondly finally first in order to get a solution to this we have to think about just for a moment why murder is so wrong and we're not told that in Exodus chapter 20 or

[19:10] Matthew chapter 5 instead you go all the way back to the beginning God tells us why murder is wrong all the way back in Genesis chapter 9 right at the end of the flood and so this is what he says he says you shall not shed another person's blood because they are the image of God so he says murder is wrong because human beings are made in the image of God and so that means that life every single human life is the gift of God and that means no other human is allowed or can take that away life is a gift of God and it's only up to him to decide when it starts and when it ends and so he says look out and know that every single human being is made in God's image is God's image and so that's why human life is precious and more precious than any other life on the face of the planet and alright look here's what that means Matthew 5 that means that when we have disdain for people holding on to grudges it means that we are regarding them as less than the image of God that's what that's that's got to be the application that's got to be what Jesus ultimately means but when my anger my anointing my annoyance my bitterness furthering the sulling of their reputation by gossip about a person overtakes me and I have deep deep disdain for somebody in my life I'm regarding that person is less than the image of God and that's why

Peter Singer can come the great philosopher and say you know what human beings are not any more valuable than animals you can't really say that Peter says why because he has no doctrine no belief that human beings are made in the image of God you see the reason murder is wrong is because human beings are made in the image of God and so if you deny the existence of God you don't have a justification for why human life is so precious and so valuable and that's exactly what we learn here in Genesis chapter 9 now the second thing that that's why murder is wrong well then what is required of us now Jesus tells us Jesus tells us here he says in verse 23 if you're offering a gift at the altar and you remember there that your brother has something against you he says stop and go and be reconciled and then come back now you got to think about this in the context there is only one altar it's in Jerusalem in the first century and that means that if you live in Galilee or even further you've traveled in the first century 50 miles you've hitched your wagon you know you've prepared your family you've gotten all the supplies you needed you've traveled all the way to the city of Jerusalem it's taken you a long time it's been a big commitment you could have faced robbery robbery along the road along the way and now you're there you're finally there you've been preparing all week to offer your sacrifice and he says now if you're standing there practicing your religion and somebody has something against you there's real real bitterness he says leave it and go it's extreme you said I've traveled 50 miles to get here to the Jerusalem temple and now you're telling me to go and that means that he's picking up on something from the Old Testament which is that God perpetually over and over again says to us I desire mercy not sacrifice you know

I care less about your religion and your religious practices than the condition of your heart and he says if you're holding bitterness and grudge and disdain he said he's saying you've got to go and seek forgiveness that's what that's what's required of us that's what he says here go and be reconciled now when you attach this to Matthew 5 to Matthew 18 here it says if somebody's got something against you that you need to ask forgiveness for he says go Matthew 18 it says if you have somebody something against somebody else go and be reconciled and you see that he's saying that it works in both directions if you're the primary if you're the one that's sinned against somebody he says go if you've been sinned against he says go he calls the Christian in other words when you look at the Westminster larger catechism it says that the duty required of a person obeying the 6th commandment is actively to be a peacemaker to seek peacemaking now last thing how can we do that I was helped by Tim Keller's book on forgiveness because he takes this command and works through a thousand situations many many different instances so it's important to say that we can't tonight talk about all the nuances all the ways all the big ways and the little ways that this applies to us because there are all sorts of situations where a person cannot and should not go find somebody to seek reconciliation of course that's very true and so I encourage you to read that book where that's talked about here and there but in a most basic way what we're being told to do here is two things inner repentance and forgiveness and then external repentance and forgiveness now internal repentance and forgiveness is so important and what is it internal repentance internal repentance is when you've done something against somebody else and you say before God deep down in your heart without any conditions this is what I did and I know it was wrong it's sin you know it's not it's not the language of if I offended this person in some way then I am sorry for it and that's that's repentance with conditions and it's not repentance instead it's saying internally what I did I did and it was wrong and even if you were the person that's been sinned against in some relationship that needs tending he talks about the attitude of repentance and the attitude of repentance is when you're you might not be the primary one that's caused this problem between you but the attitude of repentance is where you still say internally you know I know that I'm a sinner too and I know deep down in the roots of my heart what

I'm actually capable of and when you look and search and deep down to the roots you say you know there are things in my life too that I need to repent of and so that allows you to actually approach a person in a spirit of reconciliation because you approach them in a way where you see you see what you're capable of yourself and so that's inner repentance that leads to internal forgiveness and internal forgiveness happens when you say looking at the looking at the cross of Jesus Christ I do not need to be repaid for this I'm willing to swallow the pain to let it die deep down inside of me it hurts it causes pain because that's what Jesus Christ has done for me that's an internal forgiveness and you know I'm willing to cast this as far as the east is from the west now Keller makes the note that this may be enough this may be all you need to do because for most of us most of the time in most of our relationships we don't actually need to go seek reconciliation with people all the time about everything you know he makes the point that we don't we don't want to nitpick about every single thing that happens amongst us as friends and spouses and co-workers and colleagues and all sorts of things he says instead most of the time the way to heal our relationships is actually just very simple internal repentance internal forgiveness to just let it die right here it says because most of the time that's enough but sometimes we also are being called to seek external repentance and external forgiveness and that's when you realize no you know we've got to actually talk we've actually got to go and meet and try to seek reconciliation and healing in the midst of this conflict we need we've got to seek peacemaking let's close the condition how how can we become people how can we become people that live like this how can we come become people who can actually look deep down inside and see who we really are it's very searching this command and then turn and become peacemakers reconcilers with the people around us in deep deep relationships and I think the only way that that's possible is if you look deep down in the heart and realize I know how far sin goes down into me you know we believe in total depravity here which means that sin has gone down and corrupted every aspect of who I am in my soul and then realize but the grace of Jesus Christ goes deeper still in other words sin goes so deep it corrupts us to the to highest degree and yet the grace of Jesus Christ goes so much deeper it gets underneath it it heals the roots all the way at the bottom it gets up underneath the soil of sin and regrows you changes you changes your heart from the very bottom it gives life to a tree that's dead that's how far the grace of Jesus goes you know Jesus Christ is the only human being who never had a murderous thought he's the only human being who never breathed a single word of disdain he never had unjust anger and more than that he we shall not murder because human beings are created in the image of God but he is the fullness of that image he is the image of God in full he came to show us peace we became violent to him you know he came to teach us the way of reconciliation we murdered him acts chapter 2 we mentioned it last week Paul looks out at a crowded room in

Jerusalem with lots of people groups to tons of people that were not there at the crucifixion and he says you use y'all y'all crucified Jesus you put him on the cross he came to seek peace with his creation and yet we murdered him he was murdered at our hands and that means that we look at the cross and we see it's horror and yet we still call it good Friday and how can we and it's because when Jesus Christ went to the cross you know he was the boy the baby that came to die he knew what he was doing he came with the full intention to serve us to all the way to the bottom to be murdered by the people he made and that means that the cross was so intentional that God the Father received the sacrifice of Jesus Christ in your behalf and he gives grace to you by the Holy Spirit that runs so deep it goes all the way to the root it goes all the way to the bottom and can heal you and can change you it's the place of forgiveness for every thought of disdain that we've all had towards other people it's the place of healing now that means and this is true the last word that means we all we all can ask tonight you know where in my real what relationships in my life need tending what relationships in my life the weeds need to be pulled up from who do

[30 : 39] I need to go to what do I need to repent and forgive internally and then go perhaps and speak with somebody to heal a wound and a relationship but look before you do that the only way that that is gonna be lasting and truly powerful is if you see first the great wound that needs to be healed is you need to be reconciled to God you know we need to be reconciled with other people but before that we need to be reconciled to God and you can't be except he did it Jesus Christ did it the cross of Christ did it he reconciled you so tonight be reconciled to God by faith and then go and reconcile with the people in your lives that you need to reconcile with let's pray father teach us what it means to obey this command all the way to the bottom it's very searching Lord for us tonight as we consider all the ways deep down in the heart we've been disdainful and dismissive and unjustly angry and perpetually annoyed and gossipers seeking to hurt somebody else's reputation so Lord teach us the path of peace the path of forgiveness by helping us tonight by the Spirit to know that the cross of Christ heals and forgives every single one of our deeply deeply simple thoughts protect us Lord from those sins becoming anything more than that because sometimes they do and so we ask that you would teach us what it means to obey this commandment in both directions and we pray this in Christ's name Amen.