

Shepherd of the Hills Lutheran Church



Weekly Sermon Series

Taking Root: The Gospel Rules ...Loving Neighbor Exodus 20:13; Matthew 5:21-26

The Fifth Commandment: Thou shall not kill. What does this mean?: We should fear and love God that we not hurt nor harm our neighbor in his body but help and befriend him in every bodily need (Martin Luther's Small Catechism).

Having memorized the commandment as above so many years ago and not remembering any further discussion, I was sure that I kept this commandment spotlessly. How easy a self-righteous attitude develops.

It wasn't until many years later when in a study of the Sermon on the Mount that Jesus' words convicted me regarding my obedience of this commandment. For I knew I had broken it in my heart.

In today's study text Jesus says, "I tell you anyone who is angry with his brother will be subject to judgment." How many times have I for some perceived unfairness taken offense and felt hurt and angry? How often have I considered someone not as wise as I—even foolish—because their way of doing something was different from mine?

Jesus goes on to instruct us as to what we should do to obey this commandment. Even our offerings are not worthy if our hearts are not reconciled with our neighbor. This is so important

that we are to leave our offering at the altar and immediately go and reconcile the difference. This is not always easy to do, but necessary in God's eyes. In Matthew 5:17, Jesus says that he has not come to abolish the law but to fulfill it. This gives me the assurance that that which I find difficult to do on my own can be done through him who kept God's law perfectly. My efforts at reconciliation are only possible through God's Holy Spirit.

This commandment not only asks that I not harm my neighbor but commands that I do all I can to aid him. Is this where I fail the most, as I, in my concern for my own needs, appear apathetic to his? Here, too, I must ask for the Holy Spirit's aid in not only seeing his need but acting to meet it. My efforts to aid my neighbor in his needs are only a reflection of Jesus' acts on our behalf.

Dear God, we are reminded again and again that all you require of us is to do justice, love kindness, and walk humbly with you (Micah 6:8). Reverence for you and respect for our neighbor will follow, and thus our obedience of your commandments. In Jesus' name. Amen

-- Week of June 14, 2009