

You Shall Not Murder

DARRELL DELANEY

Since the fall of humanity, death has become a natural part of life. In some situations, we have come to accept this; but how are we to respond in situations where we hear of those who were murdered? Since our world is filled with brokenness, these things happen often, and in some cases, one takes the life of another. Fortunately, we have a caring God, who has given commands on how we are to live. In this episode of *Groundwork*, we look specifically at the sixth commandment and see what we can learn about how God wants us to live. Stay tuned.

SCOTT HOEZEE

Welcome to *Groundwork*, where we dig into scripture to lay the foundation for our lives. I am Scott Hoezee.

DARRELL DELANEY

And I am Darrell Delaney; and Scott, we are in part four of the eight-part series on the Ten Commandments; and so far, we have looked at the reverence for God in the first three commandments...

SCOTT HOEZEE

Right.

DARRELL DELANEY

Remembering the Sabbath in the fourth, and honoring our father and mother in the fifth; and today, we are going to look at the sixth commandment. It seems straightforward to me, but you know, in some cases people can...it can be difficult for them to understand what circumstances are and how things should go. So, we want to break it down today.

SCOTT HOEZEE

Right; as we have been saying throughout this series, Darrell, important to remember that God gave the Ten Commandments to Israel *after* they had been saved from slavery in Egypt. So, this wasn't...keeping the commandments wasn't a way to get saved, it is how you live after you are saved, which is the same thing in the New Testament, right? Jesus died for us, we are saved by grace alone, but then, we return to the law as a grateful way to live as God's people; and the sixth commandment...it is very simple. There is no adornment or embellishment: You shall not murder...

DARRELL DELANEY

Period.

SCOTT HOEZEE

That's it; that is the whole commandment. Probably, Darrell, if we were to look at law codes and rules and regulations from many nations in history, I am guessing that laws against murder are probably pretty close to universal across cultures. So, it is no surprise that this one is in the Ten Commandments as well.

DARRELL DELANEY

Life taking another life is always going to be a violation in whatever culture you are going to. Murdering people...killing people and taking lives...it is never going to be okay in any culture; and I think that for us

here today, it might be helpful for us to have a working definition of what murder is, so that we kind of have a common ground; and I define murder as this: One who chooses to end the life of an image-bearer, and that is caused by a sinful motive or attitude. So, I think also it is important that we make a distinction between murder and killing, because sometimes they are used interchangeably, and that can be really confusing as well. So, why don't we explain a little bit the difference between the two by using scripture.

SCOTT HOEZEE

We could be reminded of a well-known passage in Ecclesiastes 3: There is a time for everything, and a season for every activity under heaven: ²a time to be born and a time to die, a time to plant and a time to uproot, ³*a time to kill and a time to heal...*

Interestingly, of course, that well-known passage was picked up by a rock-and-roll group in the 1960s, the Birds, in their song: *Turn, Turn, Turn*. Of course, they actually turned that into an anti-Vietnam...

DARRELL DELANEY

Oh, yes.

SCOTT HOEZEE

You know, I swear it's not too late...now is the time to heal, they were saying; and yet, Ecclesiastes does say that there is a time to kill, and killing is perhaps...the killing of another human being certainly is never a wonderful thing; it is never something God wanted to happen, but in our fallen world, sometimes it does in ways that don't qualify as murder.

DARRELL DELANEY

Practically speaking about this, Scott, it is like, okay, so let's say I am drafted into the military. You know, we are in a war. It is a time to kill, because, I mean, we are out there fighting. We are trying to fight for our country so that we will be safe; or if someone breaks into your home, and you know, self-defense...it is a time to kill because you are trying to protect your family. The jury that has the decision to make in whether they decide this person who has committed a crime is going to have the death sentence or they are not going to have the death sentence. In Michigan we don't have it, but in other places around the country, we do have a death penalty. They have to decide; life and death is in their hands. There is a myriad of other grounds, but there is always a reason; but murder, on the other hand, murder is sinister because it has a motive behind it that is not very healthy. There is always a sinful motive behind murder.

SCOTT HOEZEE

And often it is fueled by anger. We are going to talk about that a little bit later in the program; and very, very often what happens in murder...you kind of alluded to this a few minutes ago, Darrell...what can sometimes happen is that in our anger, in our rage, in our desire for retribution and revenge, what we get blinded to is the image of God in another person, right? It is interesting, even in war, and wars are tragic, but you know, you think about a time like World War II, you know, when Nazis had to be stopped. Jews were being exterminated. This was an evil regime in Germany. It had to happen, but even in war, when soldiers need to kill other soldiers, there is this curious thing that I have read about several different times, you get propaganda...

DARRELL DELANEY

Oh, yes.

SCOTT HOEZEE

And what the propaganda does is it dehumanizes the enemy...

DARRELL DELANEY

It objectifies them...

SCOTT HOEZEE

Yes; in Germany, you know, it said all Jews were rats; and in this country when we got into it with Japan, they would have posters of these gross caricatures of Asian looking people with huge teeth, and menacing, so they didn't even look human. It is like you have to almost dehumanize your enemy, even in war, in order to justify killing them. Well, that happens in murder, too. You suddenly don't see this person as a sister or a brother or whatever, they are just a problem that you need to eliminate; and yes, again, we get blinded to the image of God in that person, and how precious each human life is.

DARRELL DELANEY

It is interesting that you bring up this point about objectifying. I have seen it in racial situations, where people of color have been objectified and caricatured, and these old stereotypes have been brought in to make other people fear, make other people feel that it is wrong; and in the situation with murder, you know, it is a heart issue; and I don't want to get too much ahead in this program, but I think we need to understand that there is something going on underneath that we need to address; and the retaliation piece and the vengeance piece, even though the Lord has said that vengeance is his, we sometimes want to take those things into our own hands, and that leads to major problems.

SCOTT HOEZEE

Maybe once in a great while somebody gets into a spur-of-the-moment fight. It just comes up out of nowhere, and somebody ends up killing somebody else; but yes, you are right. You know, in courts of law even you hear about malice of forethought...you know, this was planned...

DARRELL DELANEY

We can talk about that.

SCOTT HOEZEE

Yes, this was deliberate...this was avoidable, right? You could have turned left instead of right. So, those are the things that happen, and that is, I think, in our making a distinction between murder and killing, you know, like killing a crook in your house who has a gun and is threatening your family or something. I think that is really important, and in just a minute, we are going to turn to the scriptures, to one of the very first stories the whole Bible ever tells, and it is a warning story about murder, but also, the things that lead to murder. So, stay tuned.

Segment 2

DARRELL DELANEY

Welcome to *Groundwork*, where we dig into scripture to lay the foundation for our lives. I am Darrell Delaney.

SCOTT HOEZEE

And I am Scott Hoezee; and we are talking today in this middle program...the fourth program of eight on the Ten Commandments here on *Groundwork*...the sixth commandment. Simply put: You shall not murder. Darrell, we are talking about sort of making distinctions between killing and murder. One of the things we said that sometimes is common to both, though, is objectifying, dehumanizing, blinding yourself to the image of God in the other person; but in the Bible...we don't get very far in the Bible before we get to a really, really tragic story.

DARRELL DELANEY

Yes; so, Chapter 3 is the fall of humanity, and then right in Chapter 4 we see the first murder recorded in scripture; and it is in Chapter 4 where we will start reading: Adam made love to his wife Eve, and she became pregnant and gave birth to Cain. She said, "With the help of the Lord I have brought forth a man."² Later she gave birth to his brother Abel. Now, Abel kept flocks and Cain worked the soil.³ In the course of time Cain brought some of the fruits of the soil as an offering to the Lord.⁴ And Abel also brought an offering—fat portions from some of the firstborn of his flock. The Lord looked with favor on Abel and his

offering, ⁵but on Cain and his offering, he did not look with favor. So Cain was very angry and his face was downcast. ⁶Then the Lord said to Cain, “Why are you angry? Why is your face downcast? ⁷If you do what is right, will you not be accepted? But if you do not do what is right, sin is crouching at your door; it desires to have you, but you must rule over it.”

SCOTT HOEZEE

⁸Now Cain said to his brother Abel, “Let’s go out to the field.” While they were in the field, Cain attacked his brother Abel and killed him. ⁹Then the Lord said to Cain, “Where is your brother, Abel?” “I don’t know,” he replied. “Am I my brother’s keeper?” ¹⁰The Lord said, “What have you done? Listen! Your brother’s blood cries out to me from the ground. ¹¹Now you are under a curse and driven from the ground, which opened its mouth to receive your brother’s blood from your hand. ¹²When you work the ground, it will no longer yield its crops for you. You will be a restless wanderer on the earth.”

DARRELL DELANEY

In this passage it is just so tragic how this whole thing unfolded. I mean, Adam and Eve’s first kids...you know, people don’t want to bury their kids before them. They want to go before their kids...

SCOTT HOEZEE

Right, yes.

DARRELL DELANEY

In this situation, we see that Cain gave some of his grain, but Abel brought the best and the firstfruits of his; and so, in situations like this, I mean, I think about movies...I watch a lot of movies...and in the movies, you mostly have two things that constitute a crime. One is motive, and the other is opportunity; and so, because Cain did not have an offering that was acceptable and his brother Abel did, that gave him the motive that made his face downcast and he was angry. So now, he is looking for the opportunity, and that comes when he says: All right, let’s go out to the field...

SCOTT HOEZEE

Right.

DARRELL DELANEY

And it is really interesting how motive and opportunity showed up in the situation where he decided to take the life of his brother Abel.

SCOTT HOEZEE

Yes; the text is very subtle, but as you rightly pointed out, Darrell; Abel brought the firstborn—the best; Cain brought some; he probably kept the best for himself. I never could figure out how Cain figured out that his offering had not been accepted. What; did the smoke blow back in his face or something? I mean, what...how did he figure it out? I don’t know; but, one way or another, Cain knew that Abel was more favored; and sin is crouching at your door; it is like it is ringing your doorbell; don’t open the door, God...God gives him and out. God says: You are going down a bad path; stop. And the path he is going down is really the deadly sin...the second of the seven deadly sins...envy. He envies his brother, and when we envy somebody, and we only always envy a near rival, right?

DARRELL DELANEY

Yes.

SCOTT HOEZEE

I might dabble at basketball, but I am not going to envy Michael Jordan. I am going to envy the guy next door, who plays way better than me. That is the guy I am going to envy, because he is a near rival. A brother is a near rival, and what envy does is you feel diminished by the other person; you feel like you are living in their chill shadow; and envy just wants to end that; envy wants to get rid of the shadow. You want to get rid

of the source of diminishment...the one who is knocking... So, what do you do? Well, you try to knock the person down a few pegs; you badmouth him; or worse yet, you remove the source of your envy altogether and you kill him, which is exactly what Cain did here. So, envy and anger and pride, they are all kind of in the same soup, right? But that is what led to it; that is the real underlying cause here, and murder was the fruit of that other sin.

DARRELL DELANEY

Now Scott, earlier in this episode, you spoke about these crimes, and how juries determine what kinds of crimes they are. There are crimes of passion, where you just had a split-second moment where you lost it; but then there are those that are premeditated. The Hebrew word for kill in this verse is *harag*, which means you smite with deadly intent. So, he intended to do this—he planned to do this. It wasn't something that kind of snuck up on him and he just lost it. No; he was thinking about this for a while. So, I think Cain is just wrong on many counts, man. The murder that...he broke his relationship with his brother, of course...and then the second thing he did wrong was that he usurped this power that he was forbidden to have, and he took matters into his own hands when God could have helped him with this situation. Another thing he did...I mean, of course, you talked about "crouching at the door." He failed to heed God's warning there, and he had anger; and God was trying to help him understand what he could do with that anger; and he projected it onto Abel and made it Abel's problem. I think those things really led up to the reason why Cain murdered his brother.

SCOTT HOEZEE

Yes; you know, we have referred several times in this series, Darrell, to the kind of classic Reformed confession, the Heidelberg Catechism. In its treatment of this sixth commandment...and we are going to talk about this in the next segment of this program, too...but that God doesn't just condemn murder, he condemns everything that leads to murder...

DARRELL DELANEY

Yes.

SCOTT HOEZEE

And in this case, it was envy and the anger that it brought out in Cain. Cain didn't want to feel diminished by his little brother anymore, so get rid of him. What a terrible story to tell four chapters into the Bible. I mean, it is a remarkable story, but that is the honesty of scripture, I think, Darrell, that it doesn't try to sugar-coat stuff for us. It doesn't try to pretend like bad things never happen. It tells a story like this as a warning; and in the next program on adultery, we are going to read another story, which is in the Bible for a warning. So, we are being warned here, not just to not pick up a rock and split our brother's skull open with it, but to do all that we can to head that off at the pass; to listen to God and the Holy Spirit. When God says sin is crouching at your door, Scott, don't let it in—don't give in; and it takes real discipline to be able to...and real humility...to be able to listen to God, to head off those things in our heart that are leading us down bad paths.

DARRELL DELANEY

Speaking of that, in the next segment we want to talk about how the New Testament takes this whole murder concept to the next level, and how we are to respond, so stay tuned.

Segment 3

SCOTT HOEZEE

I am Scott Hoezee, with Darrell Delaney, and you are listening to *Groundwork*; and Darrell, we are in the final part of this fourth program on the Ten Commandments, and the commandment on not murdering. We just read the Cain and Abel story from Genesis 4. It is an early, early biblical warning against not just murder, but the things that lead up to it; but now let's turn to the New Testament.

DARRELL DELANEY

Now, this verse is from 1 John Chapter 3: ¹¹For this is the message you heard from the beginning: We should love one another. ¹²Do not be like Cain, who belonged to the evil one and murdered his brother. And why

did he murder him? Because his own actions were evil and his brother's were righteous. ¹³Do not be surprised, my brothers and sisters, if the world hates you. ¹⁴We know that we have passed from death to life, because we love each other. Anyone who does not love remains in death. ¹⁵Anyone who hates a brother or sister is a murderer, and you know that no murderer has eternal life residing in him. ¹⁶This is how we know what love is: Jesus Christ laid down his life for us. And we ought to lay down our lives for our brothers and sisters.

Man, Scott; I love it when scripture interprets scripture.

SCOTT HOEZEE

Right.

DARRELL DELANEY

This whole reference to Cain and Abel just takes us right back to that verse in Genesis. It just takes it to another level when he says: Anyone who hates a brother or sister is a murderer. Really?! What?!

SCOTT HOEZEE

Yes.

DARRELL DELANEY

Because now I have to think about what is going on in my heart. It is not about the physical act of actually killing somebody that is always the case. I have to do some internal searching now.

SCOTT HOEZEE

Exactly; and we have seen this in other programs, and we are going to see in the next program as well, when it came to the law of God, Jesus...particularly in the Gospel of Matthew, and particularly in the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus kind of ticks through a lot of the Ten Commandments, and deepens their meaning; and similar to what John wrote here in his first letter that you just read, Darrell, Jesus says: Look, I don't want you slipping a knife between a brother's ribs and literally kill him, but if you are so angry you say: You fool! You know, if you call somebody a dirty name, that is murder. You have murdered him in your heart. Now, let's admit, murdering somebody in our heart is, of course, not as severe as actually killing somebody, but Jesus is saying in God's sight, God looks at the heart, we know that from the New Testament...

DARRELL DELANEY

Yes.

SCOTT HOEZEE

God looks at the heart, and when your heart is full of resentment and vengeance and anger and, you are just sort of this seething cauldron of bad stuff; well, it is good if you never act on it, but God doesn't like seeing that in you because you might act on it; but even if you don't, you are not pure on the inside...you are not loving your brother or sister.

DARRELL DELANEY

And I think Paul the apostle picks up on some of these things, too, Scott, where...I mean, he doesn't really specifically name murder when he is in his epistles...when he is in Colossians and Ephesians or Galatians or one of those...but he deals with the attitudes and actions that go around it that make conditions that murder could be something that would happen; and so, I mean, not only does Paul remind us that we have been delivered and we have a new life through Christ's redemption for us, which should sound familiar because that is what we have been talking about how these commandments came to be; God delivered first and then gave the way to live; but then secondly, he deals with the things underneath—the things that make murder an option for some people—the sinful nature that comes from the old life that we should be doing away with because of Christ and his grace—these are the things that Paul wants to deal with, because that conduct is not helpful for the believer.

SCOTT HOEZEE

Exactly; and you know, John, in that passage we just read, he does what most of us tend to do: What is the opposite of love? Hate. True, but I have also been impressed by some writers who develop the idea that perhaps as much as hate, the opposite of love may be apathy. You just don't care. You just don't care about another person; or, you know, apathy can apply to lots of things, but in this case, it is not so much that you necessarily actively hate somebody, but you don't care enough about them to take care of them, either. A while back, you know...it was in the middle of the Covid pandemic, and of course, one of the big things that made the news was the murder of George Floyd at the hands of, or literally under the knee of Derek Chauvin, the Minneapolis police officer who was eventually sent to prison; but I read in this analysis in the news, where they said: If you look at the picture...look at the still picture, or even the video, and look into former officer Chauvin's eyes...this commentator said what you saw in his eyes was the most terrifying thing of all. He didn't hate George Floyd; he was totally blank. George Floyd wasn't even a human to him. He was just totally apathetic. He didn't care; and that was as chilling, this commentator wrote, as anything else. It was even more chilling than if he had looked hateful...

DARRELL DELANEY

Yes.

SCOTT HOEZEE

But he looked empty...like, you know, I could be kneeling on the sidewalk as well as a man's neck. What is the big deal? That is the kind of thing that blinds us to the common humanity that we all share in the image of God.

DARRELL DELANEY

Yes; when you are able to objectify people and make them less than human, your conscience is not brought into play; but when you love one another, your conscience is definitely brought into play. You are held accountable for that love, and that is why Jesus made it one of the top two commandments when they asked him that question.

Martin Luther King, on March 31, 1968...I know it was a few days after that that he was assassinated...

SCOTT HOEZEE

Yes.

DARRELL DELANEY

But at the Washington National Cathedral, he said one of his famous lines; and his line was this, "Darkness cannot drive out darkness; only light can do that. Hate cannot drive out hate; only love can do that." It is just like darkness...Jesus said this: Darkness cannot drive out darkness; it cannot drive out Satan. You need to have a different alternative; and Christ is the epitome of that.

SCOTT HOEZEE

So, I think on, you know, the positive side here...we often try to end with a positive take on the Ten Commandments, not just what they are against, but what they are for...and what the sixth commandment is for, I think, Darrell, is cherishing all life...cherishing every human being you meet, no matter how different they look from you, no matter what language they speak or where they came from or how they dress, God wants us to cherish each person whom we meet; and that means that we have a lot of internal work to do to root out of our hearts all the things that can lead to the apathy, the hatred, you know, the disdain that can lead to physical murder, but Jesus says and John says, it leads to spiritual murder. So, we need to root out our envy. When we envy somebody, we have to work on that because it is not going to lead us anywhere good; or if we are angry...if we feel aggrieved and we want revenge...we have to find a way to turn that over the God; let God bring the justice; and our duty is to do our best to let the scales fall from our eyes and see each other as cherished sisters and brothers made in Christ's image.

DARRELL DELANEY

And Christ gives us the example in that he gave his life; he had a sacrificial example of what it means to love one another; and when we follow his way of living, when we are ready to serve one another, look at other peoples' lives and benefits as better than ourselves, like it tells us in Philippians...if we see that, then we would know that God has given us a better way to live, and that he is in the process of taking care of us. Will it be easy? No, of course not; but it will be worth it, absolutely. Thanks be to God.

SCOTT HOEZEE

Thank you for listening and digging deeply into scripture with *Groundwork*. Join us again next time as we continue our study of the Ten Commandments by looking at the seventh commandment and discussing what it means to not commit adultery.

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DARRELL DELANEY

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