

**Here we have again the Word of God whereby He would encourage and urge us to true noble and sublime works, as gentleness, patience, and, in short, love and kindness to our enemies, and would ever remind us to reflect upon the First Commandment, that He is our God, that is, that He will help, assist, and protect us, in order that He may thus quench the desire of revenge in us. (637)**

Just as salvation is a gift from God, so also new obedience is something God works in us as a gift. The same Jesus who died for our sins is the Jesus who dwells in us through faith as born again children of God. He provides the works for us to do, and He provides the power to do them. We do well, then, to seek that power in prayer and to find it in our Baptism, in the Holy Supper, and in the encouragement of the Word.

God loves life. He created it. He sustains it. He redeemed it. And He will resurrect us to it. We see God's great love for life in His death on the cross to free us from the eternal death we've so richly earned. His Blood, shed for us, is our life, poured into our mouths in the Sacrament. Our life is in Him, and our life is His, and He is our life. Rejoice that Life Himself has so loved you and longs for you to live, and treat life as it is: the blood bought gift of God and the eternal reward of all who love Him who loved us when we were dead in trespasses and sins.

**“You shall not murder. *What does this mean?* We should fear and love God that we do not hurt or harm our neighbor in his body, but help and befriend him in every bodily need.” Amen.**

## FIFTH COMMANDMENT

As we continue now in the second table of the law, God's will for our lives with our neighbor, we read together the Fifth Commandment with explanation from the Small Catechism, printed on your inserts: **“You shall not murder. *What does this mean?* We should fear and love God that we do not hurt or harm our neighbor in his body, but help and befriend him in every bodily need.”**

Notice that the Commandment forbids murder and not killing. In the first paragraph on your insert, which we will not read together right now but I'd encourage you to read at home, Luther reminds us that the Fifth Commandment follows the Fourth, which urges us to honor the authorities. The Bible is clear that the state is given the sword, that, if it chooses to do so, or, in the case of America and other democracies, if they are constitutionally allowed to do so, the government may take life by employing capital punishment. Of course, the government is also allowed to take life in a just war, authorizing soldiers to kill in defense of their country.

Individual Christians, however, except in self-defense, when they are defending their life and body, or the lives and bodies of their families or neighbors, are forbidden to take life. Life is sacred, a gift from God, and is to be protected in every possible way. While the quality of an individual's life may change, the sanctity of life always remains the same. For this reason, euthanasia and abortion, except when the life of the mother is at risk, are obviously contrary to God's will and most serious sins. We have an obligation to refrain from such things and, when possible, to work against their intrusion into our culture. Whether a day after conception or

ninety-five years old, life is sacred, and God alone gives it and is to decide when it ends.

We not only break the Fifth Commandment if we physically take life, however, but also if we harbor hateful thoughts. Luther explains this in paragraph 2, which we'll read together:

**Now this commandment is easy enough, and has been often treated, because we hear it annually in the Gospel of St. Matthew, 5, 21ff, where Christ Himself explains and sums it up, namely, that we must not kill, neither with hand, heart, mouth, signs, gestures, help, nor counsel. Therefore it is here forbidden to every one to be angry, except those (as we said) who are in the place of God, that is, parents and the government. For it is proper for God and for every one who is in a divine estate to be angry, to reprove and punish, namely, on account of those very persons who transgress this and the other commandments. (631)**

He expands upon this in section 3 on your insert, of which we'll read the last paragraph, 3d:

**Thus this commandment aims at this, that no one offend his neighbor on account of any evil deed, even though he have fully deserved it. For where murder is forbidden, all cause also is forbidden whence murder may originate. For many a one, although he does not kill, yet curses and utters a wish, which would stop a person from running far if it were to strike him in the neck [makes imprecations, which if fulfilled with respect to any one, he would not live long]. (633)**

Jesus tells us to turn the other cheek, but we by nature prefer an eye for an eye. It's not easy to repay evil with good, but it is our God's way, perfectly patterned in the saving life of our Lord Jesus Christ, who did not spew threats when threatened or swing back when

struck, but as a Lamb went uncomplaining forth to accomplish our salvation.

This commandment doesn't only deal with what we aren't to do, though, but, like the others, also tells us what to do, namely, to help and befriend our neighbor in every bodily need. We read together paragraph 4a on your inserts:

**Secondly, under this commandment not only he is guilty who does evil to his neighbor, but he also who can do him good, prevent, resist evil, defend and save him, so that no bodily harm or hurt happen to him, and yet does not do it. If, therefore, you send away one that is naked when you could clothe him, you have caused him to freeze to death; if you see one suffer hunger and do not give him food, you have caused him to starve. So also, if you see any one innocently sentenced to death or in like distress, and do not save him, although you know ways and means to do so, you have killed him. And it will not avail you to make the pretext that you did not afford any help, counsel, or aid thereto, for you have withheld your love from him and deprived him of the benefit whereby his life would have been saved. (635)**

From its earliest days, the Christian Church has been a strong advocate for life, rescuing unwanted children left exposed to the elements to die, visiting those in prisons, operating makeshift hospitals to care for the sick abandoned by others. Still today we support much of this work as a Synod and we do well as individual Christians to take advantage of the opportunities provided in our personal lives, so far as it is within our means, to show Christ's love to those in bodily need.

Let's join to read paragraph 5: