

Deuteronomy 5:17 “You shall not murder.”

The Birling Family sits happily around dinner to celebrate the youngest daughter's engagement. All is jovial and jolly as wonderfully prepared food and drink are consumed, and the conversations float around the happy topics of the upcoming wedding and the prospect of the family continuing to grow more and more healthy and numerous in the future.

And there is a knock at the door from an unexpected guest, a certain man with detective Goole written on his badge. He is invited in out of the rainy night, and the Father Arthur asks him what's going on? Is there a problem? Detective Goole holds up a picture and says: “A young woman named Eva has died. Down and out in the lowest and poorest part of town.” “Well, that's awful, detective, but I'm still a little puzzled. We don't know this woman; in fact, we've never even been to that part of town.”

The 5th Commandment is quite simple. Don't murder. You are not allowed to kill someone. And killing someone is wrong. It's pretty self-explanatory. I mean, in every law code that has ever existed, there has been a prohibition against murdering someone else. What is more is that murder is seen as the paramount of crimes, taboo, and universally deplorable.

I mean, it's making a concerted effort by some means to stop a person from living. It's awful, it's terrible, it's something that is marked on people who are in jail or end up on a Netflix docuseries. That's not me. That's not us. God, this commandment is for the bad people. The degenerates. The despicable. The reprehensible.

Detective Goole speaks to the Father, “Oh, but you do know her.” Detective Goole goes down the line and reminds each of the family members how they all had a part to play in this young girl Eva's tragic death. The Father refused to give wages to her proper wages for her labors, the Mother for conspiring to get her fired, down even to the young soon-to-be betrothed for turning her away for food when young Eva had nowhere left to go.

For those of you for whom this sounds familiar, it's because it's from a famous play from the 20th Century, titled “An inspector calls.” In which the happy family finds out that they are all guilty in a sense for this young woman's tragic death; they all contributed to the loss of life. This becomes abundantly clear as the detective exits the home with these pointed words: “This girl died—and died a horrible death. But each of you helped to kill her.”

While this example is a fictional and obviously advocates for a specific change in his society, I think it is accurate in describing our relationship to the 5th Commandment. Oftentimes we hear “You shall not murder” and instantly move on because, well, I haven't

done that. That is for terrible people. But when we examine what it is that the 5th commandment actually involves, we understand that we are all guilty of breaking it.

God established this command as a way of protecting the sanctity of human life and the time of grace. And if you think about it, anything that gets in the way of protecting, supporting, and honoring God's gift of life is breaking the 5th commandment. Being able but not protecting, shielding, or saving a person from bodily harm. If you refuse to clothe them, they freeze to death. If you do not feed them, you starve them to death. You didn't do anything, but you withheld your love from them and withheld the help that might have saved their life. "I was hungry, and you gave me nothing to eat." It's the same as if you are standing watching someone drowning and refusing to reach in and grab them.

And If murder is forbidden, so is everything that could lead up to it. Harsh words spoken in anger. Cursing and aggression. Even without any words that are spoken, Jesus condemns as murder in his sermon that even hating someone has already murdered in his heart.

Not only that, but we know that to obey the 5th commandment is to avoid the negative of murder, but also to do the positive of being kind, of helping and befriending everyone, including our enemies, taking care to develop patience and kindness to each and to all.

With the Bible as our detective barging into our dinner party, we understand something that we all have been guilty of murder. Of hating, hurting, not honoring, and respecting God's gift of life, on which he places such a significant emphasis on.

But thanks be to God. Because in this world of sin, we had no chance of ever keeping this commandment entirely. God sent his own Son to keep it fully in our place. Even though man is against God spiritually and even committed violence, hatred, and murder against the son of God, he did not return evil for evil. Still, he remained faithful to his perfect nature as the God of life. He took on human flesh to honor, serve, be kind, and protect the lives of others, even those who committed violence and murder against him. And even after the ones he came to save yelled to crucify him, he still stretched out his hands to bleed; even after he was beaten and spit on, he offered the prayer: "Father, forgive them for they do not know what they are doing."

He allowed himself to be killed, in perfect and holy submission, to give the forgiveness of sins to all people who have sinned against any commandment. He gave us new life and a new heart giving us a new life on this earth, as well as an eternal one after our time here is completed.

From Murder to Mercy

Deuteronomy 5:17

Because of that perfect sacrifice, you and I are seen as perfect in God's eyes. His righteousness, holiness, and obedience wrap us up in a white robe, cleansed and purified with the saving blood that flowed from our Savior Jesus Christ. The one who did not consider the sacrifice of his own life to be too great to save ours for all eternity.

Coupling the 5th commandment with the words and actions of our Savior, we learn something so vital for us as Christians, and the basis of the commandment: Life is important and precious. God has placed and given our own lives and the lives of every person we come into contact with. It is special enough that God provides food and shelter to keep it safe. It is special enough that God puts a fence around it with commands to protect it. It is special enough that God himself died to save it.

We should treat it as such. We should not only not kill people but also show love to our Savior by appreciating and honoring this precious blessing. We should be patient and forgiving, not hating others because of the wrongs that they have committed against us. We should help and serve others, giving aid and support to our families, friends, and even enemies. We should speak up for those who cannot defend themselves and who are in pain and danger and encourage others to honor life and breath as God wants us to. And why would that be? It's because Jesus was killed to save a murderer like me.

While I don't anticipate a detective Goole coming to any of our doors to show how we are all wrapped up and contributed to the death of a young lady, we understand that the 5th Commandment goes far beyond just killing someone, but involves our actions, our words, and yes even our thoughts. We give thanks that we have the opportunity to spread our love and honor of human life, as God did for us first.

The Fifth Commandment

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.