

“No More Killing”  
July 28, 2019  
St. Paul’s UCC Church  
Rev. Mary Beth Mardis-LeCroy

**Deuteronomy 5:1-22**

Moses convened all Israel, and said to them: Hear, O Israel, the statutes and ordinances that I am addressing to you today; you shall learn them and observe them diligently. The LORD our God made a covenant with us at Horeb. Not with our ancestors did the LORD make this covenant, but with us, who are all of us here alive today. The LORD spoke with you face to face at the mountain, out of the fire. (At that time I was standing between the LORD and you to declare to you the words of the LORD; for you were afraid because of the fire and did not go up the mountain.) And he said:

I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery; you shall have no other gods before me. You shall not make for yourself an idol, whether in the form of anything that is in heaven above, or that is on the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth. You shall not bow down to them or worship them; for I the LORD your God am a jealous God, punishing children for the iniquity of parents, to the third and fourth generation of those who reject me, but showing steadfast love to the thousandth generation of those who love me and keep my commandments. You shall not make wrongful use of the name of the LORD your God, for the LORD will not acquit anyone who misuses his name. Observe the sabbath day and keep it holy, as the LORD your God commanded you. Six days you shall labor and do all your work. But the seventh day is a sabbath to the LORD your God; you shall not do any work—you, or your son or your daughter, or your male or female slave, or your ox or your donkey, or any of your livestock, or the resident alien in your towns, so that your male and female slave may rest as well as you. Remember that you were a slave in the land of Egypt, and the LORD your God brought you out from there with a mighty hand and an outstretched arm; therefore the LORD your God commanded you to keep the sabbath day. Honor your father and your mother, as the LORD your God commanded you, so that your days may be long and that it may go well with you in the land that the LORD your God is giving you. You shall not murder. Neither shall you commit adultery. Neither shall you steal. Neither shall you bear false witness against your neighbor. Neither shall you covet your neighbor’s wife. Neither shall you desire your neighbor’s house, or field, or male or female slave, or ox, or donkey, or anything that belongs to your neighbor.

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Welcome to the sixth week of our summer series on the Ten Commandments! For ten weeks, we will focus on each one of the Ten Commandments – Ten Gifts, Ten Promises. I will preach on these commandments; but not only that, I will interpret the commandments musically as well! The Music of the Ten Commandments.

Today, we are looking at the sixth commandment, “You shall not murder.” Seems simple enough, but is it? I’m not so sure. For one thing, just *translating* this commandment is not so simple. Listen to just a few of the different English translations out there:

American Standard Version:	“Thou shalt not kill”
Jewish Publication Society:	“You shall not murder”
King James Version:	“Thou shalt not kill”
The Message (Eugene Peterson):	“No murder”
New International Version:	“You shall not murder”
New Revised Standard Version:	“You shall not murder”

It’s hard to tell from the Hebrew if the word is best translated as “kill” or “murder.” Most of us would probably agree that there’s at least some difference between “killing” and “murdering.” Scholars have spent hours pouring over this one controversial word, trying to find the most faithful translation.

And, like most of the commandments, the commandment as a whole is pretty sparse: “You shall not kill.” In English, just four little words. These four words don’t give us a whole lot of guidance, and so they leave a lot of room for a lot for what if’s. “You shall not kill.” But what if our nation is attacked, and decides it must go to war? What should we, as individuals, and as the church, do then? “You shall not kill.” But what does that mean regarding issues like abortion, euthanasia, and stem cell research? “You shall not kill.” But what if someone threatens violence to your household, your family? “You shall not kill”... what then?

God, you say, “Do not kill.”  
But still, it seems we will.

‘Cause what if our nation is called to war, what then would you say?  
Yeah, what if we’re attacked, what if they threaten us?  
Do you expect us to turn away?

‘Cause what if a woman turns up pregnant, and it wasn’t what she chose?  
Yeah, what if somebody took her dignity,  
Took more than just her clothes?

‘Cause what if somebody broke all the laws, & maimed & murdered some more?  
Yeah, what if they didn’t even seem to care?  
How do we settle the score?

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I learned in seminary that when in doubt, let scripture interpret scripture. So, maybe the prophet Isaiah can help us make some sense of this commandment.

It’s clear from our Isaiah reading that Israel knows a thing or two about killing. The people of Israel have enemies who are out for their blood, “ruthless nations” who want to destroy them. They, like us, live in a time of war, violence, and uncertainty.

But in this terrifying time, in the midst of the killing and the bloodshed and struggles for power, Isaiah has a vision. “Strong peoples will glorify you, O God; cities of ruthless nations will fear you for on this mountain the Lord of hosts will make for all peoples a feast of rich food, a feast of well-aged wines, of rich food filled with marrow, of well-aged wines strained clear.”

Isaiah’s vision suggests that God is not so concerned about telling us what we shall not do; instead, God invites a war-weary people to embrace life, to lay

down their weapons, and come to a feast. Even in the midst of a terrifying time – even in the midst of death – we are invited to hear and to heed the promise: “God will swallow up death forever.”

O Lord, my God, I exalt and praise your name.  
For you have done wonderful things.  
Your faithful plans, they have always been the same.  
But the wicked city your destruction brings.

*And on this mountain, Lord, you will make a rich feast  
A feast of marrow, a feast of well-aged wine  
You'll call us from the north, the south, the west, the east  
Oh, this sacred meal for us will be a sign*

All the strong ones, Lord, they will adore you  
The poor and needy, in you they will find rest  
A shelter from the rain, and sanctuary, too  
In the stillness of your love they will be blessed.

And you'll destroy upon this holy mountain  
The shroud of death that falls upon us all  
And joy will flow from there just like a fountain  
And we'll kill no more, Lord, when we hear you call.<sup>1</sup>

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God will swallow up death forever. Jesus knew that. Think about the way he lived his life. In peace, in community, in love. As one of the commentators I read puts it, “Jesus did not resort to killing, even self-defensive killing, to defend or to establish his kingdom, yet he was vindicated by God in his resurrection. He has shown us the way, the way of the cross, which defeats the world, but not on the world’s terms.”<sup>2</sup> As Christians, we are to live the same kind of life that Jesus did. Not on the world’s violent terms, but on Jesus’ terms of forgiving love.

You see, people of God, God in Christ sees us all as one. And God in Christ means to *make* us one. Everyone is my family. Maybe that’s why Jesus has us praying for our enemies all the time. Maybe he knows that if we do that enough, we’ll start to see them as family. Not as someone to harm or do violence to or kill, but to reconcile with. Someone to forgive. Someone, eventually, to call family.

*And other sheep I have  
Which are not of this fold  
Them also must I bring  
And there shall be one fold  
One fold*

You, you are my shepherd, Lord, but you are not just mine  
There’re other sheep out there  
Ones I don’t know. O help me God to know how much I do not know

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<sup>1</sup> Tune by Jean Ritchie.

<sup>2</sup> Hauerwas and Willimon, *The Truth About God* (Nashville: Abingdon Press), 1999, p. 83.

About your love out there.

But you, you mean to make us one, to make us one big fold  
One big ol' family  
And that, that means my brothers and my sisters I don't know  
They are my family

The sick, the lost, the friendless and the crazy,  
They are mine, my fold; they are my family  
And God belongs to them and what this means is  
They belong to me

The homeless, poor, the immigrant, my enemy  
They are mine, my fold; they are my family  
And they belong to me and what this means is  
I belong to them (3x)

*And other sheep I have  
Which are not of this fold  
And they shall hear my voice  
And there shall be one fold  
One fold*