

REFORMED CHURCH CLANWILLIAM : SUNDAY 9 DECEMBER 2012 EVENING SERVICE

If calamity comes upon us, whether the sword of judgment, or plague or famine, we will stand in your presence before this temple that bears your Name and will cry out to you in our distress, and you will hear us and save us. (2 Chronicles 20: 9)

Sing before: Psalm 46:5

Let us commence this meeting with God by declaring openly to one another and to God:

Our help is in the name of the Lord, who made heaven and earth. Beloved grace and peace be to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ, through the mighty working of God the Holy Spirit.

Amen

Psalm of praise: Psalm 103:2

Prayer:

Doxology

Worship

Confession of sins

Forgiveness

Gratitude

Prayer for the need of the congregation for the church, the authorities and the sinful world and appeal to God's promises.

General prayer

Enlightenment from the Holy Spirit for the sake of the ministry of the Word.

Amen

Psalm 144:3

Scripture reading: Genesis 4.

Scripture text: Genesis 4:23+24; and Heidelberg Catechism Lord's day 40.

23 And Lamech said unto his wives: Adah and Zillah, hear my voice; Ye wives of Lamech, hearken unto my speech: For I have slain a man for wounding me, And a young man for bruising me:

24 If Cain shall be avenged sevenfold, Truly Lamech seventy and sevenfold.

(Genesis 4:23-24)

Cain killed his brother Abel in the initial years of our world's history.

- The first murder on earth was committed.
- Consider the shock it must have been to the first people to see the first dead person.

Cain never showed any remorse for this horrible deed.

- Because God punishes sins unto the third and fourth generation, this deed lived on in Cain's descendants.
- We have read that it extended to his grandson.

From that day on until the present the deed and the sin from which it flows increased.

Let us consider the following matters:

1. **How murder started**
2. **When do we in fact commit murder?**
3. **What about mercy?**

1. **How murder started**

After Cain committed the murder the Lord promised to protect Cain.

- This meant that the LORD would avenge Cain's death seven times on whoever killed him.
- In the generations who rejected the LORD it grew negatively to the extent that Lamech said that his death must be avenged seventy-seven times.
- The LORD need not do this – Lamech himself shall see to it.

It appears clearly from these passages in the Bible that a murderer considers himself to be God, because he will exact vengeance himself – because he wants to maintain his own greatness by killing.

This was the beginning of murder.

- It commenced in the generation of people who rejected God and His Commandments.
- It commenced in people who wanted to determine their lives themselves.

It is logical that sooner or later a commandment such as the sixth Commandment had to come – you shall not murder.

- Someone who commits murder stands against the LORD and His Commandments – he stands with the generation of Cain and Lamech.
- A further reason for the sixth commandment is that the children of God must know Him.

One of the ways of knowing God is to know what He expects of His creatures.

- Service to the LORD is amongst others the keeping of His Will/Commandments.
- In this case the prohibition of murder.

A further reason for the prohibition of murder is that only the LORD can give life.

- Life comes at creation out of the hand of God for He creates the plants, animals and people with life in them.
- He is also the only One who can maintain life.

- Neither a person nor an angel can decide when somebody has lived long enough on earth.

The LORD alone can, together with all this, ordain that the soul of such person be cared for after his earthly life is ended.

- Only the LORD can do that.
- That is why the LORD preserves life.
- He does this by giving us His Law in which He orders and guides our life.
- He orders us in such a way that we understand that we do not have power over life - you may not murder.

He gives positive guidance in that He teaches us that not to murder is not sufficient – we must positively protect the life and property of our neighbour and help him to develop and further his life.

Why does God forbid murder?

- When we kill somebody we interfere with the work of God.
- We do not accept that the LORD has planned our life and that some conflict with other people is part of it.
- We want to take control – in other words, with murder we attempt to remove God's handiwork.

That is precisely what Cain did.

- He refused to accept that God favored his brother's offering and not his!
- With his brother out of the way only he would be left to bring offerings.

This deed could not go unpunished! Hence the sixth Commandment - you may not murder.

- It is not for you to kill because the LORD gave you different instructions.
- With your whole life you must glorify the LORD – all things in life are the work of the Lord.
- It is not part of our duty to be put in authority over one another to decide over life and death – only God disposes over this.

The sin of murder always has a development and a background – as with Cain.

- Usually somebody has angered us.
- Then we plan the murder.
- Actually it is a double sin for the Lord says that the vengeance is His.

We easily forget all these matters that carry great weight with the Lord.

- Do you see that we transgress this Commandment in many ways?
- Murder is not only the killing of someone.

The Heidelberg Catechism lists many acts as murder:

- The first is murder in thought.

- A good example of this in the Bible is Herodias who lays cunning plans to have John the Baptist killed.
- In this respect man is worse than the animals!
 - How often do we not plan all sorts of ways of avenging us on somebody!
 - Sometimes because we were injured and sometimes just because we do not get along with someone.
 - It lies in the nature of some of us to harbor thoughts of vengeance as a means of cooling our wrath.
- The second kind of murder according to the Catechism is **murder by means of words**. We all know this method.
 - Who does not know the venom in a word of gossip that can destroy a whole life?
 - Or worse – to curse somebody. It is a curse to wish somebody dead or some harm.
 - Or to torment someone viciously. This we do so sharply that the person cringes due to hurt.

If we may not do so by word we may not do so by deed, says the Catechism.

- It is not a lesser sin to slander someone than to kill him with your own hands.
- Both are sins – whether done by the hand or by the heart or by mouth.
 - Proof of this the word of the Lord Jesus Christ who said that before God a man has already committed adultery when he looks at a woman desiring her. *The same applies to murder. To the Lord it is murder whether it is only planning or actual killing.*

The application of this Commandment has consequences that go further than only us.

- If we may not kill we may also not employ someone else to do so for us.
- The commission of murder by employing another was well known in Biblical times and condemned.
 - David committed adultery with Bathsheba. On discovering that she is pregnant he instructs his general Joab to have her husband Uriah killed. David had two reasons for this – he wanted to have Uriah's wife and he wanted to avoid a public scandal involving himself.
 - Another example is Jezebel who with false witnesses caused the death of Naboth so that her husband could acquire his vineyard.

The matter of murder is so important that all aspects must be underlined.

- I must know that it is so serious that I may not even think of injuring another.
- The Lord also does not forbid only the killing of another.
 - The Lord also protects us against ourselves. You may also not kill yourself.
- Again this Commandment has a wider meaning than killing
 - You may not intentionally expose yourself or other people to danger unnecessarily.
 - You may also not unnecessarily do dangerous things.
 - Then you would be a potential suicide.
 - At the same time you would be trying God by seeing how far you can go with the Lord still protecting you.
- The principle is the same as when Satan tempted Christ in asking Him to jump from the temple roof:

6 and saith unto him, If thou art the Son of God, cast thyself down: for it is written, He shall give his angels charge concerning thee: and, On their hands they shall bear thee up, Lest haply thou dash thy foot against a stone.

7 Jesus said unto him, Again it is written, Thou shalt not make trial of the Lord thy God.

(Matthew 4:6-7)

We all need this Commandment. All of us transgress this Commandment in one way or another.

How are we to approach this Law of the Lord?

- In the first place the Law is spiritual.
 - In other words, it is directed at your heart.
 - The law is directed at the place where your planning is done.
- The Lord is our Creator and He knows that He created us so that all planning comes from the heart.
- The Law therefore tries to cut off the root of sin by discovering our deepest sins to us.

That is the reason why the Catechism lists a whole series of spiritual sins – envy, wrath, hate and avarice.

- All well-known sins in the history of mankind and in the life of everyone;
 - Consider the brothers of Joseph who sold him out of hate and envy.
 - Or vengeance – we have read of Lamech, the descendant of Cain.

All matters of the heart – as the Bible says from the heart come evil thoughts:

18 But the things which proceed out of the mouth come forth out of the heart; and they defile the man.

19 For out of the heart come forth evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, railings:

(Matthew 15:18-19)

3. What about mercy?

Yet the Lord tolerates us. Despite all the Commandments we transgress there is hope for us to enter the eternal life – if we repent.

- We pray in the Lord's prayer that the Father should forgive us our sins as we forgive those who trespass against us.
- This means that the Lord is fully prepared to forgive us our sins – also the sin of murder.

How? This Commandment refers us to Jesus Christ.

- We must love our neighbour as ourselves. - as Christ loved us.
- We must have as much patience and peace with our neighbour as we expect of him to have with us.

We can obey this Command only in the power of the Lord Jesus Christ.

- This Commandment has more meaning to us Christians than to the unbelievers because receive the eternal life through the Lord Jesus Christ.
- That is why He keeps the sixth Commandment over us. He keeps us in this life and in the life of the future.

He does not keep us simply so that we may each night lay our heads down in a peaceful sleep.

- He keeps us in this life so that we may live in heaven too.
- You may not murder then also means to us that we must believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and seek him so that we may have the eternal life – for without the eternal life we shall have the eternal death.
- It is suicide if we neglect this part of the Commandment in our lives.

Let us read together what is written about this in the Heidelberg Catechism, Lord's day 40:

40. Lord's Day

Q. 105.

What does God require in the sixth commandment?

A.

That neither in thoughts, nor words, nor gestures, much less in deeds, I dishonour, hate, wound, or kill my neighbour, by myself or by another: (a) but that I lay aside all desire of revenge: (b) also, that I hurt not myself, nor wilfully expose myself to any danger. (c) Wherefore also the magistrate is armed with the sword, to prevent murder. (d)

(a)

Matt.5:21 Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time, Thou shalt not kill; and whosoever shall kill shall be in danger of the judgment:

Matt.5:22 But I say unto you, That whosoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgment: and whosoever shall say to his brother, Raca, shall be in danger of the council: but whosoever shall say, Thou fool, shall be in danger of hell fire.

Matt.26:52 Then said Jesus unto him, Put up again thy sword into his place: for all they that take the sword shall perish with the sword.

Gen.9:6 Whoso sheddeth man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed: for in the image of God made he man.

(b)

Eph.4:26 Be ye angry, and sin not: let not the sun go down upon your wrath:

Rom.12:19 Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves, but rather give place unto wrath: for it is written, Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord.

Matt.5:25 Agree with thine adversary quickly, whiles thou art in the way with him; lest at any time the adversary deliver thee to the judge, and the judge deliver thee to the officer, and thou be cast into prison.

Matt.18:35 So likewise shall my heavenly Father do also unto you, if ye from your hearts forgive not every one his brother their trespasses.

(c)

Rom.13:14 But put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make not provision for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts thereof.

Col.2:23 Which things have indeed a shew of wisdom in will worship, and humility, and neglecting of the body; not in any honour to the satisfying of the flesh.

Matt.4:7 Jesus said unto him, It is written again, Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God.

(d)

Gen.9:6 Whoso sheddeth man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed: for in the image of God made he man.

Exod.21:14 But if a man come presumptuously upon his neighbour, to slay him with guile; thou shalt take him from mine altar, that he may die.

Matt.26:52 Then said Jesus unto him, Put up again thy sword into his place: for all they that take the sword see for good. But if thou do that which is evil, be afraid; for he beareth not the sword in vain: for he is the minister of God, a revenger to execute wrath upon him that doeth evil.

Q. 106.

But this commandment seems only to speak of murder?

A.

In forbidding murder, God teaches us, that he abhors the causes thereof, such as envy, (a) hatred, (b)

anger, © and desire of revenge; and that he accounts all these as murder. (d)

(a)

Prov.14:30 A sound heart is the life of the flesh: but envy the rottenness of the bones.

Rom.1:29 Being filled with all unrighteousness, fornication, wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness; full of envy, murder, debate, deceit, malignity; whisperers,

(b)

1 John 2:9 He that saith he is in the light, and hateth his brother, is in darkness even until now.

1 John 2:11 But he that hateth his brother is in darkness, and walketh in darkness, and knoweth not whither he goeth, because that darkness hath blinded his eyes.

(c)

James 1:20 For the wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God.

Gal.5:19 Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these; Adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness,

Gal.5:20 Idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies,

Gal.5:21 Envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like: of the which I tell you before, as I have also told you in time past, that they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God.

(d)

1 John 3:15 Whosoever hateth his brother is a murderer: and ye know that no murderer hath eternal life abiding in him.

Q. 107.

But is it enough that we do not kill any man in the manner mentioned above?

A. No: for when God forbids envy, hatred, and anger, he commands us to love our neighbour as ourselves; (a) to show patience, peace, meekness, mercy, and all kindness, towards him, (b)and prevent his hurt as much as in us lies; © and that we do good, even to our enemies. (d)

(a)

Matt.7:12 Therefore all things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them: for this is the law and the prophets.

Matt.22:39 And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.

Rom.12:10 Be kindly affectioned one to another with brotherly love; in honour preferring one another;

(b)

Eph.4:2 With all lowliness and meekness, with longsuffering, forbearing one another in love;

Gal.6:1 Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such an one in the spirit of meekness; considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted.

Gal.6:2 Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ.

Matt.5:5 Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit the earth.

Matt.5:7 Blessed are the merciful: for they shall obtain mercy.

Matt.5:9 Blessed are the peacemakers: for they shall be called the children of God.

Rom.12:18 If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men.

Luke 6:36 Be ye therefore merciful, as your Father also is merciful.

1 Pet.3:8 Finally, be ye all of one mind, having compassion one of another, love as brethren, be pitiful, be courteous:

Col.3:12 Put on therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, longsuffering;

Rom.12:10 Be kindly affectioned one to another with brotherly love; in honour preferring one another;

Rom.12:15 Rejoice with them that do rejoice, and weep with them that weep.

(c)

Exod.23:5 If thou see the ass of him that hateth thee lying under his burden, and wouldest forbear to help him, thou shalt surely help with him.

(d)

Matt.5:44 But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you;

Matt.5:45 That ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven: for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust.

Rom.12:20 Therefore if thine enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him drink: for in so doing thou shalt heap coals of fire on his head.

Rom.12:21 Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good.

Amen

Closing prayer.

Closing Psalm: 32:6.

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with you all.

Amen

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