

Do Not Murder

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Date: 07 June 2020

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- [0 : 0 0] The scripture reading comes from Deuteronomy chapter 5. Please follow along in your bulletin. Verse 1, And Moses summoned all Israel and said to them, Hear, O Israel, the statutes and the rules that I speak in your hearing today, and you shall learn them and be careful to do them.
- Then in verse 6, 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 a carved image or any likeness 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 serve them, for I, the Lord your God, am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children to the third and fourth generation of those who hate me, but showing steadfast love to thousands of those who love me and keep my commandments.
- You shall not take the name of the Lord your God in vain, for the Lord will not hold him guiltless who takes his name in vain. Observe the Sabbath day to keep it holy, as the Lord your God commanded you.
- [1 : 1 9] Six days you shall labor and do all your work, but the seventh day is a Sabbath to the Lord your God. On it you shall not do any work, you or your son or your daughter or your male servant or your female servant or your ox or your donkey or any of your livestock or the sojourner who is within your gates, that your male servant and your female servant may rest as well as you.
- You shall 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, 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, and you shall not commit adultery, and you shall not steal, and you shall not bear false witness against your neighbor, and you shall not covet your neighbor's wife, and you shall not desire your neighbor's house, his field, or his male servant, or his female servant, his ox, or his donkey, or anything that is your neighbor's.
- This is the word of God. Thank you, Karen. Let's just pray briefly. Father, as we come before your word, these ten words for abundant life, God, we want to hear from you.
- [2 : 5 7] Father, we are so aware that so many of these things touch on real points of pain in our life. I just think of last week as we spoke about relating to our parents, as we think this week about what does it mean to honor life, and the weeks to come, God, as we deal with these real areas of life that so many of us have experienced pain and hardship.
- God, we pray for your grace to wash over us. God, we pray that you will speak to us. We pray that we will see the good news of Jesus in these words, these ten commandments.

God, I pray for this morning. God, I want you to soften our hearts, Lord. We want to meet with you and encounter you and your word. And so, God, won't you open our hearts, won't you impress upon us your greatness and your glory, your majesty, but also your mercy and your grace.

God, I pray. Come help us, we pray, in your wonderful and powerful name. Amen. Amen. Amen. Okay, so once again, welcome. If you are in the overflow room, welcome to you.

If you're at the community center or at home or somewhere else in the world, welcome to those of us at Ebenezer. A very warm welcome to you as well. We are, as a church, working through this very famous body of teaching called the Ten Commandments.

[4 : 15] And these ten words that God gives to his people for their abundance and their flourishing, for their well-being. And these ten commandments are broken up into two groups.

The first four have to do with our relationship with God. And in them, God says, unequivocally, I want you to honor me and worship me alone. I want to be first in your heart.

Make sure that I'm supreme and preeminent in your heart. Have no other gods beside me. He says that we are to honor him and glorify his name.

And he actually commands us to set aside a set period of time each week where we rest but also reorientate our hearts to him, where we worship him. And then the next six commandments all have to do with the way we relate to other people.

And so last week we looked at how we relate to our parents, and that was a challenging one. And today we look at this sixth commandment, and in the Hebrew language it's just two words.

[5 : 15] It says, not murder. Do not murder. And so I think that's probably all I want to say today. Please, let's not murder anybody this week, and let's take communion, okay?

No, the sixth commandment is a little bit more complicated than that. And so let's dive in and see what God has to say in this passage.

The ten commandments have fallen on hard times recently. Not too many people think that the ten commandments are that applicable to our life. But this one, the sixth commandment, is one that most people still think we should try and obey.

I heard recently there was a poll, and 78% of people said that the sixth commandment is still a good law. It should still be obeyed and honored in society. I'm a little nervous about the other 22% that weren't so sure about that.

Let's hope they don't live in Hong Kong, right? But this seems like a pretty straightforward one. Do not murder. Let's dive in and see what is God's heart behind it.

[6 : 19] And so this morning there are four things I want us to see. I want us to see God's heart behind the commandment, God's scope. In other words, what is the extent or the limit of the command? What is God actually saying?

Thirdly, our hearts. And fourthly, our hope. Okay, so God's heart, God's scope, our hearts, and our hope. Okay, let's dive in.

So firstly, God's heart. Now, as we said, for most people, this command is pretty straightforward. It's not a good idea to go around killing people, murdering people. That's not a good society to live in.

It's not the kind of society we want to raise our children in. But in the Bible, the reason why God gives this command is actually far more profound than just utilitarian ethics.

It's far more than just pragmatism. Actually, the reason for this command is deeply theological. It has something to do with God's heart. And the reason why God is against murder is because human beings are not just a matter of flesh and blood.

[7 : 21] Human beings are not just carbon atoms or DNA strands that come together. Each human being has been knitted together by God, created by God, by his will, and brought into existence by his will and for his pleasure.

Each human being is God's handiwork, his artistry, his craftsmanship that displays something of his nature and his character. So think about this.

Imagine you go to a world-class art museum. You go to the Tate Modern in London or the Louvre in Paris. And you see a piece of art and you think, that art doesn't speak to me at all.

I mean, what is this rubbish, right? And you decide to pull out your cutting knife and you shred this piece of artwork. What's going to happen to you? Sirens, alarm, the police are going to jump on you.

You're going to soon find out what it looks like to destroy somebody else's famous, beautiful artwork. Friends, God says that each human life, each human being, irrespective of how we feel or think about them, is his artwork, his craftsmanship, his artistry that he has brought into existence by his own will.

[8 : 41] But even more importantly than this, the Bible says that each human being, each human life is one of supreme value and worth because every human being is made in the image of God and carries something of the image of God on them.

And what that means is that every human being, admittedly in our fallen, broken, sinful way, every human being carries something of the nature and there's an image of who God is and carries his unique fingerprint, his signature.

Every human being houses God's glory to some degree. No matter what your ethnicity, no matter what your background or the color of your skin, no matter your socioeconomic status, whether you're a billionaire or you sweep the streets for a living, no matter what your personality is, whether you're very kind and gracious or you're obnoxious and rude, every human being has indescribable value and worth and dignity because every human being is created as an image bearer, a representative of who God is, of the unrivaled supreme God almighty, the majestic God who is seated on the throne.

Every one of us carries something of a representation of him in our being. I'm sure you've seen this on the news. We haven't seen this in Hong Kong recently and I think that's a good thing.

But in some countries, when there are big protests, especially political protests, you'll see that some countries, the people will build an effigy. An effigy is like a paper statue of, let's say, either their leader or maybe an opposing leader, the leader of a country that they don't like.

[10 : 32] They'll build this paper statue, an image, a figure of a world leader, and then they'll march it through the streets singing and chanting, and what will they do at the end? They'll burn it, right?

That's right. They'll burn it. Now, why do people do that? Because it's the ultimate insult. It's the ultimate insult to take an image of somebody and to destroy it.

I don't know if you remember when Saddam Hussein was toppled. One of the things, the street scenes afterwards, there was a big statue of him in the center of Iraq.

And people climbed up on the statue and grabbed their sandal off their feet and would beat the face of the statue. To destroy or to insult the image of somebody is the ultimate offense.

Friends, God says that every human being, from those that are still in their mother's womb to those who are on their deathbeds, all people, all persons carry something of the image of God in them and are therefore supremely valuable, have dignity and worth and respect.

[11 : 39] All human life is precious. And when we directly oppose somebody or slander somebody, when we deride them or we call them names like somebody's useless or they're a piece of rubbish, we're not just deriding a person that we disagree with.

We're taking something of the nature and the image of God, that which that person represents, and are slandering or shredding the character and the assassinating the character of God. All people carry the image of God in them.

All people are persons for whom ultimately Jesus died on the cross. Okay, so that's the heart of God behind this command. What is the scope of this command, secondly? So this command, as we said, is two words.

Lo ratzach, not murder. But what does that actually mean? What does that involve? In the Old Testament, in the Hebrew Bible, there are seven or eight words for killing or ending someone's life or murder.

And the word in this command is a very specific word. It's the word ratzach. And it doesn't just refer to ending life in general, per se. It refers to taking the unjustly taking an innocent life.

[12 : 52] Okay? The unjust taking of an innocent life. So in the Old Testament, in the Bible, God actually makes provision. There are times when it is not contrary to his will to take another life.

At times in the Bible, when you're defending yourself, you're not responsible if another person loses their life. And the obvious example of this is self-defense. So in Exodus 22, it says if somebody breaks into your house in the middle of the night and wants to steal something and you get into a confrontation and that person ends up dying, you are not culpable for that person's life under the sixth commandment.

It's self-defense. Now interestingly, it actually says in Exodus 22, if this happens in broad daylight and you kill the person, well then things change. And the motivation for that is in broad daylight, you might be able to call for help.

There are other witnesses that can come and help you. But in the middle of the night, you're caught off God, you're defending yourself and someone dies. God's word says actually you're not culpable under the sixth commandment. Because we are required to defend our family and those that we are responsible for.

Now that's true on an individual level, but it's also true on a national level. And so actually in the Old Testament, the word ratzach, our Hebrew word here, is never used when dealing with legal matters.

[14 : 13] And what that means is that in the Old Testament, capital punishment doesn't fall under the sixth commandment. Now I'm not making a case for capital punishment. There are other problems with capital punishment.

And the most obvious of those is that ethnic minorities, those that are without power, are often subject to most injustice. And so there's other reasons why we might want to be careful about capital punishment.

But in God's word, capital punishment was considered a defense of the image of God. To murder somebody was so serious that it required the most severe deterrent and punishment for it.

And of course this also didn't apply to military campaigns. So somebody comes and attacks your nation, you shouldn't just roll over and say, no problem. We have the right to defend what is ours, and that may mean attacking other enemy soldiers.

So does that make sense? Okay, maybe I should go over that again. So Phil Riken, a theologian, says this. This is what the sixth commandment is about.

[15 : 17] On the one hand, it is forbidding all deliberate premeditated murder. Okay, that's pretty obvious. It's also forbidding manslaughter committed in fits of rage.

So you lose your temper with someone, and you hit them, you beat them, you are culpable and responsible for that. But it also holds responsible those who cause someone's death through reckless or careless living.

So drunk driving, somebody gets killed, you are culpable and responsible for that person's life. A mother or a father leaves and abandons their children, and their children pass away, you are culpable, you are responsible for that person's life.

Now this all may seem pretty straightforward. I'm not sure how many of us have recently weighed up the pros or cons of committing manslaughter. Maybe you don't get on with a colleague or a boss.

I hope nobody is contemplating taking a gun to work this week. This all seems pretty straightforward. But as thinking Christians in the 21st century, I want to urge us to really think about the sixth commandment very carefully.

[16 : 21] And to weigh up what God's word says around the unjust taking of innocent life. And the reason why this is so important for us to weigh up and consider is because we live in an age, increasingly, in which is becoming not only tolerant, but fostering deliberate taking of innocent lives.

And where this is seen is socially acceptable. Some writers have described our age as the age of death. Friends, we live in a time in the world when taking with the sanctity of human life, the sacredness of human life is being made subservient to personal preference or personal convenience.

Friends, let us be clear here that we're living in an age where legalized and state-sanctioned killing is often seen, is now framed within the narrative as a basic human rift.

Where things like aborting of pregnancy, where things like euthanasia or doctor-assisted suicide, where even personal suicide are no longer seen as moral issues, no longer seen as something that God speaks to, but are seen as a matter of personal preference, as personal convenience, as a human right.

Friends, all human life, from the zygote that is formed at the moment of conception to the person that is maybe suffering dementia or end of life at 110 years old, all human life, irrespective of the color of your skin, irrespective of your nationality or where you come from, irrespective of your mental capacity or your social status or what part of the world you come from, all human life is deeply, deeply sacred because all human life carries within it the image of God.

[18 : 15] God's handiwork that God created, God brings about, it grieves God's heart and it robs Him of His glory when we insult Him, when we decide who is worthy of life and who is not.

See, this is challenging, right? It's easy to think, okay, let's not murder. But in our day and age, we need to think about these things really carefully. I know we've used this analogy, but imagine somebody comes to you and says, look, I'm going away, I've got a hundred million dollar painting, I want to entrust into your care, will you take care of it for me?

You say, sure, take care of it, you put it on your wall. But after a little while, you think, this is not very convenient for me. I mean, it doesn't really fit. And you take it down, you store it away, and then eventually it's getting in the way and you decide, listen, I'm just going to trash it, right?

It doesn't really fit with my heart. It doesn't fit with my style. It's not very convenient for me. What's that person going to say? Friends, God comes to us and He entrusts into our hands human life.

Sometimes the very young, sometimes the very old. And we live in an age in which we feel like the stewardship of those human lives are a matter of personal preference, of personal freedom.

[19 : 43] Friends, God gives us this incredible responsibility to care for His people, His creation, His image bearers. And the point here is that if we allow our moral compass to be determined by the culture of our day, we need to be very careful because the cultural times are shifting so quickly, so rapidly, that as Malcolm Muggeridge said, what one generation considers a war crime, the next generation considers an act of compassion.

And so if we take our moral and ethical cues from the cultural tides in which we live in, friends, we're going to be deeply confused. But over and against this, against the shifting sands of our culture, God speaks a word.

And it's a word of clarity, it's a word of truth, and God's truth is always a word of freedom. God says that He is God and that we are not. He is the one who gives life and takes it away.

And that each and every human life, from the one that is fertilized one day old to the person that is a few days or weeks from their deathbed, all human life is sacred and is in His hands.

And human lives are not, the value of a human life is not determined by their utility to society, but the fact that we are image bearers of the one true majestic God.

[21 : 01] Earlier this week, I was reading Revelation 4, this amazing passage that, where God is on the throne, glorious, majestic, angels are falling down and worshipping Him.

And all human beings, who are in heaven, fall down on their knees. And this is what they say, worthy are you, our God and King, to receive glory and honor and praise and adoration.

This majestic God, friends, has chosen that we should bear His image, should house something of His glory. Friends, human beings' value and worth is not found in our utility to society, but the fact that we are made in the image of that God, that majestic, glorious God.

Okay, so that's the scope. God's heart, God's scope. Thirdly, our hearts. Our hearts. Sorry, this got a little more heavy than I intended.

Okay, well, let's keep going. Scripture actually has more to say about the subject than that. It starts off talking about murder, and when we apply it to our own lives, we realize we need to think about these things.

[22 : 20] But actually, there's another level, and that is that all of us need to grapple with our own hearts. In Matthew chapter 15, Jesus is having a debate with some religious leaders, and the reason he's having a debate, and the reason he's having a debate, is because he's eating food, and he hasn't washed his hands.

And for the religious leaders in his day, this is a serious offense, because he's eating food that is defiled, or ceremonially unclean. And so they say to him, you are defiling yourself.

You are going to be ceremonially unclean, because you haven't washed your hands. And so the issue here isn't hygiene. The issue is religious and ceremonial acceptance before God. And so Jesus says, don't you realize, it's not what goes into your mouth that makes you defiled or unclean, it's what comes out of your mouth.

And the disciples are a little bit confused. They say, what are you talking about? And so a little later, Jesus explains to him, and he says this, what you put into your mouth, the food that you eat, just goes into your stomach and is expelled.

But what comes out of your mouth, the words that you say, the anger that you say, the slander and the backbiting, the anger and the vitriol that you say, those words don't just come from your stomach, they don't just come from your mind, actually they come from your heart.

[23 : 40] And that's the problem, says Jesus. Jesus says this, out of the overflow of the heart, the mouth speaks. For out of your heart comes evil thoughts, murder, adultery, sexual immorality, et cetera, et cetera.

These are the things that defile the person. Okay, so you see what Jesus is saying there. He's saying, actually maybe you've never gone and killed somebody, but when we slander somebody, when we talk about someone behind their back and we shred their character, actually the same root is in our heart.

John says this in 1 John chapter 3. He says, anybody who hates his brother is a murderer. And that sounds pretty intense, right? You think, hey, I've never killed anybody.

But actually when we foster bitterness and anger and hatred in our heart, actually the same root is common to both of those.

So John is saying this. He says, it would be insane if somebody came here to church on Sunday and we sang this amazing song we sang earlier, good and gracious God. Holy, holy, holy, Lord God almighty, you're good and gracious God.

[24 : 49] God, I love you. You are first and preeminent in my heart. And then Monday to Friday, they are a serial murderer, right? That wouldn't make sense. Those two things are incompatible. Well, John's saying actually the same thing.

When we come to church and worship, God, you are first in my heart. I love you supremely. Jesus, have your way in my life. But then we actually are fostering or harboring or growing hatred and anger and bitterness in our hearts.

There's something incompatible about that. A couple of years ago, people used to read the newspaper and they'd read about some, let's say, violent crime that took place and say, you know, the education levels these days, what are they teaching children at school?

Or maybe, people would read something in the newspaper, violent crime that takes place and they'd say, you know, black people or Asians or Hispanics or those Guaylos, right?

You just can't trust them these days, right? In South Africa, the country I come from, in the 1970s and 80s, if you were Caucasian like me, you were taught that people with dark skin were lesser humans than you.

[26 : 04] It was part of the system that you were taught. And so people thought that violence and murder and rage and these things were a matter of either your ethnicity or your education or your intellect levels or your upbringing.

But friends, don't we know that there are some very smart people that have got very advanced educations that have become murderers and killers of others? Friends, what Jesus is saying here is that the roots of these things isn't our education or the color of our skin or what nationality or ethnicity we come from, the root of these things is our heart.

It's our heart. And so Matthew chapter 5, Jesus is famously on the Sermon on the Mount. He says this. He says, We've all heard it said, Do not murder and whoever murders will be held liable.

Well, that makes sense, right? But then he says, But don't you realize anyone who is angry with hatred towards his brother is also liable, is going to be held liable.

Anyone who insults his brother is liable to the council. Anyone who says to his brother or sister, You fool, you imbecile, is going to be liable to the fire of hell.

[27 : 15] Friends, Jesus comes here and he says that actually the root of those things is true. And so maybe we've never gone and killed somebody, but actually in our hearts there's bitter and there's resentment that is growing and we're fostering.

Jesus says, We've got a problem. Friends, can I ask us, anybody here not been angry with somebody in the last six months or twelve months? Friends, anybody here never read the newspapers and just said some outrageous things about political leaders?

Friends, anyone here says we've never looked at anybody and thought, You imbecile. Can't believe you are like that. Friends, I know I have. And what Jesus is saying here is that the ten commands, Jesus doesn't say, Oh, the ten commands are a bit old, let's give it a modern upgrade.

What he's doing, he's going right to the heart of the ten commands. He's opening it up and he's showing what is God's heart behind it. And what's God's heart behind is that though we may be innocent before a court of law, we may be very socially acceptable, for many of us our hearts are bitter and twisted, angry, even hateful, murderous.

And Jesus is showing us here that murder doesn't come out of nowhere, that it starts off with this root cause and that maybe it never grows into full-blamed murder but actually there's a root that if left unchecked, the toxicity and the anger in our hearts is going to destroy us.

[28 : 42] Friends, maybe I can ask us here, do you find yourself easily getting angry when things don't go your way, when you feel disrespected or dishonored? Maybe you're towards your wife or your husband?

Friends, what about when our children don't do things the way we want them to? Can I just publicly confess here, last weekend was not a good weekend in the Murphy household.

On Friday, Clenna had a disagreement and it took most of the day to thaw out that disagreement and I thought things Saturday were pretty good.

On Sunday night, I don't know what was wrong with me but our kids, they weren't even that bad but they weren't listening, had to speak a couple of times and I just got so frustrated so we spoke about it, we dealt with it, half an hour later they're still not doing what I want, they're still not listening and I absolutely, I just got really, really cross.

Friends, I tell you that because I've got a problem. My heart is broken and wicked. Friends, and I guess I'm probably not the only one here. Friends, do we have a string of broken relationships?

[29 : 54] Every time something goes wrong, someone disappoints you, you explode at them. Friends, do you find yourself reading the news and calling political leaders offensive names, derogatory terms?

Do we find ourselves calling people cockroaches, dogs, taking somebody made in the image of God, the beautiful person that Jesus died on the cross for and reducing them to derogatory names?

Friends, do people at the office know that when the pressure's on, they better not interrupt us because they never know what's going to explode, what's going to come out of our mouths when we explode? Do we speak of people as valued representatives, sons and daughters of the great king?

Friends, lastly, maybe bitterness and resentment has fostered in our hearts and it's been there so long we don't even realize. It's just become normal. We are numb to the bitterness and the resentments in our hearts.

Friends, do we find ourselves being passively aggressive? We are jabbing and hurting people but doing it in a socially acceptable way. Friends, in a world which is absolutely charged with hatred and bankrupt of any sort of grace and mercy, where are we going to find hope?

[31 : 05] Where are sinners like me going to find hope? Where is our world going to find hope? And so lastly, our hope. Fourth thing is this. In the gospel of Jesus, Jesus gives us the resources to deal with our hearts.

And the gospel not only gives us the grace we need for forgiveness, the gospel also gives us the grace we need to change. And so let's look at those two things. Firstly, the grace for forgiveness.

Friends, I know that all of us here have to live with the choices that we've made. For some of us, there's been so many years of broken relationships and hurt and harm that some relationships are destroyed.

Maybe it's destroyed your marriage. Maybe it's destroyed your relationship with your parents or your relationship with your children or the family member. And friends, the reality is we might need to live with those things. You can't just click your fingers, say abracadabra, and Jesus puts everything automatically right.

We have to live with the decisions we've made. Friends, maybe for some of us, we've even terminated an unplanned pregnancy. Maybe for some of us, men here, we've pressurized our wives or our girlfriends or mistresses into having an abortion.

[32 : 17] Friends, those are the decisions we have to live with. But Jesus tells us that it doesn't help us to gloss over it or to excuse it. Jesus tells us that the way to be free from our past is to acknowledge it, to own up to it, and to repent.

And Jesus starts off his ministry, when he comes and he's ministering, he starts off his ministry with these incredible words of freedom. He says, repent, for the kingdom of heaven is here, follow me.

When we hear those words repent, we often don't think of those as good news words. We think of those as words of condemnation, words of guilt and shame. But Jesus actually brings these words, he says, repent, turn from that, turn to me, because these are words of life.

These are words of freedom. These are words of hope. The only way to be free from our past and from the shame and the guilt is to come to Jesus. And so Jesus issues this invitation to be free from our past and he says, come to me.

Jesus starts off his ministry with these incredible words of freedom and hope. He says, repent and follow me. But then Jesus ends off his ministry, how? On a rugged cross.

[33 : 28] And in between those times, the gospel tells us that Jesus set his face for Jerusalem. Jesus wasn't avoiding Jerusalem. At one point his disciples and his family members say, hey, let's not go to Jerusalem.

They want to kill you. And Jesus sets his face for Jerusalem. Why? Because he sets his face for the cross. Friends, Jesus ends up his ministry on a cross on Calvary.

And the reason he goes there is to take my sin and my shame and your sin and your shame and the sin and the shame of all the world, those who would hope and trust in him and he would bear the wrath and the judgment and the punishment of God in our place so that we don't have to.

Friends, Jesus Christ had the wrath and the judgment of God poured out on him so that those who hope and trust in him won't experience it themselves. And so now, friends, because Jesus dies on the cross, not as an example of humility, not just as a picture of non-violent politics, but as an actual atoning sacrifice for us, now we get to hear the words of love and acceptance rather than the words of condemnation.

Friends, do you know that if you are in Jesus, despite your sin and my sin, despite your shame and my shame, that God the Father loves you with the same love that he has for Christ the Son because you are in Christ the Son.

[35 : 01] Friends, in the gospel, the same grace that forgives us is also the grace that changes us. There's this incredible line in the book of Proverbs, Proverbs chapter 15, I think it is, it says this, a gentle answer turns away wrath.

A gentle answer turns away wrath. Have you ever experienced that? There's somebody whose heart is so hard and bitter towards you, so angry, that no matter what you say, they're just going to respond with anger.

You try and have a conversation and they just want to kill you, right? Maybe not literally, but you try and talk things through with them and they're just bitter and hard and there's nothing you can say to soften their heart until they experience a moment of love.

Have you ever experienced that? I experienced that in our house, I remember about a year ago, one of my daughters, I can't remember which one, there's only two, right?

One of my daughters was absolutely losing it, absolutely losing it, something was going wrong and I was just saying that's unacceptable, it's not how we behave, you go to the bathroom.

[36 : 12] So she goes to the bathroom and she is furious, she has smokes coming out of her ears, absolutely steaming and if I try and say that's not how we behave, you stop that right now, that's not going to help anything.

So I go to the bathroom and I sit down there and I say, Sierra, Shiloh, whoever it is, I say, I think it is Shiloh, I said, Shiloh, I've got two things to say to you.

The first thing is this, I love you and I'll never stop loving you and there's nothing that you can do in all the world that will stop me loving you. I love you when you're angry and I love you when you're not angry.

I will never ever stop loving you. And then we had a conversation about our anger. And two minutes later, we walk out of the bathroom holding hands and we're best friends.

The Bible says that a gentle word turns away wrath. Friends, in the gospel, Jesus doesn't come with a word of condemnation. He doesn't come and say, you dirty, rotten scoundrel, you murderous heart, I cannot believe you're like that.

[37 : 21] Didn't I tell you to love people? What does Jesus do? He comes and he says, my son, my daughter, those of us that maybe have ended a life, those of us maybe who literally are murderers, those of us who've got such bitter and resentment and anger in our heart, he comes and he says, my son, my daughter, I love you.

Jesus comes with a better word. He comes with a gracious word, a gentle word. God the Father comes to us and says, if you are in Christ, it is paid in full.

It is totally forgiven. And that word of love, friends, will melt our hard and angry hearts and will change us to become the kind of people that he's called us to be.

Lastly, finally, this. Jesus gives us a grace to forgive us, but he gives a grace to change us. In Titus chapter 3, it says this. The apostle Paul's writing, and he says, previously, we were foolish, disobedient, deceived, enslaved by our passions.

We lived in anger and envy. We were hated by others and we hated them back. Sounds like our world, right? But when the kindness and the love of God our Savior appeared, he saved us.

[38 : 39] Not because of righteous things that we had done, but because of his mercy. That's exactly what we've been saying, right? His incredible mercy. And then he goes on to say, God saved us through the washing of rebirth, through being born again, by renewal of the Holy Spirit that he pours out on us generously through Jesus Christ the Savior.

Friends, this is what Paul is saying. He's saying, God's grace saves us, but it doesn't just wipe away the past and say, okay, best of luck, you go and live your life now. God's grace saves us, but it also changes us.

He causes us to be born again. He gives us a new heart, a new operating system, a new motherboard, a new DNA inside of our heart that is aligned with his heart. And then in addition to that, he gives us the Holy Spirit.

He starts to form us and change us, and we start to become the people that he wants us to become. No longer angry, foolish, disobedient, self-justifying, self-righteous, gracious.

He now makes us tender, forgiving, loving those that revile us. Friends, in the gospel, God the Father, Jesus Christ the Son, pours his love into our hearts.

[39 : 49] He says, my son, my daughter, I love you. And so look what Paul says here. He says, once we lived like this, angry, bitter, hating, and being hated, but when the kindness and the love of God came to us through our Savior, he saved us, not because of our righteousness, but because of his mercy and his grace.

In 1 Corinthians chapter 6, the apostle Paul writes, he says, don't you realize the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Murderers, adulterers, greedy, swindlers, and then he says, but such were some of you, such was I, but we've been washed, we've been cleansed, we've been justified, we've been set free.

Jesus comes and changes us. Friends, Jesus died to not only destroy the penalty of sin, but to also destroy the power of sin, to change us, to make us new.

In these words are words of life. God commands us not to murder, not to unjust, take innocent life. That may seem obvious, but God calls us to think carefully about that, how that works in our 21st century world.

But more than that, Jesus calls us to examine our own hearts, to bring our hearts before him, to be gracious and loving, gentle, and compassionate. Let's pray together. Heavenly Father, we come before you this morning because we so need you.

[41 : 15] God, your word convicts us. Father, chances are that though all of us are different by way of personality, background, culture, ethnicity, God, there's something that unifies us, and that is that apart from me, our hearts are broken and deeply sinful, but in you, God, you're doing an amazing miracle of grace.

You're changing us. Jesus, I pray for my brothers and sisters this morning. I pray that you do come and change us. God, may our hearts reflect your hearts. God, may we honor and love every person we encounter, even those that we have radically different ideas and opinions to, those that are on the opposite side of the political spectrum, may we love them and serve them, knowing, God, that they are your image bearers, created by you, fashioned by you.

God, we pray, come and work in our hearts. Make us gracious and gentle, we pray. In your wonderful and your powerful name, Amen.