



TAKING LIFE

TO THOSE WHO SAY THE TEN COMMANDMENTS have no application for the Christian, Jesus has something to say:

“You have heard that the ancients were told, ‘You shall not commit murder’ and ‘Whoever commits murder shall be liable to the court.’ But I say to you that everyone who is angry with his brother shall be guilty before the court; and whoever says to his brother, ‘You good-for-nothing,’ shall be guilty before the supreme court; and whoever says, ‘You fool,’ shall be guilty enough to go into the fiery hell.”

Matthew 5:21-22

In the course of human endeavor, considering mankind as a whole, there are only a handful who go so far as to murder. It may seem that today their numbers are on the increase, but they are, happily, still far in the minority.

Yet the world is increasingly populated by those who murder in other, less direct ways—people who suck out life and vitality, who invest themselves in pursuits dark and depressing. Our world—and, sadly, even the church—is filled with them: cynics who receive and then pass along everything with a sour, sarcastic tinge; those who learn bad theology, then make it their life's goal to share it, uncensored, with a neighbor; critics whose ambition it is to be judge and jury on every hapless soul that crosses their path.

So then each one of us will give an account of himself to God. Therefore let us not judge one another anymore, but rather determine this—not to put an obstacle or a stumbling block in a brother's way.

Romans 14:12-13

Murder is an admittedly harsh word that is just as applicable to the spirit as the mortal life, and the weapon of choice is often the human tongue.

But no one can tame the tongue; *it is a restless evil and full of deadly poison. With it we bless our Lord and Father, and with it we curse men, who have been made in the likeness of God; from the same mouth come both blessing and cursing. My brethren, these things ought not to be this way.*

James 3:8-10

On a spiritual level, the opposite of murder is “edification”—to build up. We are called to be a positive, constructive influence within the community of God. The New Testament writers take the sixth commandment, turn it positive instead of negative, and express it for the benefit of the Kingdom:

And He gave some *as* apostles, and some *as* prophets, and some *as* evangelists, and some *as* pastors and teachers, for the equipping of the saints for the work of service, to the building up of the body of Christ; until we all attain to the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a mature man, to the measure of the stature which belongs to the fullness of Christ.

Ephesians 4:11-13