“Law of Love and Liberty: Mending Murderous Hearts”

Exodus 20:1-13

(notes based on the sermon by Pastor Steve Massey, Hayden Bible Church, 8/23/20)

None of us would like to be called a Pharisee. Read Matt. 5:20. Is Jesus really saying that I should become a “super Pharisee”?!?! No. We must apprehend the spirit of God’s law, not follow a strict, legalistic adherence to the law. The law was given to a people who had been freed from bondage. (Q1) It wasn’t a list of rules to put them back into bondage! As we look at the 6th commandment, let us look not just at the letter of the law, but at the spirit of the law. These laws were given so that we could reflect the holiness of our Creator. God’s people reflect God’s image by the way they treat all the people made in His image. Now read Ex. 20: 1-13.

All people, ALL PEOPLE are made in God’s image and therefore have value. But at our core, each of us has the malignant seed of a murderous heart. It is part of our sin nature. Many in our culture are confused about this. Consider this: Earlier this summer, doctors in Minnesota worked heroically for 20 days to save a pregnant mother and her unborn baby boy, both with covid-19. Thankfully, they both survived. In those same 20 days, 47,000 unborn children were killed by abortion. Who gets to decide which life matters? God does! Every life matters to Him! The 6th commandment reaches beyond the taking of life to how we take care of each other. Like I said, our society seems really confused about this. (Q2)

Read Gen. 9:5-6. Something was wrong in Cain’s heart: jealousy, malice, murder… We are descendants of Cain. Our murderous hearts have been suppressed so that we don’t act out some of our evil thoughts (like that blankety-blank guy who cut me off on the interstate! Oops…) To devalue the life of any person is to devalue the image of God. (Q3) Pastor Steve defined murder as the intentional (premeditated), non-judicial taking of a life by action or inaction. Almost all societies around the globe would agree with this. The 6th commandment does not say “kill”, it says “murder”. The original Hebrew can be best translated as “No murder.” Look back at Gen. 9:5-6. Killing as capital punishment is definitely allowed. I would include in this “just” warfare for the defense of a nation. (Q4) The bottom line is this: God alone has the authority to give or take life. The 6th commandment compels God’s people to protect life, not take life into their own hands or affirm others who do so. Should abortion be considered murder? I say yes. It involves a person taking another person’s life. Our culture doesn’t call it murder; it calls it “choice”. Should euthanasia be considered murder? Again, I say yes. Our culture doesn’t call it murder; it calls it “mercy”. Should suicide be considered murder? I call it self-murder. Our ethics should not be based on the whims of culture, but on God’s word. All of these acts of murder circumvent God’s authority. One more thing that is very important: Are all of these acts of murder unforgiveable sins? NO! Absolutely not! (see 1John 1:9).

Read Matt. 5:21-22 to see how Jesus gets to the heart of the law. In these verses He is correcting the people’s wrong understandings about the law. Is Jesus redefining the 6th commandment? No, see Lev. 19:17-18. He is just correcting the wrong teaching from the Pharisees. Jesus is saying that a hateful, vengeful disposition toward any person (including yourself) violates God’s law. Valuing human life involves the heart, not just the hands; valuing human life is an attitude, not merely an action. Back in the 1790’s Timothy Dwight said, “Murder… is begun in unkindness; and that unkindness is begun in the early and unrestrained indulgence of human passions.” That person who cut me off in traffic was made in the image of God. I should never forget that! God’s people are to value and support all human life. God’s people should spend themselves in caring for people who cannot care for themselves.

So how shall we then live? Run to God’s shelter! Jesus is the only one who has lived up to God’s standard of holiness, **even in His heart**, even on the cross as they drove nails through His hands. He is our substitute. He took Hell for you! And now He offers forgiveness for all who accept His grace. Jesus did not come to condemn us; He came to save us (John 3:17). He accepts us just as we are, even in our guilt. And what’s more, He gives us a new heart! His people are a people who are not filled with hate, not filled with contempt. They are a people who speak the truth, always in love. Lord, we desperately need you to bring life to our dead hearts. We always want to reflect You and the way You value life. Amen. (Q5)

**QUESTIONS**

1. How are we like those Hebrews of so many years ago?
2. Where else does our culture devalue human life?
3. What does this mean? Do you agree with this statement?
4. Is there such a thing as “just” warfare? Do you agree with this concept?
5. Why did Pastor Steve specifically choose each word in the sermon title?

“I Stand Amazed in the Presence” (Gabriel)

I stand amazed in the presence

Of Jesus the Nazarene,

And wonder how He could love me,

A sinner condemned, unclean.

How marvelous! How wonderful!

And my song shall ever be:

How marvelous! How wonderful!

Is my Savior’s love for me!

2

For me it was in the garden,

He prayed: “Not my will, but Thine.”

He had no tears for His own griefs,

But sweat-drops of blood for mine.

When with the ransomed in glory

His face I at last shall see,

’Twill be my joy through the ages

To sing of His love for me.