

## Trinity 6

*“You have heard that it was said to those of old, “You shall not murder,” and whoever murders will be in danger of the judgment. But I say to you that whoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgment. And whoever says to his brother, “Raca!” shall be in danger of the council. But whoever says, “You fool!” shall be in danger of hell fire.”*

There are those who, when they hear that we are saved by grace and not by works, think that this means that good works unimportant for Christians.

They think that Jesus’ help is to lower the bar and fudge the 10 commandments.

—That Christ came to abolish the harsh and unloving law.

Those thoughts are struck down mightily by the Gospel for today.

For here, Jesus does not institute anything new but simply preaches the full meaning of the one law which is good for all times.

*“Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfill.”*

Jesus’ explanation of the 10 does not relax its demands; it heightens them.

Where the commandment prohibits murder; Jesus prohibits anger!

And this “without cause” is not to be understood in such a way that it is OK to be full of hate if you have a good reason for it.

Rather, it means that unless God has given you a station and office which commands you to rebuke and punish certain behavior, you are not to do so.

If someone hurts you in any way, it is not your place to hit them back or say angry things to them or about them; not or even to think evil about them.

As the Apostle says, *“Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves, but rather give place unto wrath: for it is written, Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord.”* (Romans 12:19) *“Why do ye not rather take wrong?”* (1 Cor 6:7)

For murder begins in the heart and from there works itself out into the hands.

When hatred and anger is allowed to fester in the heart, it will always grow so that it shows. No longer will you exhibit love to the one you hate, but will treat him with contempt and with minimal courtesy.

So Jesus says, *“Whoever says, ‘Raca’ shall be in danger of the council.”*

After festering in the heart, it bubbles out in your speech to others.

So Jesus says, *“whoever says, ‘you fool’ shall be in danger of hell fire.”*

For here the murder in the heart has already become apparent to all.

That is why Jesus is so insistent that you not allow anger to fester.

He would rather that you go to your brother and seek his forgiveness than to receive your most precious gift.

So Jesus says, *“I will have mercy, and not sacrifice.”* (Matt 9:13)

Also, if you are bringing your gift to the altar and there, remember that your brother has something against you, leave your gift and be reconciled...

Seek earnestly to do this and you will know how helpless you are to be just.

But don’t think that is the only reason for the law—just to make you feel guilty.

Jesus doesn’t say these things just to slap you around and wake you up.

He also means them for your good.

If you were addicted to drugs or alcohol and I told you to stop, I would not only be saying to make you feel bad, but I would also be desiring to help you.

The exact same thing is true when Jesus tells you to stop your anger.

While revealing your addiction, He also truly means to free you of it.

The Gospel is this: not that you get to keep on thinking and feeling and doing whatever you want, but that takes the damage into Himself.

You deliver Jesus to the judge, the judge hands him over to the officer, and he is crucified anew and does not get down until he has paid the last penny.

Like a doctor to dies of your overdose. A friend who is strangled by the noose that you placed around your own neck.

That is Jesus. That is the Gospel. And your forgiveness and new life does not depend on how well you have done in keeping the law.

It is a free gift from Jesus to you—Not partially, earned or deserved at all.

Jesus does not let the sin done to Him fester in personal anger toward you.

Rather, as One who perfectly executes the office of the Messiah, His focus remains on your salvation — no matter where your focus might drift and what pain it cost Him.

And His work as the Messiah is to fulfill all the just requirements of the law for your sake and to suffer all the wrath for sin—also for your sake.

And His office and work goes on to this day. To give you new life in Him.

His death for you is not only to remove the guilt of your addiction.

He comes to take away your addiction to sin!

The new life He brings is real and beneficial and desirable for you.

In the case of today’s Gospel, the promise is that your heartache and pain and anger which is in your heart because of wrongs done to you...

...do not have to stay there! You are not doomed to keep these feelings.

You are not cursed to feel this way until everybody treats you right.

Rather, Christ’s forgiveness—Christ’s baptism, body and blood—brings both a removal of guilt for your anger and also a removal of the anger.

By the preaching of the Gospel, Jesus promises to give you His mind and heart.

At the font you die with Him so that you need not die for yourself.

And here you rise with Him so that His perfect life is now yours.

And this perfect life does not remain a sterile and lifeless transaction.

Rather, Christ gives you His life in such a way that already here and now, your thoughts, words and actions begin to show Christ-like characteristics.

Of course, you will continue to struggle with these thoughts and feelings.

But now you have a cure: repent and receive Christ to be rid of them.

And trust the promise—look forward to the day when in heaven they will be completely and finally taken away.

So your heavenly life—begun already here—will be felt and seen by all—and most especially by you yourself. Through Jesus Christ, our Lord. AMEN.