

The Top 10 for Life Series #7
Cmdt. 6 “The Right Values”

Thank you so much for the special music this morning, Sonny, choir, and orchestra.
Thank you so much for the wonderful music today. It is great to be in a house where people are celebrating the victory we have in Jesus Christ.

Isn't it great to come in and have these beautiful Christmas decorations up today? I want you to know that here on Wednesday and then on Friday, after Thanksgiving, just hosts of people came and worked to put these up. I am so pleased with the beauty of our property and just the beauty of this building during this beautiful time of the year so I just want to say thank you to all of those who helped to make that happen as well as to say that I know that we will all enjoy these beautiful Christmas decorations throughout the entire season. Of course, last week we had gifts down here and we had the gifts before we had the decorations up.

We have been participating together as a church in Operation Christmas Child. We participated in an effort to try to get as many members as possible to take a shoebox, to fill it up with a variety of items that could be given to boys and girls in some of the most remote and some of the most needy areas of the world. Last Monday morning a group of our deacons, along with some other volunteers, and several members of our staff worked together to take all of those shoeboxes and put them in shipping cartons and then a big Ryder truck was backed up and they were all put onto that truck and taken to one of the regional gathering process centers for Samaritan's Purse ministries. At the final count we had 1,649 gifts given last week. Isn't that great! 1,649! I tell you, as a church I challenged you to have 1,000 of us to do this together and I cannot tell you what joy came into my life last Monday when I realized that we not only had met the goal but we just leapt over the top of that goal and I believe just demonstrated the heart and the commitment that we have as a church, meeting the needs of people, sharing the love of Jesus Christ, being involved in missions, and all of those things came together in this little shoebox project called "Operation Christmas Child." I am so thankful for everyone who has been a part of it. The thought hit me as I watched that truck pull away that in

some village in some part of the world 1,649 little children are going to be touched in a way that they would not have been had we not participated in this effort. So, ladies and gentleman, thank you! Boys and girls, thank you! Everyone, thank you for being a part of such a marvelous, marvelous victory I think in giving and sharing as a church. But, you know, for all of the joy that that brought to my life last Monday, seeing that truck and seeing those boxes and all of that happening was such a good thing, it could not remove the dark cloud that had come into my mind and into my heart just a few hours earlier. When I was getting ready for the day and just before I walked out the door of the house the 7:00 segment of the Today show came on. The headline story on Today and in the national and local news this past Monday morning was about an event that took place last Sunday evening on national television. It seems that Dr. Jack Kevorkian, Dr. Death, took his most latest effort to push and assert the agenda of physician assisted suicide to the front burner and beyond physician assisted suicide to take it to physician assisted death by showing on national TV on Sunday evening him giving a lethal injection to a man who was facing a critical illness and a disease and terminating his life on television. The interesting thing was that while all of the drama that would be associated with a television broadcast or a full-feature motion picture was brought around this. It was not staged. It was not just drama. It was videotape of a doctor bringing death to a patient. That began as the headline news article and released again into the airways of America the debate about the issue called, the term coined mercy killing in America. I found that late that evening, about 11:00, MSNBC still broadcasting and debating this issue. Then, of course, as the week has progressed it became evident that Dr. Kevorkian got what he wanted. That was that he eventually had so pushed the window of responsibility as a physician beyond the boundaries of law and of medical practice that the prosecutors, there in his home state, are going to bring a trial of prosecution against him and that is exactly what he was hoping for.

Dr. Jack Kevorkian is on a death quest. That death quest is to try to promote the ability and the availability for physicians to make choices and to assist patients in ending their lives. I recognize that from a purely situational perspective, and from a purely circumstantial moment, that there are times when all of us see people lingering and

lasting in awful illnesses. We look at that person and we sometimes wonder wouldn't death be the best solution? Frankly, death is the solution. But, what I see as an incredible growing danger is for a man, that man being a physician who is sworn by oath to protect and to promote health in human life, taking an active response and an aggressive role in bringing the end of a life of a patient and, by so doing, stepping out of the role of physician and stepping into the role of judge and terminator in the life of that person. I want you to know that I think that is a very dangerous thing. I think that we are just a step away when we come to that moment of being in a place where not only would physicians provide the medical procedure but where physicians and others would be involved in determining what life is viable to preserve and what quality of life demands that it be brought to death. I want you to know that that is not an issue that is simply circling in the airwaves of America today because I want you to know that God has something to say about that subject and he addressed it very directly and straightforwardly in the 20th chapter of the book of Exodus. Exodus, chapter 20.

I found it fascinating as we are making our way through this studies in these days, in the 20th chapter of Exodus, through the 10 Commandments, looking at God's Top 10 List for Life, one of the definitive things that God had something to say about was to talk about the issue of life. In particular, I think it is strategic that we understand that while these are not just rules, these are things that are just right in the economy and the kingdom of God. There are some strong words that God has to say about life and about death and I want us to look at them together this morning. They are found in Exodus chapter 20 and verse 13.

I am going to ask that you go ahead and bring up on the screen, if possible, this verse that you have printed there with the photographs. I believe you guys have it ready there this morning. Actually, not just that screen but the screen where the verse is printed out. There it is! Right there! I believe you are able to see it. Would you read out loud with me what the Bible says. Exodus 20, verse 13. "Thou Shalt Not Kill." Let us say it one more time, "thou shalt not kill." Now, immediately, by the presence of the vowel you recognize that this is from the original King James Version, the Authorized Version. It

has the old English Elizabethan English language and it says, “thou shalt not kill.” So, because of the choice of the translators, to use the word “kill” many times there has been a great debate and there has been almost, as though it were in the minds of the people, some sense of contradiction about what God means when he says the word “kill.” If we are going to understand what these four words mean to our life and to the application of the circumstances and situations in which we live today, we need to take some time to investigate it in light of the larger picture of scripture. In order to do that we need to understand what “thou shalt not kill” does not mean so that we can understand what it does mean.

When the Bible says, “thou shalt not kill” it is not referring, it is not referring to the killing of animals. It is not talking about taking the life of an animal. Now I do not believe that we should be, in any way, careless or casual or cavalier in the taking of animal life. I believe that all life that God has created is to be honored and to be protected and to be preserved. Frankly, I am thankful for efforts that are put on to try to preserve species and to try to preserve the animal kingdom as we know it and as we have seen it. But, at the same time, it is also clear in the Word of God, going back to the book of Genesis, Chapter 1, that God said to His people when He placed them in the Garden, “You shall have dominion over every bird of the air and over every beast of the field, over all of the living things, the plants, and over all of the animals.” It is clear before the Lord that we are to have the freedom to enjoy the animal kingdom but also to be able to partake of the animal kingdom. How many of you had turkey on Thanksgiving? Did you say, “thank you, Lord” when you ate that turkey? Amen! You better say thank you and eat with joy to the Lord! I hope that some of you have enjoyed a wonderful, delicious, juicy, sizzling steak in recent days. I mean, I think it is a great thing to enjoy that steak, all kinds of fish and of fowl and of beef that we can eat and we can enjoy and that it can all be eaten to the glory of God.

I think you also need to know that I believe the Bible leaves a window of opportunity for those of you who like to hunt. If you are a deer hunter, if you are a bird hunter, I simply believe the Bible leaves that open. If you want to go and kill Bambi’s mother that is up

to you. If you can have a clear conscience about that, then so much to you! But, just the same, I want you to know that I believe that the Bible is clear, that there is freedom at that point. Now, the Bible does give us a prohibition when it comes to animals. It says in Proverbs chapter 12 in verse 27, “the slothful man does not roast what he took in hunting.” It is a bad reflection on your character and who you are in the heart if all you do is kill to kill. But for any purposeful use of the animal kingdom, when the Bible says, “thou shalt not kill” it is not meaning that we cannot kill anything, that you step on an ant and go, “oh my goodness, I broke the commandment.” That is not what it means.

Secondly, when the Bible says, “thou shalt not kill” it is not only talking about reference to killing animals, it is not a prohibition against capital punishment. You see the word of God confirms in many places that there is a responsibility of government within society and within society itself to uphold the standard of life. Going back as far as the book of Genesis, chapter 9, verse 6, continuing in Leviticus, and echoed again there, chapter 24, verse the Bible says, “whoever kills a man shall surely be put to death.” Jesus quoted the Old Testament. In the book of Matthew, chapter 5 when he said, “an eye for an eye...a tooth for a tooth...a life for a life.” Now that did not mean it was automatic in the event that an eye was taken or a tooth was taken or a life was taken. What it did mean was that in proportion that you could not exceed that punishment but that there was a punishment to be identified with injury and with offense against someone else and so we find that in the Word of God. We find over in the book of Romans, chapter 13 that the Bible tells us that God has established the governing agencies and entities. Listen to what the Bible says. It says that those who serve as officers of the law they are God’s ministers to you. It says they do not bear the sword in vain. It says now, if you are an evil doer, you need to fear them but if you are doing what is good and what is right, then you know you are living within the law but the Bible speaks of them as bearing the sword, of enforcing the law. The Bible is clear that God has established government in order to keep law and order. In the book of Ecclesiastes listen to what the scripture says. It says, “because the sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily, therefore, the hearts of the sons of men is fully set in them to do evil.” Do you want to know why we have so many people who are involved in crime and repeat offenses? Because they just live in the process.

There is no point of clarity, of consequence, of judgement that comes and so many times it is so far off and it is so distant and is so separated and it is so processed that there is no effectiveness to it. The Bible is clear that God intends for law and order to be held in society by there being a healthy sense of fear and respect for government entities and for us understanding that whenever there has been an offense and an injury there ought to be a recompense and a responsibility.

I am somewhere in the line of descendants of President William McKinley. While I do not know that I have any presidential aspirations in my life, as a pastor I certainly hope that my outcome is much better than his presidency. William McKinley was assassinated. The interesting thing about Uncle Bill is that when he was assassinated his executioner was caught, tried, convicted, and put to death within 53 days of the crime. Isn't that an incredible thing! That is almost unimaginable today. Yet you see that the reality today is that we have a struggle with the justice system in America. It was Oliver Wendell Holmes who said, "justice postponed is justice denied." What we need to understand is that a major part of the problem we have today is that we have so dumb downed the role of law and order in society and we do not understand the effect of capital offense and capital crime and capital punishment. Sometimes we have missed the mark. That is another whole sermon in and of itself. I simply want you to know that when the Bible says, "thou shalt not kill" it is not prohibiting capital punishment.

Third, not only is it not prohibiting the killing of animals or capital punishment, when the Bible says, "thou shalt not kill" it is not intended to prevent all war. The book of Ecclesiastes says clearly there is a time for war and there is a time for peace. While war is a horror and a terror and while war is, in reality, something that I hope that I will never experience again in my lifetime, the fact of the matter is that because we live in a sinful and a fallen world, sometimes the only way that things are settled is by war. You know that God used war as a means of judgement upon wicked peoples in the Old Testament. Many times we need to understand that there are some things worth fighting for and there are even some things worth dying for. I believe several of those are the intention and the need to preserve freedom, the need to defend the innocent, and the need to stop evil

aggression. Sometimes, though it is never desirable, war is necessary in order to accomplish those things. Someone has said all that is necessary for evil to triumph is for good men to do nothing and so there is a responsibility that sometimes is associated with the enforcement and the reinforcement of authority in order and structure in society. So, “thou shalt not kill” does not mean the killing of animals, it does not mean the effect of capital punishment, and it does not mean to be a prohibitive against all war.

If you have a new translation of the Bible, a more modern translation than the old King James Version, your translation probably says what mine says this morning. Mine actually does not say, “thou shalt not kill.” Instead it says very clearly, “you shall not commit murder.” Is that what your translation says? Probably for a lot of you it does. You shall not commit murder and here is the intent of the law. It is that God has established a standard and that standard that we are to uphold is simply this, value human life. Human life is something that is to be valued. It is something to be honored. It is something to be treasured and what God is saying in the most positive sense is that you shall not commit murder which is a devaluing in your heart of the value of human life but instead your heart is to be full of love and value and honor for every human and every human life. Consequently, the root issue in the sixth commandment is what is the condition of your heart? The reality, the sad reality is, all of us have killer instincts. All of us have killer instincts. Now I know, when we read that commandment, “thou shalt not kill” the majority of you said, “well, this is one I don’t ever have to worry about. Check it off the list pastor I am not going to kill anybody!” You are probably right! I only know of about six professional hit men in the church so for most of you this doesn’t apply to you, but I want you to know it does apply to you. It applies to you because it was Jesus Christ our Savior who said, “you have heard it said, you shall not commit murder but I say unto you that if a man is angry with his brother he has committed murder inside.” There are really two ways in which we need to look at this statement, these four words that are put in front of us today.

On the one hand we do need to look at it in light of the confusion and the graying and the morass of the world around us and the cultural and situational ethics. We need to look at

this commandment and we need to clearly see what it is saying ethically and morally to the crucial issues of our day. But, then on the other hand, we can't just leave it there as a statement of fact. We can't just put it out there as some statement about today. Instead we have to take this commandment and bring personal application to our lives. What does God want us to see and understand? So I want to begin by looking at the ethical and moral applications and then we will talk about the personal dynamic of this application. Now when the Bible says you shall not commit murder I believe there are four crucial ethical areas of life. Crucial moral areas of life to which this commandment needs to find application.

The first is that when the Bible says you shall not murder it is simply a statement that confronts the terror of homicide, the terror of murder and we are living in a day that is filled with violence. We are living in a day where people feast, almost as though it were entertainment, on the violence and the devaluing and the taking of human life. And yet the Bible wants us to understand that God says He has put a premium value on life. Life is valuable to God and God alone wants to hold the authority over when life begins and when life ends. Tragically, the first murder that ever occurred is recorded in the pages of the Bible. It happened in the first family between the two brothers Cain and Abel, the descendants of Adam and Eve. It is almost unthinkable that you read of the Garden of Eden, that you read of this beautiful wonderful marriage relationship that Adam and Eve had and you see all of these of things that happen and then suddenly there is the fall, suddenly there is the entrance of sin, and then suddenly here are two boys and one son takes the life of the other. What a horrific thing it is to see as Cain stands there with bloody weapons having taken the life of his own brother! Can you imagine what that must have done to Adam and to Eve! Cain, what have you done! Yet in that murderous heart, Cain felt that he could ultimately usurp the authority of God and that he had the right to bring an end to the life of his brother with whom he had spite and strife and vengeance. I submit to you this morning that I believe that Dr. Kevorkian and Cain have a lot in common. It is simply the matter of having no value for human life and when the Bible says you shall not commit murder it is a striking statement against homicide, of taking, the willful taking, the plan and premeditated taking of another human life. While

we have become familiar with it we must never get comfortable with it in our world because God values life and his people who name the name of Jesus Christ, nothing could be more important than that we understand we must honor and uphold the sanctity of life. Every time we hear of a murder, every time we hear of a homicide, it should grieve our heart and keep us tender and walking in the fear of God.

Not only is this statement a statement of confrontation against the terror of murder, it is also, I believe, a statement against the treachery of suicide. I believe that suicide is a great treachery. It is destroying our families and it is destroying our young people today. It is the second most common killer among college students, the third most common killer among high school students. We have a generation of young people who believe there is no value of life. Why shouldn't they believe it, we have been telling them forever we have the right to choose. But the reality is that suicide is ultimately a rebellion against God. I believe that when the Bible is saying "you shall not commit murder" that what the Bible is saying clearly is that God does not in any way endorse, enable, or accept the treachery of suicide. You remember what happened in the life of Saul who was king over Israel? How that he went out one day to battle. He had been living in rebellion against God, an arrow hit him in his armor and he was dying there in his chariot. He looked at his armor bearer and he said, take my life, help me, give me a mercy killing here. Because the armor bearer feared God and feared the authority and the role of king and honored the role of the king, he would not do it and Saul committed the ultimate act of rebellion when he took his own life. It was almost as though Saul said even in death God, you won't choose, I will choose. I want you to know that I believe that suicide is a great rebellion against God and is a great treachery against family and against friends. I know the immediate question is are you saying pastor that anyone who commits suicide has committed the unpardonable sin that they are going to hell? No, I do not. I am not saying that. There is no action that can send you to hell except this action, refusing to receive Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior. The only thing that ever sends anyone to hell is refusal to accept Jesus Christ as the Son of God. I have done many funeral services for people who have taken their lives. I believe that some of them have known Jesus Christ but were so unable to relieve the emotional and

physical duresses of their life that ultimately they thought the only way out was to end their life. But, I want you to know that I believe it is a great offense against God and is a great offense against society and against family. It is an act of treachery, it is an act of rebellion and the Bible says you shall not commit murder.

Thirdly, when the Bible says you should not commit murder not only do I believe it is a statement against the terror of murder, that is homicide, and against the treachery of suicide but I believe it is a statement against the termination of euthanasia. I believe the Bible is very definitive at this point, that the Bible is clearly saying you will not willfully terminate the life of another and euthanasia is nothing more than an effort to choose when and where you bring an end to someone's life. Now the word euthanasia is nothing more than a combination of Greek words. The Greek word *thnatos* is the word death. The Greek prefix *Eu* means good. So the idea of euthanasia is good death, that somehow you can have a merciful way, a good way out. While I know that all of us have sympathy and compassion on those who suffer I want you to know that I do not believe that any of us can accept the role of modern day terminators who would choose to step in and to take the act and to remove and extinguish the life of another human being. Job, chapter 12, verse 10 says, "In His Hand (that is in God's hand) is the life of every living thing and the breath of all mankind." I absolutely believe that God will and God does bring death at that appointed hour and that appointed moment.

There was another man in history that believed he had the right to choose that he should push the envelope as to who should live and who should die. He didn't wear a white lab coat he wore a military uniform. His name was Adolph Hitler. Adolph Hitler said there is a race of people who are the obstruction to the progression of the human race and they need to be removed. I want you to know that I believe with all of my heart that what Dr. Kevorkian is doing is just as wicked and just as insidious as Adolph Hitler did. The reason I believe that is because once a physician, who is sworn to protect human life, begins to terminate human life we are only one step removed from a group of people who will begin to say that this life doesn't need to live any longer, this suffering has gone on too long, look how much it is costing to promote and preserve this life, let's pull the

plugs. I want you to know, ladies and gentlemen, it is a dangerous thing, a treacherous thing and I believe the Word of God is very clear on it and I don't know how much will be said and how many volumes will be printed and how many internet inquires will take place over the next few months, as this matter goes to trial, but I do want you to know that I believe that the Word of God is clear – you shall not commit murder.

There is one other area that applies to. That is it applies, it is a confrontation against the trauma of abortion, against the trauma of abortion. Listen to Psalm 139, verse 13 – “You made my whole being, you formed me in my mother's body. I praise you because you made me in an amazing and wonderful way. What you have done is wonderful, I know this very well. You saw my bones being formed as I took shape in my mother's body and when I was put together there you saw my body as it was formed. All the days planned for me were written in your book before I was one day old.” Personalize this verse in your life. Do you understand what it is saying about you? That from the very moment of conception that you were being formed according to the plan and the purpose of God and God put a value on your life even in the womb. Do you see the picture that is here? The picture of this little baby in the womb, fourteen weeks of age? I ask you what do you see there? Do you see animal life? Do you see plant life? What kind of life does that look like to you? It is human life! The Word of God is very clear, that we must always protect and always promote the wellbeing of life. We must honor life. Yet today in America one in four pregnancies ends in abortion. In America today thirty million children have been aborted from their mother's womb since 1973. That is more than all of the people killed in the wars in our history. Ladies and gentlemen it is a great trauma that has come upon us today and yet the Word of God is clear, you shall not murder. Now I know there are unplanned pregnancies. I know that there are moments of crisis and uncertainty and conflict that come to the lives of young women who face this crucial issue in their life but I want you to know that while there are unplanned pregnancies I do not believe there are any accidental conceptions because God shapes, forms, provides. I believe that if the church of Jesus Christ doesn't continue to echo the truth of the Word of God choose, as they would desire on the issue of abortion and human life. She said, “I couldn't go back to that church again.” She said, “I want to know that the church I go to

believes something.” Well, I want to make it real clear this morning, we believe in the sanctity of human life and we believe in the honor and the value of upholding God’s standard of life. Now that doesn’t mean that we don’t understand the complexities of the days and the times in which we are living. It doesn’t mean that we don’t have a heart that burns and yearns for those who have been through the trauma of abortion, for those who are facing the suffering and the lingering death process, for those who have known the invasion of suicide and their family, or for those who have been touched by homicide even as a lady came to me following the first service and told me it touched her family. I want you to know that we must always be the promoters of life.

While Mr. Kevorkian will get his day in court his real day in court will come someday when he stands in the presence of a Holy God. I don’t mean that to be mean-spirited. I pray that he will come to know Jesus Christ as his Lord and Savior but his problem is a heart problem. He doesn’t value life.

You know, interestingly enough, while we were here last Sunday evening worshipping together and that things was going on on television and the nation was watching a man die, those of us who were in this building last Sunday night, we received an injection also. It was an injection and an infusion of hope and encouragement as a young mother stood at this platform last Sunday night and related the testimony of something that had happened in their family. Certainly, if there has been a family who has lived at the edge of all the ethical and moral issues of life and death it has been this family. This morning, because I felt so compelled by what we were sharing today, I wanted her to share her testimony with you this morning. So, Elizabeth Mitchell, would you come and share some of your journey with Christ?

I am standing in the kitchen of a Ronald MacDonald House in January of this year. Jim and I have just slept in a strange bed, in a strange house, in a strange town. We miss our kids, we miss our home and we are hundreds of miles from them and what would seem millions of miles away from any solutions to our problems.

Our fourth born, James is dying. After two open-heart surgeries, three pacemakers, and innumerable surgeries and procedures, we have been told by his doctors that his only option for life is a heart transplant.

One of the other fathers at the Ronald MacDonald House is sharing his story. I am struck again that if our own trauma doesn't totally the pain we feel, we listen to someone else's. I said, "Don't you feel sometimes, don't you wish that you could carry their pain for them?" He looked at me and said something that I will never ever forget. He said, "I wish I would give him my face." I think I knew what he meant. Every time I was asked to pin James to his bed, to hold him down so they could stick another IV in his arm, or draw some more blood, I wanted to stick my arm out and I wanted to say, "Here, here is my arm, please put the needle in my arm this time but whatever you do, please don't hurt James anymore. Don't let him suffer." God has asked our whole family to go on a journey for the past five years and on this journey we were asked to. It is a trip I don't think I would have volunteered to go on but had I not taken the trip I would not have seen this view of God. So the dark tunnel on a long winding road with curves

Sermon preached by Pastor David McKinley 11/29/98