

Lesson 6

LIFE: THE GIFT OF GOD



Cain and Abel were the children of our first parents. Cain was a farmer and Abel a shepherd. One day, both of them offered sacrifice to God. God was pleased with the sacrifice of Abel who offered the best that he had. This made Cain jealous. When jealousy intensified, it became anger and hatred against his brother Abel.

Once, Cain invited Abel, his brother, to go to the fields. While they were in the field, Cain got angry, shouted at him and killed him. **God asked Cain: "Where is your brother Abel?" He said; "I do not know; am I my brother's keeper?" And the Lord said: "What have you done? Listen; your brother's blood is crying out to me from the ground! And now you are cursed from the ground, which has opened its mouth to receive your brother's blood from your hand. When you till the ground, it will no longer yield to you its strength; you will be a fugitive and a wanderer on the earth"** (Gen.4:8-12). This is the description of the first murder in this world. The punishment God gives for it is also cited there.

Human life is precious. God created us in His own image and likeness. That is the basis of the dignity of man. God alone is the Owner of life. Man is only a steward of life. Hence, it is the great duty of man to protect life. The fifth commandment of God is, "you shall not kill". This commandment teaches us that man has no right to take away any one's life.

The Fifth Commandment in the New Testament

Jesus explains the meaning of this commandment, 'you shall not kill', in His sermon on the mount. "You have heard that it was said to those of ancient times: You shall not murder; and whoever murders shall be liable to judgment. But I say to you that if you are angry with a brother or sister you will be liable to judgment; and if you insult a brother or sister you will be liable to the council; and if you say, 'you fool', you will be liable to the hell." (Mt. 5:21-22).

Jesus taught that we are violating this commandment not only when we kill someone but also when we get angry with another person and when we illtreat him. The thought and even the desire to hurt others in any way is also sin. Even the least actions of that kind are also sins against the fifth commandment. Jesus gives us also an exhortation to respect and protect life.

God gives life. We have the duty to preserve and nourish life making use of all the circumstances and facilities, which God has given. There are so many things in this world that harm our life. The fifth commandment asks us to recognize them and avoid them and to hold high the dignity of human life.

Threats against life exist in two ways. 1. Factors that destroy one's own life. 2. factors that destroy the life of others. Both these are serious sins against the Fifth commandment.

Sins Against Human life

Murder

Murder is conscious killing of man with hatred or evil purpose. It is a cruel action of destroying others life. 'Murder is the denial the authority of God', the Owner and Giver of life.

Suicide

Suicide is the conscious destruction of one's own life. By this, we are questioning the supreme authority of God over life. Man has the right only to nourish one's own life, not to destroy it.

Mercy Killing

Mercy killing is the act of putting an end to the life of the dying, the sick and the retarded, whatever be the means and goals. (CCC 2277). Even if the law allows it or not, mercy killing is equal to cruel murder. It is against the fifth commandment.

Abortion

Abortion is killing the fetus or the child in the womb. This is the meanest and most inhuman attack against human life. "For it was you who formed my inward parts; you knit me together in my mother's womb" (Psl. 139:13). Hence, killing the child in the womb is murder and a challenge against God - the Life Giver.

Terrorism

Human life has been destroyed as a result of certain acts of terror by some communities or movements. It is a violation of the Fifth commandment to destroy life through such attacks in the name of certain principles or beliefs. It destroys the right of man to live peacefully. All types of attacks are evils to be avoided.

Use of Liquor

Use of liquor, drugs, Pan Parag, etc. is a threat to human life. It destroys life indirectly and gradually excessive desire for liquor influences all the aspects of life. It hinders the nourishment of life. In one sense, use of liquor is equal to slow suicide.

Actions to Promote Human Life

We are obliged by the fifth Commandment not only to keep away from the sins against human life but also to preserve and promote human life with all possible ways.

Protection of Life

The fifth commandment demands us not only to guard against the destruction of life but also to protect life in all aspects. It also puts forward certain duties to protect our life.

Protection of Health

Man has a body and a soul. It is man's responsibility to protect the health of his body and soul. All men should get a clean environment, sufficient food and medical aid necessary to maintain health. Man has the duty to maintain his own health and of others. It is wrong to use poisonous elements in the production of food and to adulterate food materials.

Maintenance of Peace

In an age where war and quarrels are increasing, it is necessary to have efforts for peace. Attempts to maintain peace is a part of respecting life. It is the duty of all individuals, communities and nations to create an atmosphere necessary to live peacefully.

Protection of Nature

Man has a special responsibility to create an eco-friendly atmosphere. God has created nature for future generations too. Only if nature continues to survive, life will survive. Hence we have the responsibility to use and protect life in the right way. Pollution of the environment and excessive exploitation of nature are sins against life.

The fifth commandment - 'You shall not kill' reminds us not only of our duty not to do anything harmful to life, but also to protect and nourish life. As Christians, we have the duty to recognize the truth that life is God's gift, and become agents of nourishing life. Let us be vigilant to protect life and thus attain eternal life.

Let us Pray

God, Giver of life, we thank you for the precious gift of life.
Bless us to respect and protect this gift.

Read the Word of God and Narrate

Gen. 4:1-12

Word of God for our Guidance

“God created humankind in his image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them”
(Gen. 1:27).

Let us Do

Visit a patient and console him/her.

My Resolution

I will not use any liquor.

Find out the Answer

1. Why is it man's important responsibility to protect life?
2. What are the sins against human life?
3. Why is abortion a sin?
4. What are the means to protect life?
5. Why is use of liquor evil?