



Links Players

YOU SHALL NOT...

You have heard that it was said to those of old, 'You shall not murder, and whoever murders will be liable to judgment.' But I say to you that everyone who is angry with his brother will be liable to judgment; whoever insults his brother will be liable to the council; and whoever says, 'You fool!' will be liable to the hell of fire. (Matthew 5:21-22, ESV)

I'm standing on the green, and someone in my group is lining up a putt. It's obvious to me that this putt breaks 2 inches to the right, but he's setting up as though it's going to break 6 inches to the left. The thought, "What a fool!" zips through my mind.

Y'all know what happens next - one of two things. Either the ball misses 8 inches to the right, and this fool is left looking at another putt, or else he was correct, holes it, and I'm the one secretly donning the dunce cap.

Regardless, the whole "can't call someone a fool" idea is some tough law. I don't know about you, but driving on a busy interstate for more than ten minutes is hard without calling several of my fellow citizens fools. Or worse.

Because, frankly, they are.

Which underscores the utter fallenness of this world we live in. Sin makes foolish drivers do irresponsible things and makes me - by Jesus' definition - because I am angry— a murderer.

And we can't wriggle off the hook by saying, "The Devil made me do it," either. Nope. It's simply who we are. Or at least who we are since the fall of Mankind into sin. Jesus' point, in terms of his definition of murderers, is that we humans all qualify. Well - all of us except one.

But suppose "you shall not murder" is understood in a predictive and imperative sense. Not merely: "Don't murder." But more like: "At some future time, y'all shall not murder." You might call this an eschatological take on it. This hinges on some linguistic nuances of the Hebrew language in understanding the word "shall."

My church recently got a new, young assistant pastor who is fresh out of seminary, is extremely well-versed in biblical languages, and floated this notion in a recent Sunday morning adult education class. He shared with us that there is room in the Hebrew grammar for this understanding of "you shall not kill." I thought that was interesting.

A possible objection to this is that maybe it excuses our murderous impulses. But it doesn't really. The fact that Jesus' coming kingdom won't have murderers doesn't excuse our present murderous thoughts and actions.

It presupposes they are sinful and anticipates a day when they will no longer exist. A day when two of the prerequisites for murder, murderous impulses, and death, will both have gone the way of the dinosaur.

So, when you and I are golfing someday, and your putt - which you thought would break a foot to the right - breaks a foot to the left instead, don't bother asking me what I was thinking as you lined it up.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, we long for the day when your Son no longer needs to forgive our murderous impulses because there will no longer be any.

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