

# The Fourth Sunday after Trinity

## THE FIFTH COMMANDMENT

The commandment has this goal, that no one would offend his neighbor because of any evil deed, even though he has fully deserved it. For where murder is forbidden, all cause from which murder may spring is also forbidden. For many people, although they do not kill, curse and utter a wish that would stop a person from running far if it were to strike him on the neck. Now, this urge dwells in everyone by nature. It is common practice that no one is willing to suffer at the hands of another person. Therefore, God wants to remove the root and source by which the heart is embittered against our neighbor. He wants to make us used to keeping this commandment ever in view, always to contemplate ourselves in it as in a mirror [James 1:23–25], to regard the will of God, and to turn over to Him the wrong that we suffer with hearty confidence and by calling on His name. In this way we shall let our enemies rage and be angry, doing what they can. We learn to calm our wrath and to have a patient, gentle heart, especially toward those who give us cause to be angry (i.e., our enemies).

## THE SEVENTH COMMANDMENT

This is enough of an explanation of what stealing is. Let the commandment not be understood too narrowly. But let it apply to everything that has to do with our neighbors. Briefly, in summary (as in the former commandments) this is what is forbidden: (a) To do our neighbor any injury or wrong (in any conceivable manner, by impeding, hindering, and withholding his possessions and property), or even to consent or allow such injury. Instead, we should interfere and prevent it. (b) It is commanded that we advance and improve his possessions. When they suffer lack, we should help, share, and lend both to friends and foes [Matthew 5:42].

Whoever now seeks and desires good works will find here more than enough to do that are heartily acceptable and pleasing to God. In addition, they are favored and crowned with excellent blessings. So we are to be richly compensated for all that we do for our neighbor's good and from friendship. King Solomon also teaches this in Proverbs 19:17, "Whoever is generous to the poor lends to the Lord, and He

will repay him for his deed." Here, then, you have a rich Lord. He is certainly enough for you. He will not allow you to come up short in anything or to lack [Psalm 37:25]. So you can with a joyful conscience enjoy a hundred times more than you could scrape together with unfaithfulness and wrong. Now, whoever does not desire this blessing will find enough wrath and misfortune.

## THE EIGHTH COMMANDMENT

To avoid this vice we should note that no one is allowed publicly to judge and reprove his neighbor—even though he may see him sin—unless he has a command to judge and to reprove. There is a great difference between these two things: judging sin and knowing about sin. You may indeed know about it, but you are not to judge it [Matthew 7:1–5]. I can indeed see and hear that my neighbor sins. But I have no command to report it to others. Now, if I rush in, judging and passing sentence, I fall into a sin that is greater than his. But if you know about it, do nothing other than turn your ears into a grave and cover it, until you are appointed to be judge and to punish by virtue of your office.

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