

[Exodus 20:12:] "You shall not murder."

[Luther's Small Catechism:] What does this mean? We should fear and love God that we do not hurt or harm our neighbor in his body, but help and befriend him in every bodily need.

1. Our series on how Jesus upholds the Ten Commandments in the Gospel Lessons this Pentecost season continues with the Fifth Commandment today. Remember that Luther used the Ten Commandments as a summary of God's moral law—God's moral will for all people of all time. Today we'll take up the Fifth Commandment. It's short and sweet: You shall not murder.
2. The distinction between murdering and killing is important here. *Killing* per se is not a sin. By definition, it is the taking of life. God allows for the taking of life as He executes His justice in the world. And God even extends that authority to governments and people acting on behalf of governments to maintain order in society. Romans 13:4 tells us, For the one in authority is God's servant for your good. But if you do wrong, be afraid, for rulers do not bear the sword for no reason. They are God's servants, agents of wrath to bring punishment on the wrongdoer. While no government or no one acting in the name of the government is perfect (even abusing the ability to take life throughout history), that does not make what God established any less perfect. The distinction is important because a Christian can serve in a capacity that may require the taking of life and do so with a good conscience so long as that Christian is not choosing to kill on their own. That's what makes murder what it is: the willful taking of someone's life without God's authority to do so. We are never free to do that!
3. Remember last week how I mentioned that Lutheran shop-talk uses the Ten Commandments as a way to categorize sin? We use the Fifth Commandment to take up the topic of not harming the body, but rather protecting and helping others—and self—with regard to the body. Jesus certainly had the physical body in mind as He ministered to people! Oftentimes we think of religious topics as merely spiritual ones. But that is not the case with our God!
4. God created us, body first, then He breathed into us the breath of life. Jesus was pleased to take on a body at the incarnation in the womb of the virgin Mary. He still has it, and always will. Jesus was resurrected bodily, and ascended bodily, and will come back visibly with His glorified body. God is concerned with the body! It is to be used in service to God and neighbor just like our soul is.
5. God forgive us if we pooh-pooh the body as some kind of lesser part of our being! Then we're insulting the One Who created us to be body-and-soul creatures. At the same time, God forgive us when we worship the body by loving what feels good in the body more than the Giver of the body. This is why we treat topics like addiction and self-harm under the Fifth Commandment. How wonderful that Jesus used His body perfectly! He loved us so much that He became one of us.
6. As one of us, He never used His body to escape from what He came to do. Note that He didn't even take wine mixed with myrrh to get a little wasted to "take the edge off" before going to the cross. At the same time He was happy to celebrate the Passover with His disciples the night before, eagerly desiring to partake of the wine with them,

even giving us the Lord's Supper. God grant us that kind of balance with regard to the body! And God be praised that Jesus did it for every time we did not!

7. Now to the Gospel Lesson at hand. {Read verses 11-12.} I imagine this scene looking like when two bodies of water meet and the water kind of backs up a little bit at the confluence: two crowds with a dead body in the middle of it all. {Read verse 13.} Jesus honors the Fifth Commandment here by befriending this woman in her bodily need in the most extraordinary and divine way. Yes, her son was deprived of *his* bodily life. But *she* too probably was going to suffer in the body because of the culture of her time. A widow who lost her only son is at a distinct disadvantage and would have to work very hard just to make ends meet. Now Jesus would lift her up by doing something which proved Who He is: the Son of God. Jesus would lift up her dead son! {Read verses 14-15.}
8. God's providence in helping the widow of Nain is a great reminder to us on a couple of levels. The people of Jesus' time got the timeless message. {Read verses 16-17.} The first timeless message is that Jesus has power over death. He's the only One that truly does. The second timeless message is that God helps His people, which ties in with the fact that He has power over death.
9. Consider how Jesus used His power over death. We often lie to ourselves and think that God mustn't care about our bodies much. Otherwise, our bodies wouldn't hurt. Otherwise, our bodies would feel good all the time. Otherwise, our bodies wouldn't age. Otherwise, our bodies wouldn't have defects or deformities. And the sinful conclusion we draw is that God doesn't help and befriend *us* in our bodily need, and then He expects us to turn around and do so for others? What we're ignoring is that God helps and befriends us in every bodily need *despite our sin!* All of the things I mentioned about our bodies are the result of the fall into sin. And so the general sinful state of the fallen creation leads to our bodies having problems. And we compound those problems with our bodies by what we do to them and what we put into them. Then we have the audacity to blame God. Christ used His power over death to help and befriend us in every bodily need *despite our sin!* His body hurt when it shouldn't—nails hurt. His body didn't feel good when He did nothing wrong—He hungered sore when the devil pummeled Him with temptation. His body was in its prime when He went to the cross—He died young. And as Isaiah prophesied [53:2-3], He had no beauty or majesty to attract us to him, nothing in his appearance that we should desire him. He was despised and rejected by mankind, a man of suffering, and familiar with pain.—disfigured beyond recognition as He took away the lies we tell ourselves about not helping and befriending us in every bodily need.
10. God help us realize this. God help us reflect it, helping and befriending those around us—a wonderful task God has given to all our bodies. Amen.