

I am a big fan of British or British-produced murder mysteries. Poirot and Miss Marple, Sherlock Holmes, Murdoch (actually Canadian), Midsomer Murders, Inspector Lynley, Morse, Grantchester, Miss Fisher (actually Australian), Vera.

In those murder mysteries – and in American murder mysteries, as well -- the perpetrator's motives generally fall into one of a few categories. They are envious of something. Examples of this are love triangles where their girlfriend or boyfriend left them for someone else or someone got a job meant for them. Another category is that the perpetrator receives something of value when the victim dies, such as an inheritance or freedom to live the kind of life they want. A third category is revenge. The perpetrator has been unable to let go of anger for something that happened years ago and to assuage that they kill the person they feel is responsible. Finally, a fourth category is a conflict or dispute. The perpetrator and the victim have argued, and, so, to get their way, the perpetrator kills the victim.

Interestingly enough, these same motives also appear in true crime shows, such as Dateline, and in newspaper articles of murders. Real people let their envy, jealousy, selfish ambition, or desire to win a dispute become so strong that they kill to have it.

Humanity's wickedness hasn't changed much since NT times. We still argue about who should have the highest status. We still want things our neighbor has, whether it's

a job or a lover. We still have to have the last word when someone's wronged us. We still have to have what we want.

Most of us don't actually physically kill people to get what we want. But we do "murder" them in other ways. For example, we sabotage projects led by someone who might be a competitor for a job we want, or, at the very least, we don't give 100 percent. Or, we gossip about a person we envy. Sometimes we rationalize that gossip – after all – the person may really be doing something wrong that we can tell others about. Yet, we are gossiping nonetheless and, if we look at our motives, we are doing so out of some psychological desire to make ourselves feel in some way superior to that person.

We also get into arguments and disputes because we believe our way or our opinion is best. We may even feel justified in arguing with another person because, after all, we're right.

All these behaviors have the effect of killing some part of someone because they hurt that other person. The closer we are to that person, the greater we hurt them by our actions. Hurt sometimes has a way of killing off a person's enthusiasm and, over time, may even change their personality. People who suffer deep hurts may require psychological help to overcome depression or trauma. Some may never reach the potential God intended for them. So our selfish and argumentative behaviors, in this way, do "kill."

Jesus taught that we are to love our neighbor as ourselves. He taught that the ability to love our neighbor comes out of loving God with all our heart, soul, and mind. That means that when someone has something we want, we need to pray about it and wish them well. It means that when someone attacks us looking for an argument or does something terrible to us, we may have to just suck it up and let them have their way. No revenge. No arguments. When we feel the need to gossip about another, we are called to stop and think about why. What psychological need of our own are we trying to meet by spreading that negative story about another person? Most often, the need is to make ourselves feel important. Yet, God created us in God's image, and God loves us. That's all we need to be important.

Today, we welcome in the family of faith, Madison. Madison was created in God's image and God loves here. That's all she needs to be important.

As Madison matures in the faith, she will learn what we all know that getting along with others is hard. Letting people have the last word is hard. Not envying the good fortune of another is hard. As humans, we often fall short of the mark, holding resentments within us and misbehaving because of them. The solution is to turn to God. The solution is to develop a closer relationship to God through prayer, Scripture study, and regular worship.

Draw near to God, and God will draw near to you. God alone offers us the wisdom to be gentle in the face of

adversity. God alone can give us what we need to live a peaceful, compassionate and grateful life.