

Sermon Series: Spurred on to Holiness (and Power) by Immersing Ourselves into the Life of Christ Through the Eyes of the Apostles – A Harmony of All Four Gospels

Today's Scripture: Matthew 5:33–37 [33] “Again you have heard that it was said to those of old, ‘You shall not swear falsely, but shall perform to the Lord what you have sworn.’ [34] But I say to you, Do not take an oath at all, either by heaven, for it is the throne of God, [35] or by the earth, for it is his footstool, or by Jerusalem, for it is the city of the great King. [36] And do not take an oath by your head, for you cannot make one hair white or black. [37] Let what you say be simply ‘Yes’ or ‘No’; anything more than this comes from evil. (ESV)

Sermon Title: “Is Your Word Enough?” from Matthew 5:33-37

February 3, 2019

Theme verse: Acts 4:13 Now when they saw the boldness of Peter and John, and perceived that they were uneducated, common men, they were astonished. And they recognized that they had been with Jesus. (ESV)

Introduction: Spoke to a pastor who could have retired a long time ago but decided instead to enter the ministry. His big heart got in the way of loaning out thousands of dollars to people who asked for help. Today, despite promises of paying him back, this pastor has not gotten one dime back from these individuals and so now cannot afford to retire like he once was able to. Why don't Christians keep their word, their promises?

Main point: Only the wicked play word games to avoid the costs of integrity. Believers are called to be truthful at all times and their word to be a reliable guarantee of performance.

Context

Exegesis

1. An oath is when a person swears by some authority, usually God Almighty, that 1) He agrees with what I am about to say, or He knows I will do what I promised to do, or 2) in a court of law if I don't say what is true, God will punish the oath giver if he is not telling the truth or if he fails to keep a promise.
 - They are used to settle disagreements. For example: *Hebrews 6:16 For people swear by something greater than themselves, and in all their disputes an oath is final for confirmation. (ESV)*
2. This passage is not against taking oaths, for the Bible has many examples of taking oaths. It does not prohibit any Christian from swearing on the Bible in a court of law or making vows on their wedding day.
 - For example: Deuteronomy 6:13 *It is the LORD your God you shall fear. Him you shall serve and by his name you shall swear. (ESV)*

- Actually Jesus is quoting from Deuteronomy 23:21–23 [21] *“If you make a vow to the LORD your God, you shall not delay fulfilling it, for the LORD your God will surely require it of you, and you will be guilty of sin. [22] But if you refrain from vowing, you will not be guilty of sin. [23] You shall be careful to do what has passed your lips, for you have voluntarily vowed to the LORD your God what you have promised with your mouth. (ESV)*
 - A vow is a form of an oath. It is used when a person vows to give something of great value to God in return for God’s favor or blessing.
 - This is what Hannah did when she asked the Lord to give her a son. She promised to dedicate Samuel to the service of the Temple if God opened her womb, which he did.
 - Solomon instructs us regarding vows: Ecclesiastes 5:4–5 [4] *When you vow a vow to God, do not delay paying it, for he has no pleasure in fools. Pay what you vow. [5] It is better that you should not vow than that you should vow and not pay. (ESV)*
 - Wedding vows . . . both promise to be faithful to each other unto death in sickness and in health for richer for poorer. Notice however that the vow does not say I will be your wife even if you are unfaithful to me.
3. The Pharisees were fudging on their oaths and vows by removing God from the oath and incorporating other valued objects such as heaven or earth or Jerusalem or their own head. How would heaven, or earth or Jerusalem or their heads guarantee the truthfulness of the oath?
- They were acting like little children who when they tell a lie they had their fingers crossed behind their back as if that would remove the penalty of lying somehow.
 - Only God is sovereign over heaven and earth and if you leave God out of your oath then you are sidestepping the consequences.
4. Jesus was not telling them never to make oaths, he was saying “STOP IT”. It is better to never to take an oath or vow at all than to make the insincere ones you are doing. After all, Paul swore by the God of heaven and took oaths:
- 2 Corinthians 1:23 *But I call God to witness against me—it was to spare you that I refrained from coming again to Corinth. (ESV)*
 - Jesus says this again in Matthew 23:16–22 [16] *“Woe to you, blind guides, who say, ‘If anyone swears by the temple, it is nothing, but if anyone swears by the gold of the temple, he is bound by his oath.’ [17] You blind fools! For which is greater, the gold or the temple that has made the gold sacred? [18] And you say, ‘If anyone swears by the altar, it is nothing, but if anyone swears by the gift that is on the altar, he is bound by his oath.’ [19] You blind men! For which is greater, the gift or the altar that makes the gift sacred? [20] So whoever swears by the*

altar swears by it and by everything on it. [21] And whoever swears by the temple swears by it and by him who dwells in it. [22] And whoever swears by heaven swears by the throne of God and by him who sits upon it. (ESV)

Application

1. This is all about lying. God despises liars. Here is what He says about this:

Proverbs 12:22 [22] Lying lips are an abomination to the LORD, but those who act faithfully are his delight. (ESV)

Proverbs 6:16–17 [16] There are six things that the LORD hates, seven that are an abomination to him: [17] haughty eyes, a lying tongue, and hands that shed innocent blood, (ESV)

Psalms 119:163 [163] I hate and abhor falsehood,

2. And why does God hate lying so much (as well as liars)? It deprives people from seeing the glory of God. If the followers reflect their leader, then he must be a proud deceitful liar. God cares a great deal about his glory and he wants people all over the world to see it and fall in love with it. That's why we preach the glorious gospel.