

The King's Speech: "Cross My Heart"

June 30th – July 1st, 2012

Missions Team Send Off (Saturday night)

Communion

Matthew 5:33-37

Introduction:

As children, we instinctively make oaths to each other. Do remember saying, "I promise, cross my heart, hope to die, stick a needle my eye."? That meant someone was REALLY serious, unless of course their fingers were crossed. If their fingers were obviously not crossed, you still couldn't be sure. Perhaps their toes were crossed (as a final bail out I remember promise breakers stating that their hairs were crossed). You never really knew if the oath counted.

Today Heidi and I performed our first wedding ceremony of the summer and heard some serious vows made: "Before God and these witnesses, will you love her, even as Christ loved the Church, in sickness and in health, in prosperity and adversity, for better or for worse, as long as you both shall live?" And the answer was "I do".

We sign contracts and we write checks and we shake hands we pledge allegiance. We have documents notarized, we swear to tell the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth, and we make commitments to each other.

Promises are important. But the need for promises shows that we in fact might have a problem keeping our word. "There is one way to find out if a man is honest – ask him. If he says, "Yes," you know he is a crook." Groucho Marx

Today we are going to see what Jesus had to say on this subject in His most famous sermon – The Sermon on the Mount.

I. Matthew 5:33

³³ "Again, you have heard that it was said to the people long ago, 'Do not break your oath, but

fulfill to the Lord the vows you have made.'

Here Jesus quotes, not a specific command, but a summary of several passages from the law.

- Deuteronomy 23:21-23 ²¹“If you make a vow to the Lord your God, do not be slow to pay it, for the Lord your God will certainly demand it of you and you will be guilty of sin. ²²But if you refrain from making a vow, you will not be guilty. ²³Whatever your lips utter you must be sure to do, because you made your vow freely to the Lord your God with your own mouth.” This passage makes a distinction between what one says and what a person vows.
- Numbers 30:2 ²“When a man makes a vow to the Lord or takes an oath to obligate himself by a pledge, he must not break his word but must do everything he said.
- “You shall not lie.”
- “Do not take the name of the Lord in vain.”

Obviously, our word, and promises, are very important to God. Consider for a moment even the concept of covenant. The word “Testament” as in “Old Testament” and “New Testament” literally means covenant which literally means “promise”.

God is both a promise giver and a promise keeper, and we're to mirror those attributes of God.

Keeping our word is what keeps us close as a society. It is a necessary ingredient in our desire for strong and close relationships. Can you imagine what our world would be like if no one trusted anyone to keep their promises? What would that world be like? There would be a lot of fear and fragmentation. It would be every man for himself and every woman for herself.

In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus has been taking the Old Testament commands, cutting to the heart of the command, and then raising the bar while applying that truth to our behavior. Let's see how He does that here:

II. Matthew 5:34-36

³⁴But I tell you, do not swear an oath at all: either by heaven, for it is God's throne; ³⁵or by the earth, for it is his footstool; or by Jerusalem, for it is the city of the Great King. ³⁶And do not swear by your head, for you cannot make even one hair white or black.

In Jesus day, people had become quite creative in their promise making and promise breaking. Some rabbis taught that if you swore by heaven, or by earth, or by Jerusalem, you were not bound by your oath. If you swore by Jerusalem, you had to be facing the city in order for it to

really count. They had constructed various degrees of truth and responsibility for following through on your vows, depending on the type of vow you had taken.

When we play these games as children and as adults it points to the fact that we cannot be trusted. It is an attempt to be irresponsible for our words.

Jesus says, “Stop playing games. You have no right to swear upon any of these things.” Stop playing gymnastics and playground games with your words.

III. Matthew 5:37

³⁷ All you need to say is simply ‘Yes’ or ‘No’; anything beyond this comes from the evil one.

In John 8:44 Jesus says that the devil has no truth in him. His native language is the lie and he is the father of all lies.

If our simple yes or no is not reliable, then there is a part of our heart that the devil still controls.

What do we learn about oaths/promises?

1. Vows/oaths are made because of our tendency to lie

There would be no need for oaths if we didn’t lie. Because of our lying nature, oaths and contracts are needed. We usually don’t want to lie – most of the time we lie because we are afraid.

When I was a child I was afraid of my father’s discipline. I found it easier at times to lie than to receive his discipline. I was afraid of punishment.

As a Sophomore in high school I got myself into a huge mess. One fall morning...

Some of us were really good at lying when we came to Christ. Are you still the reigning champion at Balderdash? Could you out-bluff anyone in a game of poker? Does your dry sarcasm get you into trouble on a regular basis because people actually believe you when you say something that you absolutely do not mean?

I came across a quiz that is designed to see how good (or bad) of a liar a person is.

“Good Liar Quiz” – Self Analysis

1. How often do you lie?
 - a. Hardly ever (+1)
 - b. Every now and then (at least more than once a month) (+2)
 - c. All the time (sometimes just for practice) (+3)
2. If you needed to lie about where you were, you would:
 - a. Give some details without going overboard (+1)
 - b. Be vague. You figure it’s only a half lie (+2)
 - c. Give lots of details. You figure the bigger the story, the harder to disbelieve (+3)
3. If someone accuses you of lying:
 - a. You shrug it off. You can play it cool (+3)
 - b. You get a little defensive (+2)
 - c. It totally blows your cover – you can’t deal with it (+1)
4. When telling a lie you:
 - a. Make a ton of eye contact (+3)
 - b. Avoid eye contact (+1)
 - c. Make a little eye contact, but not a lot (+2)
5. After you’ve told a lie you:
 - a. Wait to hear what the person will say (+3)
 - b. Change the subject (+2)
 - c. Leave (+1)

5-7: Bad liar and that is a good thing

8-11: Need some help

12-15: Serious problem

Common lies that we tell:

- I didn’t hear my alarm clock.
- I just got your text message.
- I plead “not guilty”.
- I’m busy on Friday night.
- I wasn’t driving that fast. Maybe it’s my tires. I haven’t had my speedometer calibrated.
- I was just about to do that.
- I am on my way.
- I’ll pray for you.

Lies are most often told because of fear:

A fear of rejection (I know what I am doing is wrong and I don’t want to pay the price for that.)

A fear of loss (If I tell the truth I am doing to lose someone’s respect or my job or I might be punished and lose even more). **Every time we tell a lie, the thing that we fear grows**

stronger in its power over me. We are weaving a spider web that will eventually be caught in.

Did this behavior change overnight when you became a Christian?

When we become a Christian we elevate the value of truth but untruth still can sneak its way into my life and your life:

I want to be a terrible liar, not a good liar, when it comes to the skill of lying.

One of baseball's greatest pitchers of all time was recently accused of lying under oath. In spite of the evidence, time and time again, Roger Clemens denied using performance enhancing drugs. As did Olympic champion Marion Jones, Tour de France winners and home run hitters. So it goes that professional athletes lie about performance enhancing drugs, politicians make promises that cannot be kept, church leaders and husbands and all give in. The sin of lying is indiscriminate in where it finds its home. It seems as though the days of "honest Abe" and George Washington ("I cannot tell a lie") are fabled parts of our history,

2. Jesus points us towards a positive approach

Instead of focusing on keeping a law aimed at controlling our sinful behavior, Jesus gives us a positive and proactive approach – the way God intended things to be. In this case His focus is on **simple, uncomplicated truthfulness** without the need of oaths to undergird it.

Remember that this sermon began with His statement that we are salt and light. We have a new identity. I'll avoid the verbal gymnastics of half truths and aim for integrity. **Jesus is the way the truth and the life, and if the truth shall set us free, then may we be people of truth.**

Truthfulness is a key characteristic of integrity.

Integrity: Defn. "The state of being complete, unified."

It is when my words and my deeds match up.

Integrity has to do with who we are. Who we are determines what we do. Integrity builds trust. Integrity creates a high standard, and it builds a solid reputation, not just an image.

3. We must remember the third party in our promise making: God.

Perhaps Jesus addresses this issue because every broken oath isn't an oath broken simply between people, but between people and God.

God established "promise" as His way of doing things: The Old Covenant and the New Covenant. Exodus 24:3 ³When Moses went and told the people all the Lord's words and laws, they responded with one voice, "Everything the Lord has said we will do."

We make promises to Him all the time: "Lord, I raise my hand..." "If you get me out of this bind this last time I will..."

We know how deeply it hurts us when we keep our part of a deal and someone breaks their promises. (ex.). That is when we need healing and help. That is a deep wound. People will let us down, but God will not.

He is the greatest recipient or victim of broken promises, so if I need encouragement when promises to me are broken, He is the One I go to.

The point is not that we shouldn't make promises. The point is to:

- **Be a person of your word**

There is power in making commitments where "so help me God", I will do what I said I will do.

It is what motivated Ruth in Ruth 1 when she said to Naomi, "Where you go I will go, and where you stay I will stay. Your people will be my people and your God my God...May the Lord deal with me, be it ever so severely, if even death separates you and me." It is what enables a person to care for their aging spouse. It is what causes a person to guard their fickle emotions when they are tempted to compromise their values. It is what is behind the formal covenants or promises of the Bible. Let's be...

- Be truthful
- Be reliable

- Be dependable
- Excel at integrity and truth telling. Truth and trustworthiness are qualities that make our fabric as a community, TIGHT, or fragmented.

Jesus is the way the truth and the life.

To be like Him is to be a person of the truth.

After I became a Christian I had to go back to my school officials...

Conclusion

This part of the King's Speech is like the rest of it in that it shows that we cannot live a perfect life. If you thought keeping the law was difficult, try to keep the Sermon on the Mount. Jesus' teaching drives us to our knees. We have to stop kidding ourselves with our pleads of innocence and admit our guilt. There where we receive His grace and then from a place of being transformed by His forgiveness, we then strive to love God and love our fellowman, not to earn God's approval but from a position of having His approval.

In love, we tell truth, and we don't have to let fear control us. The truth keeps us safe and the truth is safer than the lie. As we live in truth we don't have to concoct oaths for each other. Our yes is yes and our no is no.

Communion