

Sermon Notes for November 28, 1999

The Sermon on the Mount
“A Biblical Look at Integrity”
Matthew 6:33-37

Mickey Mantle had a friend who would let him hunt on his ranch. One day, along with teammate, **Billy Martin**, they went to the ranch to hunt. Billy stayed in the car while Mickey checked with his friend. Mickey was given permission to hunt, but the rancher asked him for a favor. **His old mule was going blind and had become crippled, but the rancher just didn't have the heart to put him out of his misery—so he asked Mickey if would shoot the old mule as a favor.** When Mickey came back to the car, he decided to play a trick on Billy and pretended to be angry. “What’s wrong?” asked Billy. **“My friend told me NO HUNTING!!!”** Mickey pounded his fist on the dashboard feigning anger and said, **“Why, that guy got me so mad I’m going into the barn and shoot one of his mules.”** With that, Mickey jumped out of the car and headed for the barn. In quick order he took care of the mule and started back to the car to tell his friend it was just a joke. At that moment Mickey heard two shots fired and found Billy Martin standing over two dead cows. “What are you doing?” asked Mickey. **Martin answered, “Why I saw how made you were and so I wanted to let the rancher know he couldn't fool with me either.”**

We become as honest as the ninety-two-year-old priest who was venerated by everybody in town for his holiness. He was also a member of the Rotary Club. Every time the club met, he would be there, always on time and always seated in his favorite spot in a corner of the room. One day the priest disappeared. It was as if he had vanished into thin air. The townsfolk searched all over and could find no trace of him. But the following month, when the Rotary Club met, he was there as usual sitting in his corner. **“Father,” everyone cried, “where have you been?” I just served a thirty-day sentence in prison.”** “In prison,” they cried. **“Father, you couldn't hurt a fly. What happened?”** “It’s a long story,” said the priest, “but briefly, this is what happened. **I bought myself a train ticket to go into the city. I was standing on the platform waiting for the train to arrive when this stunningly beautiful girl appears on the arm of a policeman. She looked at me, turned to the cop and said, ‘He did it. I’m certain he’s the one who did it.’ Well, to tell you the truth, I was so flattered I pleaded guilty.”**

Introduction

A. Our Society Seems To STRUGGLE With The Truth

1. **Moral erosion continues in America**, according to James Patterson and Peter Kim. They report that **74 percent** of Americans will steal from those who won't miss it, and **64 percent** will lie for convenience as long as no one is hurt. Most Americans (**93 percent**) say they alone decide moral issues, basing their decisions on their own experience or whims. **84 percent** say they would break the rules of their own religion. And **81 percent** have violated a law they felt to be inappropriate. Only **30 percent** say they would be willing to die for their religious beliefs or for God.
2. **What are you willing to do for \$10,000,000?** Two-thirds of Americans polled would agree to at least one, some to several of the following:
 - Would **abandon their entire family (25%)**
 - Would **abandon their church (25%)**
 - Would **become prostitutes for a week or more (23%)**
 - Would give up their **American citizenships (16%)**
 - Would leave their **spouses (16%)**
 - Would **withhold testimony and let a murderer go free (10%)**
 - Would **kill a stranger (7%)**
 - Would **put their children up for adoption (3%)**
3. Thus the need in court: "Do you promise to tell the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth, so help you God?"

B. Our Society Has Been TRAINED In Dealing With The Truth

1. In the last thirty years, Americans have experienced the following "illustrations of integrity" in:
 - a. **The death of JFK** - who REALLY killed him?
 - b. **The Vietnam War** where some 58,000 Americans died in what may have been a political war instead of a war that we aggressively went in to win (as the Gulf War).
 - c. **Richard Nixon** resigned as President of the United States because of the cover-up of the break-in at the Watergate hotel.
 - d. What REALLY happened in the **Iran-Contra affair?**
 - e. And MOST RECENTLY **we have a President** who was impeached because he lied under oath about an extra-marital affair **WHILE IN THE WHITE HOUSE!**
2. Is it any wonder that truth and integrity are not as important as they once were.

C. Our Society Must Be CALLED BACK To The Biblical Standard Of Truth

1. To the standard of Jesus
2. Let's see what He says about integrity.

I. The BIBLICAL Approach To Truth

A. The Standard Of The OLD TESTAMENT

1. Oaths were to be given and they were to mean something.
 - a. **Leviticus 19:12** "**Do not swear falsely** by my name and so profane the name of your God. I am the Lord."

- b. **Numbers 30:2** “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.**”

2. You are to **KEEP** your word.

B. The Standard Of The NEW TESTAMENT

- 1. Paul, to confirm his standing before the Lord, says in **Romans 9:1** - “**I speak the truth in Christ—I am not lying**, my conscience confirms it in the Holy Spirit.”
- 2. Even when Jesus says, “**Truly, truly** I say to you.”

II. The PHARISAICAL Approach To The Truth

A. The Pharisaical STANDARD

- 1. The Pharisees **believed** that lying was an ungodly act.
 - a. The Jews considered lying as one of the great sins.
 - b. The Jews also believed that 4 people will be shut out of heaven:
 - 1. The scoffer
 - 2. The hypocrite
 - 3. The liar
 - 4. The slanderer
- 2. One Pharisaical school was brutally honest. (The Shammai School)
 - a. Every statement had to be totally true.
 - b. They were forbidden to even compliment a newly married bride that she looked charming if she actually was a plain looking woman to begin with.
 - c. Consider how many flippant statements we make each day:
 - 1. My upbringing - Hello, how are you? Nice to meet you. **NO MATTER WHO IT IS.**
 - 2. A foreigner responds to southern courtesy - “Come see us”
 - 3. All of this would have been forbidden by certain Jews who took the truth this seriously.
- 3. So, most Pharisees would **ADAMANTLY** state that they believed in telling the truth.

B. The Pharisaical ABUSE

- 1. However, the Pharisees were so **LITERATE** that they read the Scriptures this way.
 - a. **Leviticus 19:12** - “Do not swear falsely **BY MY NAME** and so profane the name of your God. I am the Lord.”
 - b. **Numbers 30:2** - “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.”
- 2. In taking the Scriptures so **LITERALLY**, they believed that the **ONLY TIME** that they were bound to the truth was when they made a promise **TO THE LORD.**
 - a. In other words, when a Jew used the word Lord in a promise, he had to **keep** that promise. Otherwise he wasn’t Biblically bound to keep a promise.

- b. In the Jewish commentary, the Mishnah, one whole section of teaching is given to the question of oaths, detailing when they were binding and they were **NOT**.
- c. **THIS** is what Jesus is talking about in Matthew 5:33:
 “You have heard that it was said to the people long ago, Do not break your oath, but keep the oaths you have made **TO THE LORD.**”
 - 1. The Pharisees had made their own text - this was not the exact verse from the Old Testament.
 - 2. But the emphasis was on keeping your oaths made only **TO THE LORD.**
 - a. All of the other promises you were not Biblically obligated to keep.
 - b. It was a giant game of
 - 1. “cat and mouse”
 - 2. “fingers crossed”
 - 3. “Kings Time”
 - 3. They took the Scriptures so **LITERALLY** that if a promise or oath **DID NOT** use the Lord’s name in it, they did not have to keep their promise.
 - a. So they would swear by words **OTHER THAN GOD:**
 - 1. the heavens
 - 2. the earth
 - 3. Jerusalem
 - 4. the very hairs on their heads
 - b. And although this “sounded spiritual” and very serious they held no obligation to keep these oaths.
 - 1. I swear by the “heavens above”
 - 2. I swear on the “loss of my very head”

III. The PRACTICAL Application Of Truth

A. Jesus CERTAINLY Had A Different APPROACH To Truth Than The Pharisees

- 1. These “games” that they were playing were simply games, and let me **EXPOSE** them for what they are.
 - a. Don’t swear by **HEAVEN:**
 - 1. Because that is **WHERE GOD RESIDES.**
 - 2. If you speak of heaven, you speak of God.
 - b. Don’t swear by **EARTH:**
 - 1. Because God made the earth; it is under His providential rule.
 - 2. And He rests His feet on “this huge ottoman.”
 - c. Don’t swear by **JERUSALEM**
 - 1. This is God’s city
 - 2. A city totally consumed with the things of God!
 - 3. The home of the Temple and the Shekinah glory!
 - d. Don’t swear **BY YOUR HEAD**
 - 1. Because even your head is controlled by God; even owned by God.

2. And you cannot control the color of your hair, white or black (except by hair coloring . . .)
2. Jesus is attempting to destroy the compartmentalization of the spiritual life.
 - a. He further attacks this foolishness in **Matthew 23:16-22** -
“Woe to you, blind guides! You say, ‘If anyone swears by the temple, it means nothing; but if anyone swears by the gold of the temple, he is bound by his oath. You blind fools! Which is greater: the gold, or the temple that makes the gold sacred? You also say, ‘If anyone swears by the altar, it means nothing, but if anyone swears by the gift on it, he is bound by his oath.’ You blind men! Which is greater: the gift, or the altar that makes the gift sacred? Therefore, he who swears by the altar swears by it and by everything on it. And he who swears by the temple swears by it and by the one who dwells in it. And he who swears by heaven swears by God’s throne and by the one who sits on it.”
 - b. William Barclay - **“Here is a great eternal truth. Life cannot be divided into compartments in some of which God is involved and in others of which he is not involved; there cannot be one kind of language in the Church and another kind of language in the shipyard or the factory or the office; there cannot be one kind of standard of conduct in the Church and another kind of standard in the business world. The fact is that God does not need to be invited into certain departments of life, and kept out of others. He is everywhere, all through life and every activity of life. He hears not only the words which are spoken in his name; he hears all words; and there cannot be any such thing as a form of words which evades bringing God into a transaction. We will regard all promises as sacred, if we remember that all promises are made in the presence of God.”**
 1. We will regard all promises as sacred, if we remember that all promises are made **“in the presence of God.”**
 2. We are NOT protected by the games that we play with the truth
 - a. God not only **HEARS** our promises
 - b. He knows our **MOTIVES** and what we intend to do **INTERNALLY.**

B. Jesus CERTAINLY Has A Different APPLICATION Of Truth Than The Pharisees

Vs. 37 - “Simply let your yes be yes and let your no be no. Anything beyond this comes from the evil one.”

1. Does this mean that we can never make **a formal oath**?
 - a. **God** made an oath in **Genesis 9:11** - **“I establish my covenant with you: Never again will all life be cut off by the waters of a flood; never again will there be a flood to destroy the earth.”**
 - b. **Jesus** made an oath to Caiaphas in **Matthew 26:63-64** - **“But Jesus remained silent. The high priest said to him, “I charge you under**

oath by the living God: Tell us if you are the Christ, the Son of God.”
 “Yes, it is as you say,” Jesus replied. “But I say to all of you: In the future you will see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of the Mighty One and coming on the clouds of heaven.”

- c. These are oaths made BEFORE GOD IN A LEGAL SETTING.
2. Jesus is talking about the **day to day relationships** that we have with our fellow man each day.
 - a. **FIRST** of all, we are not to use any **tricks** with others when we tell them something.
 1. “I was crossing my fingers.”
 2. “I didn’t REALLY mean that.”
 - b. **SECOND**, we should NOT NEED to use the Lord’s name as some other means to **EMPHASIZE** that we are REALLY telling the truth.
 1. “As God is my witness, I am telling the truth.”
 2. “I promise on a stack of Bibles that I am telling the truth.”
 3. “Cross my heart, hope to die, stick a needle in my eye.”
 4. **Oswald Sanders - “To call God in as a witness to back up what you say is nearly always a sign that what you are saying is not true.”**
 5. **Oswald Sanders “We ought not to have to call on anyone to back up our word; our word ought to be sufficient.”**
 - c. **THIRD**, we are to tell the truth **TOTALLY AND COMPLETELY FROM THE HEART**.
 1. When you do not tell the total truth, you are lying.
 2. Illustrations:
 - a. **Did you take my biscuit?**
I was watching T.V.
I didn’t ask whether you were watching T.V.
There’s another one in the box.
Did you take my biscuit. Answer yes or no.
 - b. **Story of Dick Woodward**
 “I know your father. My father is a good man.”
 - d. **FOURTH**, we are to have **the type of spiritual reputation** that all we HAVE to say is yes or no.
 1. Jane’s dad
 2. We should not NEED to say a lot of words to prove our point.
 - a. W. Wiersbe - “We should not need ‘crutches’ to get people to believe us.”
 - b. “The more words a person uses to convince us, the more suspicious we should be.”
 - c. **Proverbs 10:19** - “When words are many, sin is not absent, but he who holds his tongue is wise.”
 - d. Swindoll - “When a monosyllable will do, why waste our breath on polysyllables?”

- e. **Clement of Alexander, “A Christian must lead such a life and demonstrate such a character that no one will even dream of asking an oath from them.”**
- 3. Oswald Sanders - “It never occurs to a pure honest heart to back up what it says. It is a wounding insult to be met with suspicion.”
 - a. I work **VERY HARD** to be a person of integrity.
 - 1. I have had to go back and apologize many times.
 - 2. Gone back to stores that have given me too much change.
 - b. That was why it was so hard to be accused of manipulation.

Closing

1. **Jesus’ point is that integrity is a matter of the HEART.**
 - a. The Sermon on the Mount should be re-titled The Sermon on the **Heart**.
 - b. Jesus is attacking not the speech of the Pharisees but the **HEART** from which that speech comes.
 - c. Oswald Sanders - “A lie is not an inexactitude of speech; a lie is in the **motive**.”
2. **So, the solution to your lying or misrepresenting is not to be legalistic like the Pharisees.**
 - a. You are to **LOOK INTO YOUR HEART**.
Jesus in **Matthew 15:15-20** - Peter said, “Explain the parable to us.” “Are you still so dull?” Jesus asked them. “Don’t you see that whatever enters the mouth goes into the stomach and then out of the body? But the things that come out of the mouth come from the heart, and these make a man ‘unclean.’ For out of the heart come evil thoughts, murder, adultery, sexual immorality, theft, false testimony, slander. These are what make a man unclean; but eating with unwashed hands does not make him ‘unclean.’”
 - b. **THIS** is the **NOBILITY** of the Christian life
 1. It is **NOT** a list of “do’s and don’ts.”
 2. It is a training of the heart.
 3. That is why I teach in the parent’s class, be more concerned about your child’s attitudes than actions.
 - c. We need to **GET** our **HEART** right.
 1. Confession of our lostness.
 2. Confession and repentance of our sins.
 3. Ask to be filled with the Holy Spirit.
 4. Walk with Christ daily.
 5. Develop a sensitized conscience so that the Holy Spirit will teach you **WITHIN** what integrity is all about.
The word **‘sincere’** comes from two Latin words meaning ‘without wax.’ Artificers of Middle Eastern countries fashioned highly expensive statuettes out of a very fine porcelain. It was of such fragile nature that extreme care had to be taken when firing the figurines to

keep them from cracking. Dishonest dealers would accept the cracked figurines at a much lower price and then fill the cracks with wax before offering them for sale. But honest merchants would display their uncracked porcelain wares with signs that read, “sine cera,” “without wax.”

6. Ultimately, is Jesus Christ a guest in your house or does He own it? Because you can hide a mess from your guests, but you can't from the owner. **He will clean it up.**

After the war the communists swept down into South Korea from the North. One of the first things they did was to gather a group of Christians into their church building, where they demanded that the leaders deny their Lord. They backed up their demands with torture and threats to the lives of their prisoners. One by one the leaders succumbed. When their torturers handed them the Bible and told them to spit upon it, they did so. Until the communists came to one little girl.

Fearlessly she looked at her tormentors and said, **“You can hammer me into a pulp. You can beat me into extinction, but I will never deny my Lord!”** Then she began to sing, after turning to the leaders who had fallen to say, “May God have mercy on your souls.” What was the result? The crowd with her in the church joined her in singing. She turned the tide of denial that had been begun by the leaders. **What did the communists do? They executed the leaders who had denied Christ and set free the girl whose courage had been so clearly communicated.**