

CITY CHURCH-EASTSIDE WEEKLY WORSHIP GUIDE

October 18, 2009



Sermon on the Mount: A Simple Veracity

"You have heard that it was said, 'You shall not swear falsely, but shall perform to the Lord what you have sworn...'"

All of us are familiar with the fabled tale Robin Hood and if you understand this legend, then you'll understand the Sermon on the Mount. Leaving his kingdom for a time, King Richard the Lionheart entrusted Prince John to serve as his vice-regent. John of course exploited the kingdom for his own gain causing Robin Hood and his band of merry men to respond. Their rebellion climaxed as Robin Hood and Prince John met face to face with Robin Hood winning the day. Robin Hood's tactics were particularly counter-cultural to the system of government put in to motion by Prince John. Yet returning to his kingdom, King Richard vindicated all of Robin Hood's efforts. In much the same way the prophets of the Old Testament carried out a very subversive, counter-cultural work by warning the people of God to repent of their idolatry. But it wasn't until the long-awaited King of Israel was born that all their efforts were vindicated. In Matthew 5-7 Jesus echoes

the words of the prophets as he rights the kingdom ship over and against the teaching of the religious establishment. Consistent throughout, Jesus approaches the subject of oaths seeking to correct the Pharisees' harmful teaching. At first glance we question the applicability of oath-taking in our modern context. But as summarized in verse 37 what this passage is really all about is the climate of the kingdom. This climate is one of truth and trust, a simple veracity in all things. Understanding biblical oaths as a grave undertaking before a heavenly tribunal is of paramount importance. The religious leaders in Jesus' day had moved away from this understanding and were committing a two-fold error. First, they were tweaking this high and holy process bringing it down to a level they could manage. Taking oaths, not before the great throne of God, but by "Jerusalem" or "the hair on their head" they created a tailor-made integrity focusing their honesty upon select trivial oaths. This of course, left the door open for dishonesty in other areas. The religious leaders

then took performance to such oaths and created a self-justifying integrity. If they could simply be faithful in these select commitments then they qualified as "good people". The problem is that God calls us to respect oaths and see all of life as a sacred commitment to integrity. Additionally, we cannot rely upon our own integrity for salvation. The reality is that we all fail our commitments to God and others. So how do we create a climate of truth and trust? It comes by applying the work of Christ to our veracity. If the work of Christ has secured all of God's promises for us, then we are free from procuring life in dishonest ways. God has promised to supply our every need (Luke 12). Additionally, in our relationships we are free to be honest because our ultimate acceptance is in God, not in man. The flip-side of that coin is our freedom to forgive as God has forgiven us. How else can the work of Christ empower you towards truth and trust? May God bless us with a simple veracity, the climate of His Kingdom.

Sermon Application

The questions and thoughts below can be used for further reflection this week. Seek to use a journal or discuss with a friend. Most of all use this to consider how the gospel of Christ can be transforming. Enjoy!

Application Questions: Matthew 5:33-37 *Intersect: Spiritual Dynamics Part II*

1. Our culture approaches honesty and integrity from various directions. Describe and discuss these approaches.
2. Why are trust and truth so important? What are some examples in your own story that illustrate this answer?
3. In Matthew 5:33-37 was Jesus telling us to avoid taking oaths? Why or why not? What was his ultimate point here?
4. The Pharisees were making two errors in regards to oaths. The first error, a “tailor-made integrity”, altered the process of oath-taking by bringing it down to a trivial level. What impact did this have on their spirituality? How do we do this today?
5. In the second error, “a self-justifying integrity”, the Pharisees were using these trivial commitments to justify themselves as “good people”. What impact did this have on their spirituality? How do we do this today?
6. Steve and his family go out to dinner at their favorite restaurant. When they get the bill, he notices that a meal has been left off the ticket. He ponders the fact that money has been tight this month and considers not telling the waiter about the error. How does the work of Christ empower Steve to report the error and thus be honest?
7. Diana trusted a good friend with a piece of confidential information about her life. The information was not appropriately handled by her friend. How does the work of Christ help Diana from feeling absolutely crushed? How does it empower her to move towards forgiveness with her friend?

“When Hitler lied, we all held up our hands aghast; but we seem to think it is somehow different when we tell what we call a ‘white lie’ in order to get out of a difficulty. It is terrible, we think, to lie on the international level, but not apparently, when it comes to a matter between husband and wife, or parents and children. Is not that the position?”

Martin Lloyd-Jones



If you’ve ever experienced the delight of restoring a car, making it to that much needed salon appointment, or fixing up a house then you’ll understand the process of sanctification. Sanctification is the theological term for God shaping us into the image of Christ. Now, that might sound a bit despotic, but the goal of sanctification, is God’s glory which is synonymous with our freedom.

We know that sin is choosing to worship the things of this world, including ourselves, rather than God. In this way we violate the first commandment and thus commit idolatry. Idolatry is at the root of all things abhorrent to God. Theologians have identified four steps in dealing with our idolatry and thus our spiritual formation. These steps include identifying it, starving it, cutting it out, and crowding it out.

William Cowper once wrote, “the dearest idol I have known, Whate’er that idol be; Help me to tear it from thy throne, and worship only thee.” The first step in mortifying sin is to identify the underlying idol. We might be tempted to identify such things as “anger”, “lust”, or “dishonesty”. But upon further examination trying to correct these issues is the same logic as replacing a bulb in the dashboard because an indicator light came on. There’s nothing wrong with the dashboard, something’s going on under the hood! It’s what’s under the hood that we need to identify. What is the idol you’re worshipping instead of God? Here are some further meditations on what it means to identify our core problems (aka our idols).

- **Idols Create Delusions:** Idols appear more wonderful and powerful than they really are. In what ways are your idols distorting your thinking?
- **Recognize Their Weakness:** In prayer, confess that these things are good, but finite and weak, and praise God for being the only source of what you need.
- **Recognize How Dangerous They Are:** Idols enslave and they will never be satisfied.
- **Recognize How Grievous They Are to Christ:** Realize that when you pine after idols that you are saying “Lord you are not enough. This is more beautiful, fulfilling, and sweet to my taste than you. You are negotiable, but this is not. Despite all you’ve done for me, I will only use you as long as you help me get this.”

Blessings as you take the first steps toward freedom!

This material is taken from Steve Childers’ “Spiritual Dynamics for Leaders: Applying the Gospel” & Tim Keller’s “Preaching the Gospel”.