

Priority of Truth

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[0 : 00] to the book of Exodus chapter 20 considering this morning the ninth commandment which we have in verse 16 there. Exodus 20 verse 16.

Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbor. Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbor. I'd just like also to read a couple of the verses in the chapter which we read earlier in John 18 towards the end of that chapter Pilate said to him are you a king then?

Jesus answered you say rightly that I am a king. For this cause I was born and for this cause I have come into the world that I should bear witness to the truth. Everyone who is of the truth hears my voice.

Pilate said to him what is truth? I suppose this is one of the most famous recorded conversations of the Lord Jesus Christ.

This conversation that he had with Pontius Pilate as he approached his crucifixion. Pilate asked him are you a king then?

[1 : 19] Pilate said to him. And Jesus said you're right in saying that I'm a king. In fact for this reason I was born. For this reason I came into the world.

To testify to the truth. Everyone on the side of truth listened to me. Pilate said to him.

And then we have Pilate's famous reply or reaction to what Jesus said. Pilate simply said what is truth?

What is truth? I wonder how Pilate asked this. I wonder if he was really serious. I wonder if he really wanted to know what truth was.

Or did he say this when he asked this like modern man with a shrug of his shoulder as if he were saying, I don't believe any such thing as truth anyway.

[2 : 22] Was he like a modern man giving up any idea that there might be the possibility of truth or knowing what truth was? What is truth?

What is truth? What do you think this morning? Is there truth with a capital T?

Well whatever we think of that, Jesus certainly believed that there was truth with a capital T. And if you and I are his follower, then we hear him as he said, I am the way, the truth, and the life.

No one comes to the Father except through me. And we realize when we hear Jesus' truth. That yes, there is truth.

What is truth? Because he is the embodiment of truth. Because what he has said is truth. And if our standards are his standards, or if the approach is his standards, then truth figures marginally with us.

[3 : 39] What is truth? This is a vital question for you and for me for today. There is of course the challenge of the gospel message.

Because the message of the Bible, the message of the gospel is truth. This is where truth is found. It is found in Jesus.

Everyone who is of the truth, he says here in John 18, Everyone who is of the truth listens to me or hears my voice.

And friends, it is important to realize that the Christian faith is true. Perhaps it is obvious to us. But we need to remind ourselves that the Christian faith is true.

It is bound up with the truth. And you believe it fundamentally because it is true. Jesus hasn't lied to us.

[4 : 43] God isn't deceiving us in any way whatsoever. It isn't part true. It isn't half true. It is all true.

As Jesus himself taught, Thy word is true. It is true from beginning to end.

And if you want to know what is true for the world, and if you want to know what is true for yourself, and if you want to know what is true for the world to come, this is where you find him.

In this world. In his world. The Christian message. However people may shrug it off. With indifference. With sad skepticism.

The Christian message. Only. In all that is in the world. Is. Spoken truth. Well this morning I'd like us to reflect on this ninth commandment.

[5 : 45] And this commandment is to do with truth. This is via the reading in John 18 there. It is to do with truth. You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor.

This is saying, You shall not lie. You shall not lie. You shall not make defamatory statements. You shall not misrepresent. Or deceive.

Why? Because your fellow man won't like it. Well, that's a miracle too. But first and foremost.

Because God does not lie.

Because God cannot lie. Because lying unto, is out of accord with the God who is truth. Unto whom we are answerable.

Every one of us. Because lying is of the devil. Because he is the one who is the power of lies.

[6 : 51] And so this morning let us think of this commandment for a little. And I'd like us to think of two things. If you like, the negative side and the positive side. I'd like us to see first of all, the lying that is forbidden.

And then to look at the truth. Or the truthfulness which is required. So it is first of all the lying forbidden. Now I don't suppose I need to say to you folks that we're living in an age in which telling lies is quite widespread.

Indeed we might even say that it has a respectable reputation. We have statements that come from politicians. And they use the term being economical with the truth.

Which is another way of saying that we're not telling something that is quite strange. Claims are made by advertisers. We see tremendous claims made through advertisements on the television and through the go boards also.

There is always true, isn't it, what's been said as the basic of communism. That if your lies are big enough, people will believe them. It's true.

[8 : 11] We're living in this sort of age, unjust. In the courts also, perhaps it's been a bit sinister. The truth seems to be twisted.

Eyewitnesses are confused. False witnesses sometimes prevail. But the Bible ultimately forbids all forms of lying.

So we need to be convinced. It's like the question of stealing, really. We all know what it is. We all know that it's wrong.

We all know that it's wrong to tell lies. And yet we have to be aware of how influenced that we can be by the prevailing standards of our own day, of our own generation.

More than we think. Let me put it this way. Honestly, do you always tell the truth? The whole truth are nothing but the truth.

[9 : 21] Have you ever exaggerated? Have you changed the details of story, of a story, or an incident? Have you ever said you couldn't go to work or school?

Or you couldn't go to meetings because you were sick? Were you really so sick you couldn't go? Have you ever told something that was half true or that was partly true you have to say that if something is half true then it is also half a lie?

We must be honest about it and we must be clear that a lie is against the God of holy truth. This is what is so wrong about lying. By definition, it isn't true.

It isn't true. And God is a God of truth who requires truth from his followers. The devil is the manufacturer of lies and of half-truths.

And how can honesty and how can integrity coexist with lies? Now the carrying of lies of our truth, if you like, is sin.

[10 : 39] But so is the spreading of lies. The false witness is sin because it harms people. There may be the folks who never dream of murder.

There may be the folks who never dream awkwardly of adultery or death or even blatant tearing of lies. But what about false witness? You see, we must push these commandments and their implications out.

What about beating people in a bad life of gossiping, of tale-bearing, of spreading rumors and tales? Have we never done this?

But this commandment, you see, makes clear is this, that we have to be meticulously honest, that we have to be meticulously careful about the reputation of other people.

Perhaps it's opposite to say at this point, but in a strange way, this can apply even to truthful statements. For instance, when one's conversation is negative about others, it may not be strictly speaking untruthful, but it may be insensitive or it may be negative, for example, about Christians or about the church.

[12:09] And I think there is scarcely anything more damaging to a Christian fellowship and to a church than negative thoughts. and it just seems to be so much easier for us to talk and to disapprove and to spread innuendo than to remain open-faced and to remain honest and sincere.

Yes, concerned too, but positive, but at the same time not in the least condoning sin.

We must be aware like a plague of harshness, of silent shrugs, of a nod that gives appealing approval to something, flattery, instant fear, praise, and so on.

All these things come into the realm of the forbidden in this commandment. you shall not bear false witness against your neighbor.

No telling lies, no spreading lies, but also, I would say, no living a lie. John keeps it this way in his first letter.

[13:33] I think this is one of the most important implications of this commandment. And he says, if we say that we have fellowship with him, in other words, if we say that we are Christian and walk in darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth.

And I say this is the most important of the implications of this commandment on the negative side. This really has to do with our standing before God. Lying, now, it is a moral problem for women in the ninth commandment.

the most serious is this, the sinner's self-deception that all is well with my soul when it is not.

And this, you see, is Satan's greatest lie. And I would suggest that it is his most successful lie in our own day. This lie that you can be a Christian without being born again, without being converted by the Holy Spirit of God.

That you can be a Christian without living by the word of God. That you can be a Christian without attendance at the means of grace. Or even that you can be a Christian by attendance at the means of grace.

[14:53] And the truth of God has been exchanged for the lie, as Paul tells us. And the creature is worshipped instead more than the Creator who is blessed forever.

But havoc has been caused by this sort of lie that the word of God is not entirely to be followed, is not entirely to be believed, is not entirely to be trusted.

And so, the command you see for this, the telling of lies and the spreading of lies and the living of the lies before God and men.

But I'd like to turn for a few moments to the positive requirement here, to the truthfulness required.

Now, as we've said before in these morning services, these morning sermons on the commandments, we must do a full justice on the positive side.

We've not, in other words, kept them simply when we can say that we haven't done this or that.

Wrong. In this case, with this commandment, the positive note is truth.

[16:21] It is truth. God expects his people to believe the truth and to speak the truth and to practice the truth.

And that is a requirement of this commandment also. It is a requirement of honesty. It is a requirement of integrity. It is a call to live out the truth.

Take the truth with you wherever you go. God's truth is entirely trustworthy. God's truth is true.

Everything else is of sin.

God's truth isn't half truth. It isn't merely true. It isn't true just for some situations and not for others.

It isn't true just for some societies and not for others.

The truth of God expressed in the Holy Scripture is absolutely to be believed and to be received. It is true and it is true.

[17:32] Now, when you become a Christian, this is what happens. You come to see that God's word is truth. The blindness is taken away from your eyes and what you didn't receive and understand before, you now come to see as being the truth of God.

When you become a Christian, you come to believe in the one who is the truth incarnate and you come to give your heart to the one who said, I am the way, the truth and the life.

No one comes to the father but by me. When you become a Christian, you come to live out your life, not by the standard of man, but by the standards of God, holy truth.

You come to see that God wants truth. He wants it, not only in what we do out of him, but he wants it as we sing in Psalm 51, he wants truth in the inward path.

When you become a Christian, you say this, I want to know the truth. You say I want to live by the truth. You say I want to tell forth the truth.

[18 : 57] God has revealed himself by this truth. None of a converted person will know how to truth by it.

None of a converted person will have knowledge and understanding of the truth or obedience to it. But the converted person, the Christian brought to faith through the truth will desire to be conformed more and more and more to the truth that is revealed there.

And we'll pray more and more and more so the Holy Spirit will take that truth and apply it to our hearts day by day.

God will be practical for a moment. There are obviously some things which are essential if you and I are to live out the truth, if you and I are to speak the truth.

Let me suggest a few. If we are to live out the truth and if we are to speak forth the truth obviously first of all we must believe it.

[20 : 10] We must sincerely believe it in our hearts. We must realize that we are answerable to the God of truth. We must realize that Jesus is the truth.

A Christian believes what God has said. It is as simple as that. A Christian believes what God has said. A Christian is truthful because God says do not lie to one another since you have put off the old man with his teeth and have put on the new man who is renewed in the knowledge according to the image of him who created him.

Do not lie to one another. Do you believe the truth? I mean do you really believe it as the most vital thing in your belief in your life?

Do you believe it with sincerity? Can you say this morning that you really and truly are captive to the word, to the truth of the gospel?

Has it captured, has it captivated, has it gripped your heart yet? But what we have here is the very truth of God by which we expect us to live.

[21 : 41] So then, not only believe the truth, but you are to speak what actually is, what is true. In other words, before things are passed on, before things are taken on a stream, they are chained, to ensure that they really are true.

And that they are fair and faithful. And then again, if we are captives to the truth, think, we are to think before we speak.

Really, this is what James is speaking about in his official, when he speaks about the town and what tremendous damage the town can do. And the town so often does so much damage, because there is not bad thought beforehand of what is going out in our stream.

And then, if we are to live out of truth, we are surely to speak on, and not be silent, that our wrong has been done.

And isn't it true that there is too much silence in the face of a tremendous flood of sinfulness and perversion in our own day, and standards inevitably slip and slip and slip, but nobody is prepared to stand up and to speak for what is truth, and to say, this is the truth, the truth of God.

[23 : 21] else would our silence seem to express consent, truth, and to us. But then, finally, in all our concern for truth, we must remember, you must remember, and teachers, I can tell you more than any, that God is first, that God is first, that is quite simple and obvious, He is the one that you and I ought to seek to please.

Nothing really matters except that we please God ultimately, and what an impact that will have on our conversation, on our conduct, on our absolute truthfulness, when we realize that, that God is first, and that our concern, our consuming passion, and desire, is that He should be pleased with our conduct, and with our conversation, and with our utter, physical man.

love. But you see, in the end, there is only one way that any of us can come to believe and to speak the truth, and that is when you come to have a saving relationship with Jesus Christ.

And so perhaps that is the greatest question of all, do you yet have a saving relationship with Jesus Christ? Remember that it is Jesus Christ who is the truth, and that it is He who liberates men and women, sinners, from serving their sins, to turn to Him and to please Him in the life.

And the only worthwhile truth is the truth that we have in Jesus Christ, in the word of the living God.
[25 : 46] Just a word in conclusion. I just want to end really with a question, and that is quite simple, have you faced the truth yet?

Have you faced the truth yet about yourself? Have you come to see yet that you are a sinner in need of salvation? Perhaps that's the most important question that you can be asked. Have you come to see yourself the truth about yourself as a sinner before God? And if so, does it disturb you to walk you?

You need to know yourself, you need to know the truth about yourself as a lost sinner to see in need of Jesus as the sinner's savior.

And as you stand before the cross, as we stand in face of the cross, you realize surely the truth that you are bad enough to have crucified the law of glory there upon the cross yourself.

[27 : 03] That is the truth about the human heart. That is the truth we need to admit, we need to confess. You know, the very moment you admit that, you confess that.

the power of the lie is broken. The power of the lie that you're not to die a sinner.

The power of the lie that all will be well in the end, willy-nilly. When you confess and repent and receive the Lord Jesus Christ, the Holy Spirit of God comes into your life and he takes over, he is the Spirit of truth, he was promised to lead into truth, he is the one who will lead you from darkness and from lying and all self-deceit to light and to truthfulness, then and only then will life be for you as God intends it.

Not personally, but living by the truth. truth, oh dear friend, there is something so important in this commandment.

It is calling you, it is calling me, it is calling all of us to take the truth seriously, to take it as it is, to love the truth, and it is calling us to love the God who is truth, and who has revealed himself in this word.

[28 : 48] As we sing in the hundredth psalm, because the Lord our God is good, his mercy faileth never, and to all generations, his truth endureth ever.

And may the Lord may have home to our own hearts this morning, his truth afresh, and the new that our concern would be to go forth with that truth in our hearts, and speak it, and live it, before God and before men.

And may he bless these thoughts upon his word. Let us pray. O merciful and gracious God, our Father in heaven, we come before thee shamefaced, because thy law, thy word, exposes our own sinfulness.

And Lord, we pray that we may have grace to confess to thee, that we pray that we may have grace to live out our lives according to thy truth, that thy truth would be in our minds and in our hearts and in our lives, that we would take it with us wherever we go, and that we would live it out to thy praise and thy glory.

O do thou bless us this day, we pray thee, Lord, take away from us all our sins, cleanse us in the blood of Jesus, in his name we ask it, and for his days.

[30 : 15] Amen.