“Life in the Kingdom: A Call to Credibility”

Matthew 5:33-37; Lev. 19:11-12; Ps. 15

(Notes based on the sermon by Pastor Steve Massey, Hayden Bible Church, 12/4/22)

Our King’s promises to His people are ironclad, never subject to change. What blessed assurance is ours, what security we enjoy, knowing that “the word of our God stands forever.” (Is. 40:8) When God says something, He really means it. Do you?

Ever since the Fall, people in all cultures have told lies. Today’s scripture is about weaseling around with our lies, making them seem like they’re not such a big deal. Starting at a very young age, we’ve played games with the truth. Remember these? pinkie swear; cross my heart, hope to die…; cross your fingers behind your back; little white lie; shading the truth; stretching the truth; talking all around the truth; and more!!! Jesus says to His kingdom people, “Let your ‘yes’ be ‘yes’ and your ‘no’ be ‘no.’” Christ calls His kingdom people to credibility.

In the Kingdom of Heaven, everything comes under the rule of the King, including our words. In today’s passage, Jesus is correcting the wrong use of the Law, a corruption of the Law. What are Christ’s followers like? They are people who walk God’s narrow way. They are not legalists, pretending to be righteous. They are not licentious, figuring they can bend the truth, ‘cause Christ has all their sins covered anyway. No, credibility goes to the heart of a Christian’s character. What’s more, Christians are meant to shine the light of truth into a world full of deception.

Read Ps. 15. Do you merit fellowship with your Holy God? No, not on your own. Your Savior, though, has made that fellowship possible for you. He took the wrath of God for all of our lies, even those “white lies” that we pretend don’t matter. Have you been born again into this Kingdom of truth? The King reigns over all things… including His people’s words.

Read Matt. 23:16. The Pharisees had established a system of religiously sanctioned lying. That’s NONSENSE! That’s as good as crossing your fingers behind your back! In Matt. 5 Jesus was telling us to stop looking for loopholes in our marriage vows. He was telling us to stop looking for loopholes in speaking honestly. He was saying stop lying, stop deceiving, stop hiding falsehood behind your religion. The King’s people do not withhold parts of their lives from His rule. Christians should stick out like bright lights in this dark world. The need to embellish our words to mask our untruthfulness is evil. Let’s heed the words of Martyn Lloyd-Jones: “We are all being watched, and therefore everything we do is of tremendous importance.” Don’t put that fish on your business card, and then conduct business just like everyone else. Don’t put that cross on the back of your car, and then make angry gestures at other drivers. Christian’s words either commend Christ to others, or take His name in vain.

Two clarifications before we finish: 1) Can Christians take an oath? Yes. The context of this passage refers to the frivolous use of oaths to mask deception. 2) Doesn’t God Himself make oaths? Yes. His promises to His people are visible from Genesis to Revelation.

Jesus is the Truth (John 14:6; Heb. 6:16-19). He is “a strong and trustworthy anchor for our souls” and He will never change His mind. Our King is credible, and progressively, by the work of His Spirit, His people are becoming credible, too. Father, may You be glorified through Your credible people. Amen.

**QUESTIONS**:

1. That great theological work Horton Hatches the Egg (by Dr. Seuss) contains an oft repeated phrase. Does anyone in your group remember it? I think it was the same point Jesus was making!
2. The Quakers of Pennsylvania were known for their honesty. Companies have even tried to capitalize off of that (Quaker Oats, Quaker State Oil, etc.). How can we go beyond that? How can a life of honesty bring glory to God?
3. Why do people lie? What does this have to do with God’s glory?
4. In what ways is keeping your word costly?
5. Pastor Steve said, “Christians’ words either commend Christ to others, or take His name in vain.” What did he mean by this statement?
6. How does King Jesus fulfill the law **for** His people when it comes to truthfulness?

“Come Thou Long Expected Jesus” (Wesley)

Come, Thou long-expected Jesus,

Born to set Thy people free;

From our fears and sins release us,

Let us find our rest in Thee.

Israel’s Strength and Consolation,

Hope of all the earth Thou art;

Dear Desire of every nation,

Joy of every longing heart.

Born Thy people to deliver,

Born a child and yet a King,

Born to reign in us forever,

Now Thy gracious kingdom bring.

By Thine own eternal Spirit

Rule in all our hearts alone;

By Thine all-sufficient merit,

Raise us to Thy glorious throne.