

# Tell the Truth

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**Bible Verse:** Matthew 5:33-37  
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For our message this morning, I invite you to turn to the gospel of Matthew chapter 5 as we continue in our study on the Sermon on the Mount. I intend to stay in the Sermon on the Mount on Sundays and Tuesdays for a little while. I'm not sure exactly which or how long that will go. I have not forgotten about our study of Revelation. We will return to that in time but for now, it just seems fitting to me to stay in this sermon and to benefit from it as the Lord leads us day by day and week by week through his word.

Matthew chapter 5, our text begins in verse 33, this morning, where we read this,

33 "Again you have heard that it was said to those of old, 'You shall not swear falsely, but shall perform to the Lord what you have sworn.' 34 But I say to you, Do not take an oath at all, either by heaven, for it is the throne of God, 35 or by the earth, for it is his footstool, or by Jerusalem, for it is the city of the great King. 36 And do not take an oath by your head, for you cannot make one hair white or black. 37 Let what you say be simply 'Yes' or 'No'; anything more than this comes from evil.

Could be translated "from the evil one." And here in the Sermon on the Mount, especially in chapter 5, Jesus, as I've said many times, is showing us the kind of righteousness that God requires. God requires an inner purity. He's not looking for external rituals that are gone through mindlessly and in a rote manner, and thereby you can dismiss so much of what passes for Christianity and other segments of religion, you could say. He's looking for an inner righteousness and we've seen this as we've proceeded through the Sermon on the Mount. He said in Matthew 5, verse 20, that your righteousness must exceed that of the scribes and the Pharisees or you will never enter the kingdom of heaven, which was a shocking statement to the hearers at the time because they regarded the Pharisees as the ultra-righteous. These were the men who knew the law and were the paradigms of virtue as they understood it, and Jesus comes and demolishes all of that and says, "You see those that you regard as your highest examples, they're not going to heaven. You have to be better than them," which was an earth-shattering, paradigm-shifting statement for him to make and what he does in verses 21 through 48 of Matthew 5 is he illustrates how righteousness must exceed that of the Pharisees and what the Pharisees practiced. And so in six different sections dealing with anger, lust, divorce, oaths, retaliations, and loving your enemies, he shows how the law of God, the moral law of God, requires a heart

righteousness far beyond anything that the people had anticipated, and so he gives six different examples to help show what the righteousness of God requires, what holiness requires, and it's always an inner work in the heart that's being taken place. That's why we have to be born again. We need new souls. We need new life implanted in us because the natural man does not have the ability to do any of these things.

You could say that in the Sermon on the Mount, you see Jesus expounding on what the fruit of true repentance looks like. You could say that these are the marks of the new birth, different ways to say different things. And so, in verses 21 through 26, we saw Jesus teaching that the law against murder also prohibits the heart sin of anger, unrighteous anger. In verses 27 through 30, we see that the command against adultery in the Law of God, Exodus 20, also forbids the heart sin of lust. In verses 31 and 32, which we just completed, he deals with the matter of divorce and marital infidelity and such things. Now here in verse 33, he picks up another example to say and to show how the law of God requires a different kind of righteousness than what the Pharisees practiced and what they taught and this text that I just read in verses 33 through 37 deals with the matter of truth. Truth is embedded in the sanctions of God's moral law. In Exodus 20, verse 16, we read, "You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor." It's that the law of God reflects the truthfulness of God, and those who would belong to God and be in his kingdom must be marked by a principle of truth.

Now the sad reality is most of us would at least give a head nod in the direction of truth and the importance of truth, but we don't necessarily realize how searching this commandment is, because truth impacts every word that you speak as a Christian. God evaluates, God says you will give an account for every careless word that you speak, and so every word, it's really remarkable, every word that we speak has eternal consequences. Every stray, angry outburst, every false accusation, however you want to make it, is something that one day will be given an account for, and either that account is laid on Christ when we put our faith in Christ and trust him for the forgiveness of our sins, or there will be a final accounting at the Great White Throne of God where there is an eternal judgment rendered on every aspect of our lives. We are far, far too casual and indifferent to the eternal realities that govern the universe and by the eternal outcome of our lives and our conduct, and it's not that hard to even show that from the New Testament. In Ephesians 4, verse 25, we read, "Therefore, having put away falsehood, let each of you speak the truth with his neighbor."

And so there is this principle of our words conforming to the way that things really are as being the standard by which we are to conduct ourselves, and the background to the text here in verses 33 to 37, I'm going to explain in this first point in just a moment, or actually in the second point, but I just want to give a little bit of biblical background to the subject that Jesus is using, the subject matter of oaths. Not an easy word to say; you have to kind of slow down, and otherwise it sounds like you're talking about oats, and that's not at all what I'm talking about here this morning. The biblical use of oaths is our first point here, and Jesus is using the subject of oaths and vows, you could say, to illustrate the principle of truth in daily life for his disciples.

Look at verse 33 with me again and he's making a summary statement to invoke the present practice of the Pharisees in verse 33, and then he's going to inject a contrast to help us understand a proper application of the law of God. So in verse 33, we read this, "Again you have heard that it was said to those of old, 'You shall not swear falsely, but shall perform to the Lord what you have sworn.'" Let's think a bit about what Jesus is talking about here. An oath, to give a definition of an oath, is an oath is a solemn appeal to God to verify the truth of a statement or a promise that you are making. And I say this with utmost reverence simply to make the point and to illustrate what it is that we're saying, if you think of a somber courtroom setting, "Do you swear to tell the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth, so help you God?" "I do." There is this invocation of God in that setting, and the idea is, you know, the formality of it kind of obscures the formal significance, which was originally in place when this practice was started, is that I call God as a witness to the truthfulness of what I am saying and if I speak falsely, I invite, I invoke, I welcome the punishment and intervention of God on my life. I call upon him to judge me if I am not speaking the truth.

An oath is designed for solemn situations or times where it is important for the truth to be known, but there's not independent confirmation available to the statement that is being made. You know, you're the only witness to, you know, a death situation, no one else is there. And so you swear that you're telling the truth as a means of adding a second witness, a greater witness to the truthfulness of what you're saying. Very solemn, very serious. And the point is, is that the one who makes the oath is calling upon God to be his witness and he says, "I submit to the punishment of God if I speak falsely in what I'm about to say." Very solemn for those that fear God. For irreverent people, this just becomes one more occasion to manifest the flippancy of their heart. But for those committed to biblical truth and for those who fear God, this is a fearsome thing to contemplate because in principle, what an oath is designed to do is to foster credibility in serious situations. Okay, that's the point of an oath. It's a means of getting to the truth and in a world where truth is increasingly marginalized and disregarded, you can see where oaths would be treated more lightly than they were intended to be, but because they are so important to the cause of truth, they are to be treated seriously.

Now, let's step off the path to a little rest area here and sit down for a moment, as it were, and contemplate a false and mistaken understanding of this text. There are groups in some circles of Christianity, in circles of completely heretical groups like the Jehovah's Witnesses, who believe that this text forbids all oaths altogether, that under no circumstances should anyone give an oath. After all, Jesus says, you know, you shall not swear falsely, and in verse 34, do not take an oath at all. And so they look at that and in a wooden sense, without regard to any context, historical or broadly biblical, they say this forbids all oath-taking. So they won't take an oath in a courtroom. They won't pledge allegiance to the flag. And beloved, what I want you to see, and there's a reason why we're pausing for this, that view is not sustainable from Scripture. That is not a correct understanding of this text at all and it's very, very important for you to understand why.

First of all, I'm going to take you through a number of places biblically where righteous men were taking oaths; even God himself swore by an oath, even Christ himself

submitted to an oath at his trial. So it can't possibly be biblically sustained that that is the position. I'll show you that in a moment. But also understand this, it's a complete identity with the approach that the Pharisees used to narrow down an important command and just make it about something very narrow and unrelated to personal righteousness so that it separates out the real import of what Jesus is saying. And let me, as we've paused at the rest area here, the car's turned off, we're sitting under a shady tree, taking our time here, let me just make another point here to reinforce what I'm about to say. The Sermon on the Mount is about personal righteousness in an individual's life. Jesus is not teaching societal righteousness in the Sermon on the Mount. He's addressing the matter of righteousness for his disciples, and you know that for certain by the way that the sermon opens in the Beatitudes. Look at verse 3 with me when he says, "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted." Verse 6, "Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied," and on and on you go. Jesus is addressing what righteousness looks like, what the standard of God universally is for all men, generally speaking, but he's addressing it to his disciples who are repentant and showing them how to live life in light of the righteousness of God. This is personal, directed to individuals in their personal life. It is not a prescription for society about how society should think about war and peace and other things that we'll cover in a week or two, depending on how all of this goes.

It's personal righteousness, and that's going to become so important as we proceed through this text this morning. If you just isolate this and say, "Well, I'm righteous. I'm not going to take an oath in a courtroom." Well, congratulations. How many people end up in a courtroom over the course of their life? 5%, 2%, 10%, and all of a sudden you've marginalized this text so it has nothing to do with you know, the broad swath of the people of God? That can't possibly be what Jesus was intending to teach here and so let's contemplate for a moment the biblical use of oaths here in point number one, just to show that that interpretation can't be right and when we understand that it can't be right, then we say, well, what is the right interpretation? What does this mean? How does it apply? And then we're finally getting someplace. And so we'll just go through this rather quickly as I give you a half dozen different examples to show that biblical men, God himself, they used oaths.

So, for example, point number one here, the Old Testament required oaths in certain situations so that in the book of Numbers 30:2, we won't turn there, Numbers 30:2, we read this, "If a man vows a vow to the Lord, or swears an oath to bind himself by a pledge, he shall not break his word, he shall do according to all that proceeds out of his mouth." That's Numbers chapter 30, verse 2. And so rather than saying, you should never give an oath, the Old Testament law, the law of Moses, the five books of Moses that surround the Ten Commandments say, if you make an oath, this is what you must do. This is what regulates it.

And so the Old Testament required oaths in certain situations and in Psalm 110, verse 4, Psalm 110, verse 4, we read that God himself made an oath. God himself made an oath in Psalm 110, verse 4, where we read, "The LORD has sworn and will not change his mind, 'You are a priest forever after the order of Melchizedek.'" It's a prophetic looking forward

to the time of Christ. God himself made an oath. If we're never to make oaths, then what is God doing making an oath? And you can see similar language in Hebrews 6. Jesus himself testified under oath before the high priest.

Look at Matthew 26. Matthew 26, as we look at the trial of Jesus. In the same book where the Sermon on the Mount appears, we read about Christ making and testifying under oath. Matthew 26, verse 63, verse 62 actually is where we should start. "The high priest stood up and said, 'Have you no answer to make? What is it that these men testify against you?' But Jesus remained silent. And the high priest said to him, 'I adjure you by the living God,'" he placed Jesus under a responsibility of an oath and said, "You tell us if you are the Christ, the Son of God." And what did Jesus do? "Oh, I'm sorry, sir. I can't make an oath. God forbids all oaths and so we'll have to handle this another way because I can't make an oath." No, there was not that simplistic, silly superficiality of an approach. Jesus accepts the adjuration and speaks under it and said to him in verse 64, "You have said so. But I tell you, from now on you will see the Son of Man seated at the right hand of Power and coming on the clouds of heaven." Christ testified under oath at one of his six trials before his crucifixion.

We can go further. In the New Testament epistles, the Apostle Paul invoked the name of God to support the truthfulness of what he was saying so that in 2 Corinthians 1, verse 23, he says, "I call God to witness against me. I call God as a witness to the truthfulness of what I'm about to say and if I don't tell the truth, I invoke the punishment of God on my own head."

Similarly, in Philippians 1, verse 8, he said, "God is my witness, how I long for you all with the affection of Christ Jesus." What's he doing there when he says words like that in Philippians 1:8? No one could know the truthfulness, no man could know the sincerity of Paul's heart as he spoke about his love for the church at Philippi. No one could know that and so, in order to establish it as a fact beyond dispute, Paul says, "I testify before God, I call on God as my witness that I love you, that I am concerned for you, and that my heart is with you as I write," and then he proceeds to say what he has to say, the truthfulness of it established by the fact that he called upon God to be his witness and said what he had to say.

Paul said it, God witnessed to it, therefore, by the testimony of two or three witnesses, a fact is established. Paul loved the church at Philippi and wrote from a spirit of concern for their well-being as he did. All of that simply to say, beloved, that in the context of Scripture, Old Testament, New Testament, God, Christ, their servants, we see the principle of oaths being used in serious situations to verify the truthfulness of what was being said and so it can't be correct to look at verse 34, yank it out of its context, tear the garment in half, and cut it into pieces, and just focus on three or four words. "Oh no, Jesus said, don't take an oath, therefore I'm not taking an oath." That's not what it means and so we dispense with that incorrect view of this passage and ask the question, well then, what does it mean and why is Jesus making this point, and how does it expose the Pharisees as being false converts, false teachers, and what does it have to do with us today?

Well, that brings us to point number two: the Pharisees' abuse of oaths. The Pharisees' abuse of oaths. We saw the biblical use of oaths, serious, solemn situations practiced by many and matters relating to the ministry of Christ and apostolic sincerity and Christ teaching or speaking and testifying at his own trial and so we see these solemn situations where it's being used. Now, what's Jesus addressing then about the Pharisees? Well, they abused the process of oaths, and in what we're about to see, it's obvious that Jesus did not intend his words to be used in an absolute sense. What Jesus is doing is he is instructing his disciples about integrity in daily life and to simply walk with a simple, pure integrity so that your words are naturally true without appealing to oaths. Jesus is instructing his disciples on integrity in daily life and to not use little tricks to try to avoid speaking the truth, or to speak in a way to say the truth and yet not mean it, or to say a falsehood and then do something to excuse it.

Let me illustrate. When I was a kid, you could tell a lie and supposedly get away with it if you simply had your fingers crossed when you said it, and so by crossing your fingers, you excused yourself from an obligation to tell the truth. You could say whatever you wanted to as long as you went through the formality of crossing your fingers when you said it. So you could say, "Well, I didn't take your ball." I did take it, but my fingers are crossed, so I'm excused from truthfulness in what I say. We all understand that. Probably many of us have done that in one time or another. By the way, all my fingers are, no fingers crossed here. The point is this: a little trick supposedly made the deception legitimate and not blameworthy; you're not guilty of deception because of a little trick that you went through. The simplicity of that example helps us understand what Jesus is getting at here. The little formality, the little physical formality hid a blatant lie.

Now keep that in mind for what we're about to see as we turn to verses 34 through 36. It's more sophisticated what the Pharisees were doing, but the basic principle is the same. So in verse 34, we read this as Jesus says, "But I tell you, I say to you, do not take an oath at all either by heaven, for it is the throne of God, or by the earth, for it is his footstool, or by Jerusalem, for it is the city of the great King. And do not take an oath by your head, for you cannot make one hair white or black." Now, in our day, when we read these things, and we're not from, you know, we're not from the land surrounding Jerusalem, these things might sound really, why are we even having a discussion like this? Here's the background behind it that helps us understand the significance of what's going on here. The Jews, the Pharisees, they had different categories of oaths. They had different kinds of oaths that a person could give. Some of the oaths were binding upon you, some of them were not. And so you're in a situation where you're about to make a factual representation, you take one kind of oath and you can't break that, but if you take a lesser diminished kind of oath, then you're free to say what you wanted to say and the idea is, is that if your oath does not specifically invoke the name of God, you did not have to be quite so accurate in everything that you said, but if you invoked the name of God, then you did.

These tricks, these verbal gymnastics, this verbal crossing of the fingers was something that they used to evade the third commandment found in Exodus 20, verse 7. Supposedly,

they thought, by leaving the name of God out of the matter, without explicitly speaking his name, they wouldn't be under the judgment from the third commandment, which says this, Exodus 20, verse 7, "You shall not take the name of the LORD your God in vain, for the LORD will not hold him unpunished who takes his name in vain." And so, what they're saying, what the idea was, "I didn't take the name of the Lord. I didn't place myself under God as my witness and because I didn't do that, then the standard isn't as strict and high, and I've got room to operate, I've got room to say different things." What you could do, you could swear by other things and appear to affirm the truth.

So this is what Jesus is saying in verse 34, they had an oath where you could swear by heaven, or you could swear by the earth under your feet, you could swear by the city of Jerusalem, the city of Zion, the city of the great king, verse 36, you could swear by your head and all of this was simply a pretext to give the appearance of concern for the truth while the reality was something different. Understanding that, the different oaths. "I swear by heaven." I've got my fingers crossed. "I swear by the earth. I swear by Jerusalem." Swearing, swearing, swearing, all projecting the appearance of concern for the truth when the actual intent was to leave room for deception. Their system of oaths was a pretext for lying and it is that system that Jesus is addressing in his teaching here, and Jesus is about to demolish it and unpack it all in what he says.

Let's look at it here again in verse 34. He says don't take an oath by heaven, for heaven is the throne of God. God is in heaven. If you invoke heaven, you're invoking the throne room of God. You can't evade it that way. Don't swear by the earth, verse 35. The earth is the footstool of God. The earth is under the control and the oversight of God. Don't swear by Jerusalem. This is the city where the son of David will one day reign over all of the earth in his coming kingdom. The city of Jerusalem is holy. The earth is a holy place for the manifestation of the providential outworking of the purposes of God. Heaven is the manifestation of the great glory of God. Don't even swear by your own head. You can't, by force of your will, make your hair grow. You can't change its colors by the force of your will, this was written before hair coloring, I guess. But Jesus is showing that all of these distinctions are meaningless and beloved, here's his point, is that you cannot shield yourself from the searching ear of God to what you say by verbal tricks that you use to deceive men. God is not deceived. God is not limited. God is not constrained by the verbal mechanisms that you use to try to deceive men and to give a different projection to men than what is true in your heart. Here's the problem for all of that is that God knows your deceit. He hears your deceit whether or not you invoke his name in the process.

And so we come back to this, the Bible says that the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom and a right understanding of God includes, among many, many other things, a recognition of his omniscience, that God knows all things. The God who made the eye sees everything that happens. The God who made the ear hears everything that is said. The God that made the human heart, that formed the human heart, the inner man, sees and reads in that and his standard of holiness and truth is permeating every realm and every situation and every word that we speak. And so it is not only futile, it is a sin against God to try to use tricks to deceive men when God is the only one who matters, and God is a God of truth, and God is a God of final judgment.

And that has a lot of implications. Point number three: Jesus' call to truthfulness. Jesus' call to truthfulness. Jesus shows forth what the righteousness of God requires, and it is the simplicity of earnest integrity without doing anything to try to elevate the appearance of truthfulness in what you say. So he says in verse 37, here's what he requires from us, "Let what you say be simply 'Yes' or 'No'; anything more than this comes from evil." It comes from the devil. It comes from the father of lies. And what he's saying is, it's greatly liberating, it's greatly simplifying, it cuts through all of the sophistry of human behavior, and he tells his disciples, just tell the truth. Just tell the truth. If the truth requires you to say yes, just say yes and let it be at that. If the truth is no, then say no and let it go at that. Don't draw upon the serious realm of oaths to verify your truthfulness in simple daily conversation, just speak the truth. Just say what is true.

And he restores the spirit of the moral law with these words that he says. The moral law requires men to speak the truth. "You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor." That's what it requires. And so you are already under an eternal obligation before God to speak truthfully and your integrity should be such that if you say yes, it means yes. We don't have to look behind your back to see if your fingers are crossed. We don't have to guess at what you mean with deception. And, you know, look, everybody knows I used to practice law. Attorneys know how to, you know, rotate the truth in order to present it in a certain way. That's not the way that it's to be. You should not swear to reinforce your honesty. And here's the thing, beloved: indiscriminate use of swearing and oaths implies actually that your word cannot otherwise be trusted. So, for example, someone could say you're a guest at a home, you've just had a nice meal treated by the hospitality of the lady of the house and you can picture someone saying, "You know, I swear that was the best roast beef that I have ever had!" No Christian should speak that way. That is a sinful use of speech, a sinful use of oaths. In a realm that I don't participate in, someone could say, "Honest, that fish that I caught and released, 25 pounds! Honest, it was 25 pounds!" We shouldn't talk that way. The righteousness that God requires is a simple integrity, a simple truthfulness of speech, so that the words are more restrained, they're more proper, they're simple, and they're consistent with the facts. So by contrast, "Ma'am, that was one fine supper. Thank you. But buddies, you know that fish, it weighed in at four pounds." And just the simplicity of the way that we speak.

Now listen, these examples have been simple, and the exposition has been simple, but the application of these things is weighty. We can see, and I use simple, somewhat humorous examples simply to establish the principle and then we carry it over to the nature of life and the nature of relationships so that we say, of course if you're in a courtroom, you're required to give an oath, jurisprudence is moving away from those things, but you give an oath but you don't use oaths indiscriminately in ordinary situations. In daily life, your words are simple, direct, and true, and trustworthy, particularly within the body of Christ, so that what we find is this, and we go into weighty matters and see the application. Within your marriage, you're speaking truth to your spouse, not withholding things, not covering up and hiding things that perhaps from the past, perhaps in the present, but that truthfulness in marriage requires a transparency, a loving transparency where there are no hidden agendas, there are no things covered up, there's no resentment or sins that are

withheld. You come forth with the truth. In the workplace, same thing, integrity in the manner in which you do your job, integrity as you report to superiors, integrity as you deal with those under your authority. In the church, transparency, truthfulness, a doing away of hidden agendas. When Christians in a local body understand the principle of truth, then there are far fewer gossipy conversations in the corner of the room where things are whispered that would not otherwise be publicly known or should be publicly known. We're doing away with, we're doing away with the kind of deception that covers our mouths so that no one reads our lips or overhears what's said. When people are functioning in that way, they are violating the call to transparent truthfulness and the implications go very far.

Let me say this as well, that the principle of truth and the challenge to truthfulness, the commitment to integrity, is more important than preserving relationships even, if the truth, if someone would react against the truth or someone tries to manipulate you so that the truth must be silenced, you cannot submit to that. You cannot submit to someone trying to control you from speaking the truth, forbidding you to speak the truth. You cannot submit to that because there is a transcendent commitment, there is a transcendent principle of truth by which the God of truth operates the universe and it is incumbent upon you and me to conform ourselves to that regardless of the consequences.

Notice what Jesus says at the end, and ask yourself what it is that you wish to align yourself with. Jesus said, "Let what you say be simply yes or no; anything more than this comes from evil." As I said earlier, it could be from the evil one. When you step beyond the simple transparency of truthfulness, when you start to shade the truth, when you start to hide the truth, when you're actively covering up the truth, you have stepped from the realm of righteousness into the realm of sin and Satan. Jesus said that Satan is the father of lies. And lies, deception, can be proactive, telling a known falsehood with the intent to deceive, or it can be simply withholding information that is necessary for an honest evaluation of the cause. Satan is the father of lies. Deception does not come from God. And at some point down the road, I probably will illustrate this more, but it's possible to deceive by telling the truth. If you're just telling a portion of the truth or you're withholding the context of the truth. One of the ways that we guard ourselves against this is that we don't judge a matter until we've heard both sides of it, Proverbs 18. But all of this reinforces to us that truth is a matter of high priority in the presence of a holy God.

And so, to the extent that we have been guilty of hiding things from those who need to know, who have a right to know, to the extent that we exaggerate, to the extent that we carelessly invoke oaths and say, "I swear what I'm telling you is true," all of these things are a compromise of the pure, simple integrity that Christ calls us to so that the ultimate goal, the ultimate truthfulness to which God calls us is simply that we would be men and women of our word, that if, picking a name at random, if Tom said it, I know it's true. The mere fact that he said it is enough to establish the truthfulness of the matter. When we compromise that kind of integrity, we've opened the door for all kinds of evil to come in.

So, men, are you honest with your wife? Wives, are you honest with your husbands? Parents and children, children and parents, and on it goes. Because, beloved, if we sacrifice the truth on the altar of expediency, we have sacrificed everything. If we sacrifice truth for the sake of trying to cover up our sin, know that God is not mocked and your sins will find you out. Your sins will find you out. It is fruitless to try to hide the truth in a realm, in a universe, in a world, in a life where the God of truth sovereignly guarantees the outcome and that the truth will one day be known. And so in light of all of these things, beloved, to the extent that you have been a deceitful person, God's word calls you to repent and to come forth with the truth and by honest talk to give glory to God. May the Spirit of God help us to examine ourselves and to speak truth in accordance with what reality is in the presence of the God who is a God of truth.

Let's pray together.

*Father, we're mindful of the words of Jesus in John 17 when he said, "Sanctify them in the truth, your word is truth." And you are a God of truth, Scripture says, it is impossible for you to lie. And Father, how it speaks to the depravity of our hearts and the fallenness of our world and the fallenness of man, that deception comes so easily to us. So many are more practiced in deception that it comes to them second nature and the truth is actually the alien force in their world. We pray, Father, that you would deliver us from such wickedness. I pray, Father, that by the power of your Holy Spirit, you would take the feeble words of this exposition and apply them with power to the hearts of those who you have put your finger on, and that they would come forth speaking truth, Father, whatever that may mean. And may the humbling of transparent confession, Father, be met swiftly by the grace of God as we look to Christ, who is the way, the truth, and the life. Father, how could we ever think that we could practice the seeming smallest of deceptions while claiming to be redeemed by the one who is the way, the truth, and the life? How could we think that we were right before God, the God who cannot lie, when we are practicing lies and deceptions and misleading people by our words, by our silence, by our actions? How could we think that things are right between you and us if we are not truthful in the presence of the God of truth? Father, it's so far-searching, so far-reaching. Help us by your Spirit to respond. Sanctify our lying tongues. Sanctify our deceptive hearts, our manipulative, controlling approach to relationships, to humble ourselves under the God of grace, and to go forth from this room, go forth from the live stream changed, willing to do whatever is necessary to reestablish the principle of truth in life, at home, at work, in the church, whatever it means, wherever the application lies, Father, may your Spirit take it and apply it with power to our hearts and help us to that end. Father, we're grateful that the Lord Jesus Christ shed his atoning blood to redeem sinners like us. Let liars come to Christ confessing their sin and find in him redemption, forgiveness, saving and sanctifying grace as a result of the time we spent together in your word here today. In Jesus' name we pray, Amen.*

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