

Sermon Series: “*Christian Life-skills*” for every age”—Lord of Life Lutheran, Westfield, IN—6/17/2001

Title: “When Your Word is Not Good Enough”

Text: Matthew 5: 33-37

Introduction: **Illus: Keeping your word**

Theme: When we look at God’s redeemed will for our tongue, it is not so much what we cannot say but what is it that we are saved to say that counts.

***A promise is a promise* (Print/read vs. 33-36)**

- **The spirit of the law on oaths**
 1. Jesus quotes Old Testament law which seemed to condone oath taking
 - a. **Conduct**---To honor God’s name rather defame it
 - b. **Commitment**--To provide for the needs of others
 2. **ILLUS.: KEEP YOUR PROMISES**
- **The root causes of our “perjury”**
 4. **Fear**
 - a. **Face-saving** – Fear of what other will think
 - b. **Intimidation** – Fear of what others will do
 2. **Pride**
 - a. Trying to impress others by shooting off your mouth
 - **ILLUS.: VAIN TALKERS**
 - b. Wanting to believe that we are in control by thinking we possess what we swear by (vss. 34-36) *“O LORD, what are humans that you should care about them? What are mere mortals that you should think about them? Humans are like a breath of air. Their life span is like a fleeting shadow.” Ps 144: 3-4*
 - c. Not willing to admit and confess our shortcomings and swearing to cover it up
 - d. *“If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.” 1 John 1: 8-9*

***How to make and keep your promises* (Print/read vs 37)**

- **Keep it simple**
 1. By “swearing” to our honesty we make others believe that we are not
 2. By implying that “God is your witness” we make God a party to your deception
 3. If someone does not believe a simple “yes” or “no,” they won’t believe you no matter what
- **Walk in the light**
 1. Your word is your honor, let your honor match your word
 2. If you walk in the light, you have nothing to fear and nothing to defend (even your mistakes)
 3. *“But if we live in the light in the same way that God is in the light, we have a relationship with each other. And the blood of his Son Jesus cleanses us from every sin”. 1 John 1: 7 (GW)*
- **Speak with the truth**
 1. **It is a matter of honor**
 - a. Often we are more interested in protecting our honor than God’s\
 - b. **ILLUS.: HONOR IS NOT FOR SALE**
 - c. *“You were bought for a price. So bring glory to God in the way you use your body.” 1 Corinthians 6:20 [GW]*
 2. **It is a matter of integrity**
 - a. Our words mark out who we belong to
 - *“You come from your father, the devil. . .He has never been truthful.. .he's doing what comes naturally to him. He's a liar and the father of lies.” John 8:44*
 - *(Jesus said) “If you live by what I say, you are truly my disciples. You will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.” John 8: 31-32*
 - b. Our word testifies to whether the redemption process took
 - *“Whoever is a believer in Christ is a new creation. The old way of living has disappeared. A new way of living has come into existence”. 2 Cor. 5: 17*
 1. **It is a matter of testimony**
 - a. *“Conduct yourselves with wisdom toward outsiders, making the most of the opportunity. Let your speech always be with grace, seasoned, as it were, with salt.” Col 4: 5-6*
 - b. **ILLUS.: IMPORTANT FLEETING CONTACTS**

Keep Your Word

In his book *Lessons from a Father to His Sons*, Senator John Ashcroft writes: *Until 1997 Michael Jordan, indisputably the leading player in the NBA for over a decade, was never the highest paid player. When asked why he did not do what so many other players do—hold out on their contracts until they get more money—Michael replied, "I have always honored my word. I went for security. I had six-year contracts, and I always honored them. People said I was underpaid, but when I signed on the dotted line, I gave my word." Three years later, after several highly visible players reneged on their contracts, a reporter asked Michael once again about being underpaid, and he explained that if his kids saw their dad breaking a promise, how could he continue training them to keep their word? By not asking for a contract renegotiation, Michael Jordan spoke volumes to his children. He told them, "You stand by your word, even when that might go against you." His silence became a roar.*

Keeping your promises!

The brilliant Christian scholar and writer C.S. Lewis was determined to pay what he had vowed. His biography tells of the suffering he endured because he kept a promise he had made to a buddy during World War I. This friend was worried about the care of his wife and small daughter if he should be killed in battle, so Lewis assured him that if that were to happen he would look after them. As the war dragged on, the man was killed. True to his word, Lewis took care of his friend's family. Yet, no matter how helpful he tried to be, the woman was ungrateful, rude, arrogant, and domineering. Through it all, Lewis kept forgiving her. He refused to let her actions become an excuse to renege on his promise.

Vain Talkers

A man who was a great speaker was trying to explain the meaning of the word, "oratory." He commented with tongue and cheek, "If you say black is white, that's foolishness. But if while you say black is white you roar like a bull, pound on the table with both fists, and race from one end of the platform to another, that's oratory!"

Honor is not for sale

After the American Civil War the managers of the infamous Louisiana lottery approached Robert E. Lee, the renowned commander of the Southern armies. They asked if he'd let them use his name in their scheme to promote and attract players. They promised that if he did not would become rich. Astounded, Lee straightened up, buttoned his gray coat, and shouted, "Gentlemen, I lost my home in the war. I lost my fortune in the war. I lost everything except my name and honor. My honor is not for sale."

Important Fleeting Contacts

A physician tells of his conversion as follows: "For some time I had been given Christian tracts by some of my patients that set me thinking, but none of them put me under conviction. However, when my dear mother who loved the Lord went Home to be with him in Glory, someone who didn't even know of my tragic loss handed me a little blue card containing these arresting words: 'Have you a home in heaven where the angels dwell and where Mother is?' This fleeting contact resulted in my conversion, for it was a word to me 'in due season.'"

Matthew 5:33-37

"You have heard that it was said to your ancestors, 'Never break your oath, but give to the Lord what you swore in an oath to give him.' ³⁴But I tell you don't swear an oath at all. Don't swear an oath by heaven, which is God's throne, ³⁵or by the earth, which is his footstool, or by Jerusalem, which is the city of the great King. ³⁶And don't swear an oath by your head. After all, you cannot make one hair black or white. ³⁷Simply say yes or no. Anything more than that comes from the evil one.[GW]