

**Sermon Series: Choosing Life by Living It God's Way—Lord of Life Lutheran, Westfield, IN—6/13/2004**

**Title: Mis-spoken Vows**

*"You shall not take the name of the Lord, your God, in vain" Exodus 20: 7*

**Text: Judges 11: 1-6, 28-40 (initially print and read vs. 28-40)**

**Intro.:** *Ills. A few stray words*

**Theme:** As children of the Heavenly Father, we want what we say and promise to reflect the living and trusting relationship we have with Him through His Son, Jesus Christ.

**Why does God and why should we care about what we say?**

- Because careless words can get us into big trouble
  1. Evil origins -- *Make no oath...let your, "yes be yes" or "no, no"; and anything beyond that is evil. Matt 5: 34-37*
  2. Eternal consequences -- **Print and read Matthew 12: 33-37**
- Because careless words can dishonor God—whom we represent
  3. **Ills.: Alexander the Great — change your name or change your conduct**
  4. *As it is written: "God's name is blasphemed among the Gentiles because of you." Romans 2:24*

**Ordinary lives are often confronted by extra-ordinary circumstances—so watch what you promise**

- Often our present circumstances are birthed in our past history
  1. Jephthah had a "not so good" upbringing which laid a crooked foundation (**Print and read vs. 1-6**)
    1. Mother a prostitute; rejection by family; dysfunctional neighbors/people
    2. Jephthah made bad choices for companions (*worthless fellows surround-vs3*)
    3. Jephthah was quickly elevated as judge making his head spin (*the elders made him head an chief over them. vs11*)
    4. Dysfunctional homes, tragic accident, unguarded relationships place in overwhelming situations & ill-advised words
- Yet many of our decisions are based on faulty judgment
  1. Prideful face saving (*vs. 28--ammon disregarded...*)
  2. Self-trust in our own ability (*if the Lord. . .I will offer30-31*)
  3. Casting the blame (*vs. 35--you have brought me low*)
  4. Stubborn impenitence (*vs. 35--I am not able to turn back*)
- Determining who sets the standards of our choices, our promises, and our actions
  1. Do we use the worlds standard which says, "the end result justifies the means how we got there."
  2. Jephthah combined a godly desire (*end goal-vs. 30*) with an ungodly method of assuring it (*vs. 31*)
  3. Do we foolishly play the game of "chicken" with God . . .expecting him not to call you on a foolish promises
  4. Or do we use God's standard for facing the crisis circumstance?
    1. **Ills.: Such a little way to go**
    2. *For we who live are constantly being delivered over to death for Jesus' sake, that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our mortal flesh. 2 Cor. 4: 11*

**The rest of the story--where redeeming grace fits in when we have "mis-spoken"**

- When faced with overwhelming choices and the temptation to say anything to escape, remember God's guarantees
  1. *No temptation has seized you except what is common to man. And God is faithful; he will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted, he will also provide a way out so that you can stand up under it. 1 Cor 10:13*
  2. No matter how overwhelming the circumstances, because of Christ let God be God and resist verbal/physical control
    1. *For as many as are the promises of God, in Him they are yes. 2 Cor. 1:20*
- When having made a tragically wrong choice with your words, remember God's promise
  3. Jephthah did not have to compound a sin with a sin

1. Often pride and face-saving causes us to verbally and recklessly defend an indefensible word or action
2. Learn to admit your wrong, to say 'I'm sorry' and to humbly accept grace from the other you have offended
4. Forgiveness and grace is all about remembering that you can return home to the Father—unconditionally
  1. **Ills.: the story of the prodigal son and the gracious father (Luke 15)**
  2. What if, like Jephthah, you find yourself having promised or acted out a monstrously horrible vow?
  3. Today Christ calls you back in forgiveness—'*come on home*'
  4. *It is a trustworthy statement, deserving full acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, among whom I am foremost of all. And yet for this reason I found mercy, in order that in me as the foremost, Jesus Christ might demonstrate his perfect patience, as an example for those who would believe in him for eternal life. 1 Tim. 1: 15-16*

### A Few Stray Words

Author Kevin Miller from the publisher *Christianity Today* writes: I was flying from San Francisco to Chicago. Five minutes before takeoff from San Francisco, a gate agent from ATA came on the plane and said to me, "Get your bags and come with me." I got my bags out of the bin and followed her into the jetway and asked, "Why? Is this a random security check?" She said, "The captain refused to have you on this flight." As we walk up the jetway, I realize I'm probably going to miss this flight, and wonder, *What in the world is going on?* In the terminal, she pointed me to the black vinyl seats and said, "Sit there. A supervisor will come talk to you." I'm waiting there, perplexed, looking out the window as the ATA plane I should be on backs away from the gate. I know there are no more ATA flights to Chicago today. After 10 or 15 minutes, I demand, "What's going on?" The gate agent says flatly, "A supervisor will talk to you." I sit back down. As I'm sitting there, it suddenly hits me: My friend had been ordered out of the security line and thus arrived on the plane much later than I. When he came on the plane, I asked him, "Why were you stopped? Was it your beady terrorist eyes? Explosives?" My friend shook his head quickly, getting me to shut up. THAT was what was causing this. Soon four uniformed San Francisco cops, revolvers on their hips, walk up to me. "Do you know why you're here?" "No," I said. "I was hoping you'd tell me." "Isn't there anything you said that caused you to be here?" "Well," I said, "I did make a comment to my friend about looking like a terrorist. I know I shouldn't have said that. I was just making a private joke." The cop, steel hair and strong jaw, shoots back, "You can't joke about those things. They may not allow you to fly again in the future." Another cop grills me. One takes my driver's license and runs a criminal background check. Another calls the FAA, to see what they want to do with me. A senior airline rep comes and pulls the cops aside, talking about me, just out of earshot. All I can hear is, "What did he tell you?" and "Well, they're gone, so we can't confirm what they heard." I'm wondering, *Am I going to be arrested? Are they going to refuse me to fly on ATA and make me buy a new ticket on another airline, probably for tomorrow? Are they going to strip-search me?* Finally, the senior airline rep comes over and asks, "Tell me what happened. What did you say?" I told them what I said. He asked, "Who was your friend?" I told him the name. He asks, "How do you spell that?" He disappears, probably to check whether that name matches the passenger manifest for the flight. I'm feeling terrible: Great. Now I've gotten my friend in trouble. They're going to hassle him and question him when he lands in Chicago. One cop looks down at me, arms folded. "So they let your friend go on the flight and not you, huh?" "Well," I said weakly, "he didn't say something stupid. I did." More huddled discussion, just out of earshot, between the leading cop and the airline rep. The airline rep walks over. "You realize that you can't talk about these things. We're in a new day." "I know that," I said. "It was stupid, and I shouldn't have said it." "Another passenger overheard you and refused to fly on the flight. The captain was told, and he made the decision to remove you from the flight." Gulp. "We've decided to let you fly again on ATA. The next flight out is not till 11:30 p.m. You'll get into Chicago at 5:30 in the morning. Inwardly I groan, but quickly say, "Thank you." The lead cop looks down at me: "You win the prize for Idiot of the Day." So now I'm sitting in San Francisco airport for 9 ½ hours and losing an entire night's sleep. All because of a few stray words. **Citation: Kevin Miller, vice president, Christianity Today International**

### **Such a little way to go**

Once a young girl came home and related to her brother about an exasperating moment on her city bus ride home from the store. It seems that she had a “big lady” who got on the bus after she did and because of the crowded circumstances had chosen to take a seat right next to her. So took up so much room in the seat that she forced the little girl right up against the side of the seat. To make matters worse, her packages kept bumping into the little girl’s face, causing her to have to dodge the sharp edge and making her endure a less than comfortable ride. Her brother asked her, “ Why didn’t you tell her to move over or stand up?” You were there first.” The little girl replay, “I didn’t think that it was worth it. After all, we had such a little way to go together.”

### **Judges 11:1-6**

<sup>1</sup>Jephthah the Gileadite was a mighty warrior. His father was Gilead; his mother was a prostitute. <sup>2</sup>Gilead's wife also bore him sons, and when they were grown up, they drove Jephthah away. "You are not going to get any inheritance in our family," they said, "because you are the son of another woman." <sup>3</sup>So Jephthah fled from his brothers and settled in the land of Tob, where a group of adventurers gathered around him and followed him. <sup>4</sup>Some time later, when the Ammonites made war on Israel, <sup>5</sup>the elders of Gilead went to get Jephthah from the land of Tob. <sup>6</sup>"Come," they said, "be our commander, so we can fight the Ammonites."

### **Judges 11:28-40**

<sup>28</sup>The king of Ammon, however, paid no attention to the message Jephthah sent him. <sup>29</sup>Then the Spirit of the LORD came upon Jephthah. He crossed Gilead and Manasseh, passed through Mizpah of Gilead, and from there he advanced against the Ammonites. <sup>30</sup>And Jephthah made a vow to the LORD: "If you give the Ammonites into my hands, <sup>31</sup>whatever comes out of the door of my house to meet me when I return in triumph from the Ammonites will be the LORD'S, and I will sacrifice it as a burnt offering." <sup>32</sup>Then Jephthah went over to fight the Ammonites, and the LORD gave them into his hands. <sup>33</sup>He devastated twenty towns from Aroer to the vicinity of Minnith, as far as Abel Keramim. Thus Israel subdued Ammon. <sup>34</sup>When Jephthah returned to his home in Mizpah, who should come out to meet him but his daughter, dancing to the sound of tambourines! She was an only child. Except for her he had neither son nor daughter. <sup>35</sup>When he saw her, he tore his clothes and cried, "Oh! My daughter! You have made me miserable and wretched, because I have made a vow to the LORD that I cannot break." <sup>36</sup>"My father," she replied, "you have given your word to the LORD. Do to me just as you promised, now that the LORD has avenged you of your enemies, the Ammonites. <sup>37</sup>But grant me this one request," she said. "Give me two months to roam the hills and weep with my friends, because I will never marry." <sup>38</sup>"You may go," he said. And he let her go for two months. She and the girls went into the hills and wept because she would never marry. <sup>39</sup>After the two months, she returned to her father and he did to her as he had vowed. And she was a virgin. From this comes the Israelite custom <sup>40</sup>that each year the young women of Israel go out for four days to commemorate the daughter of Jephthah the Gileadite.

### **Matthew 12:34-37**

<sup>34</sup> For out of the overflow of the heart the mouth speaks. <sup>35</sup>The good man brings good things out of the good stored up in him, and the evil man brings evil things out of the evil stored up in him. <sup>36</sup>But I tell you that men will have to give account on the day of judgment for every careless word they have spoken. <sup>37</sup>For by your words you will be acquitted, and by your words you will be condemned."