

Words Matter

Matthew 5:33-37

Introduction

We are continuing along in our sermon series on Matthew this morning. We'll be in [Matthew 5:33-37](#).

Part of our commitment to preaching here at Grace Road includes “preaching the whole counsel of God ([Acts 20:27](#)).” Every ounce of Scripture, we believe is necessary for God’s people and is sufficient to grow us in the grace and knowledge of the Lord. Which makes the task of preaching, on one hand, easy, because it means that the topic of the sermon for the week is the topic of the next verses of whatever book we find ourselves in. But that also means that sometimes we are faced with passages, or even a string of passages, that are difficult to deal with. Maybe they are *hard* topics to talk about, like the past few weeks: lust, adultery, divorce, and hell.

But maybe they are also *hard to understand* topics, or a passage that might just seem initially odd or perplexing. And so this morning, I think we’re met with a passage just like that, as Christ wants to teach his people about oaths and their interactions with oath-taking. But in all of this we don’t change course. We continue to preach the whole counsel of God. And if we work hard, this morning, at understanding, then we can be confident that we’ll find gold. God’s Word is good, and it never returns void. It always accomplishes its purpose ([Isaiah 55:11](#)), and we can trust that that will happen.

Understand that whenever the Bible addresses the issue of our speech, it is worth it to lean in and listen. Because we all know the area of our speech is typically a pretty massive problem-area for us. How many of us have regretted things that we’ve said? How many of us have used our words to hurt and harm? Our words are too often not pure and full of integrity, truth spoken in love, mirrored after God who, in the very first sentences of our Bibles uses his words to speak life and bring flourishing. But instead, we perhaps often find ourselves like the “wicked [person]” in [Proverbs 6:12](#), who “goes about with crooked speech.”

[James 3](#), of course, has many warnings for us about the power of the tongue and the potentially deadly and destructive nature of our speech. He says in [James 3:2](#), “For we all stumble in many ways. And if anyone does not stumble in what he says, he is a perfect man...”

So this morning, here’s the invitation: **do you want to be perfect? Then you need to let the Bible reform your speech.**

And graciously, Christ helps.

So let me read our passage in full. [Matthew 5:33–37](#), “‘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.’ But 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. Let what you say be simply ‘Yes’ or ‘No’; anything more than this comes from evil.”

So you can see we’ve got our work cut out for us in terms of understanding. But let me just state it from the outset, here’s the big idea from our text: **Christ’s people should have speech brimming with integrity and truthfulness.**

Three key points. We need to observe: 1) the problem of ruined speech, 2) the call to whole speech, 3) the promise of a healed heart.

The Problem of Ruined Speech

So consider with me first, the problem of ruined speech.

[Matthew 5](#). Where we’re at here on the Sermon on the Mount has Christ taking the Old Testament law and communicating it in a way that counters the *Pharisees’* way of communicating it.

So we’ve seen this refrain a few times: “you’ve heard that it was said... but I say to you...”

So in 5:21, (we looked at this pre-Advent) Jesus addresses anger: “you have heard that it was said to those of old, ‘You shall not murder’... But I say to you...” In 5:27, Jesus addresses lust: “you have heard that it was said, ‘you shall not commit adultery.’ But I say to you...” In 5:31 Jesus addresses divorce, “it was also said... but I say to you...”

So we have the same refrain in our passage here in [Matthew 5:33](#), “‘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.’”

This isn’t verbatim Old Testament law but is more of a summation of some texts such as [Leviticus 19:12](#), “You shall not swear by my name falsely, and so profane the name of your God: I am the Lord.” Christ seems to include also the idea of [Numbers 30:2](#), “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.” This idea also shows up in in [Deuteronomy 23:21](#), in [Psalm 50:14](#), [Ecclesiastes 5:4](#), among other places.

So again, Christ is just giving a summation of all those commands by saying, “The law says, ‘don’t swear falsely, and make sure your word carries through.’”

Understanding Oaths

Not too dissimilar from ours, oaths (or swearing) served an important function in the life of the Israelites. To give an oath meant to promise on something higher than yourself, or more valuable than yourself, with some kind of threat of penalty upon you if you were to break it. Whether it be in legal settings, religious settings, or even individual speech and commitments, what oaths do in function is they elevate the seriousness of truthfulness in a given situation, thereby increasing the possibility for trust.

One author says this:

The security of a society demands that its members speak the truth in crucial situations and keep their promises in matters of serious import. The oath is an ancient and universal means of impressing this obligation on the responsible parties in an agreement or an investigation. The obligation is fortified by holy words and holy acts which create confidence and afford a sense of security that serves to hold the community together.¹

For our day, think of the courtroom with a hand on the Bible, swearing to “tell the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth.” Think of when people are sworn into some kind of public office, vowing to uphold whatever responsibilities their position entails. Maybe your signature on paperwork might be a modern-day oath, as you are committing to uphold the terms of whatever the document outlines at risk of perjury if you break it or don’t follow through. And though not in a legal setting, we even notice this in everyday speech where sometimes we might promise or swear on something.

Oaths, by-and-large, are essentially saying, “I give you my word. You can trust me.” So it seems, then, that what the Old Testament law does is it comes along and gives buttresses to this. It makes provision for oath-taking and clarifies how it is to be done properly.

- [Leviticus 5:4-6](#) - tells us you aren’t to take oaths rashly or lightly, but only on serious occasions. But if you do take a rash oath, don’t think that they still aren’t binding. Your word is your word, and even a flippantly taken oath that is broken requires a sin sacrifice.
- [Leviticus 19:12](#) - swearing by invoking the name of God must absolutely be said in truthfulness lest you profane God’s name by associating it with lies and deceit.
- [Deut 23:21](#) and [Numbers 30](#) - if you do make an oath, be all the more certain that your words come to fruition. Never utter something and fail to do it, for that would be sin.

Again, in sum, oaths are meant to bolster up confidence in one’s word, and the law is meant to point us toward honesty.

¹ Don B. Garlington, “Oath-Taking in the Community of the New Age ([Matthew 5:33–37](#)),” *Trinity Journal* 16, no. 2 (1995): 141.

Understanding Christ

But Christ then says, back to our passage in [Matthew 5](#), in verses 34-36, “**But 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.”

And you might understandably be perplexed by Christ’s seeming prohibition on oath-taking here. Perhaps **a couple questions** might surface. **For one**, you might wonder, “*is he changing the law?*” We just observed several passages in the Old Testament that *commend* oath-taking to some degree. And now Christ says, “actually, don’t. Don’t take oaths at all.” And then maybe **another question** comes along: “*how do I actually apply this?*” Is this meant to be a strict, absolute prohibition for the Christian to not take oaths *ever*, in any scenario? What do I do if I’m called to the witness stand? Do I refrain from signing paperwork? Should I not make promises in my everyday speech?

Well if you have some of those questions, you aren’t alone. Christians have wrestled with this passage for quite some time and have landed differently in the nuances of how to best interpret, understand, and apply Christ’s words here.

But I think we’re helped when we consider a couple things: *first*, remember *in principle*, what Christ is after is the Pharisees’ *misinterpretation* of the law, *not the law itself*.

Martyn Lloyd-Jones says this:

This whole section of the Sermon on the Mount [dealing with anger and lust and divorce and so forth] is framed by our Lord to expose the sham and the falseness of the Pharisees’ and scribes’ representation of the Mosaic law, and to contrast it with His own positive exposition... Our Lord is concerned here to correct... false teaching, and not only to correct it, but to replace it with the true teaching. In so doing He brings out, as He always does, the real intent and object of the law...²

Here is the intent of the law. *Here* are the ways the Pharisees and the cultural narratives of the day have misconstrued it. And *this* is what he is after. So he’s not changing the law per se, but getting back to its heart.

The Pharisees and Deceit

Understand, the Pharisees and religious leaders of the day, always made a mess of God’s law. They created systems and hierarchies that teased out the letter of the law so much so that it

² D. Martyn Lloyd Jones, *Studies in the Sermon on the Mount* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1976), 232.

encouraged breaking the very spirit of the law. We've already seen this at play: folks get a pass on the letter of the law by having *technically* not committed adultery or murder, all the while lust and hatred are running wild in their hearts.

But we need to acknowledge, before we continue, this is where, in our examining of the Pharisees, we too need to do the hard work of taking stock of our own lives. All these Pharisaical systems and ways in which they extrapolate the letter of the law and lose the spirit of the law are really just, as G.T. Montague says, "**an attempt to find pockets of security against naked surrender to God's demands.**"³

These past few weeks, Christ's words are meant to help us understand that, us too, whether it be in our relationships, our thought lives, our marriages, and yes, even in our speech, we too might be tempted to cordon off certain areas of our lives from the lordship of Christ. So consider that as we examine the Pharisees. Here's what seemingly happened with laws concerning oaths:

I think we're helped by a passage in [Matthew 23:16–22](#). Here, Christ engages again with the Pharisees concerning their practice of taking oaths:

““Woe to you, blind guides, who say, ‘If anyone swears by the temple, it is nothing, but if anyone swears by the gold of the temple, he is bound by his oath.’ You blind fools! For which is greater, the gold or the temple that has made the gold sacred? And you say, ‘If anyone swears by the altar, it is nothing, but if anyone swears by the gift that is on the altar, he is bound by his oath.’ You blind men! For which is greater, the gift or the altar that makes the gift sacred? So whoever swears by the altar swears by it and by everything on it. And whoever swears by the temple swears by it and by him who dwells in it. And whoever swears by heaven swears by the throne of God and by him who sits upon it.”

Do you see the way in which they've nuanced the law to death? Again, the law says to *absolutely fulfill any oath we take that is sworn to God*. But it doesn't specify about oaths sworn to other things. What about swearing by the temple?... What about swearing by the altar?... What about Jerusalem, the city of God? In oath-taking and the specific words that I use, how conceptually close to God must my phrasing be for the oath to be binding or not?

By teasing out the law to exhaustion, they were creating situations where the proverbial replay button would be hit to check out the phrasing of the words and the inflections in the voice to see if they could give a pass on dishonesty or not.

“He swore by the gold of the temple *here*, so we must bind him to his word. But over here, he never said ‘gold.’ So his deceit can get a pass.”

³ -G. T. Montague, *Companion God: A Cross-Cultural Commentary on the Gospel of Matthew* (New York: Paulist, 1989), 255.

And so, just like that, the spirit of the law is explained away into oblivion. Oaths, which are meant to bolster up confidence in one's word, and the law which is meant to point you toward *honesty*, is now fodder for a system that only seems to serve *dishonesty*.

This is why Christ calls them in verse 17 of chapter 23, "blind fools." Their conclusions are absurd. Deceit is deceit no matter how you slice it.

And yet somehow, doesn't the human heart always seem to be able to rationalize it, and just explain it away? Just like the Pharisees, we too might not feel like lying or lack of truthful integrity in our speech is relatable, or a charge that would stick to us.

But we need to be aware of the trickery of our sin.

Us and Deceit

Several years ago, National Geographic released an article entitled, "Why We Lie: The Science Behind Our Deceptive Ways." The article explored, of course, famous lies throughout history, the nature of lying, and even offered a research study on the motivations that seem to lie behind our lying.

The article said this:

[The lies of Bernie Madoff, Richard Nixon, Olympic swimmer Ryan Lochte, and so forth] earned notoriety because of how egregious, brazen, or damaging their falsehoods were. But their deceit doesn't make them as much of an aberration as we might think. The lies that impostors, swindlers, and boasting politicians tell merely sit at the apex of a pyramid of untruths that have characterized human behavior for eons.

Lying, it turns out, is something that most of us are very adept at. We lie with ease, in ways big and small, to strangers, co-workers, friends, and loved ones. Our capacity for dishonesty is as fundamental to us as our need to trust others, which ironically makes us terrible at detecting lies. Being deceitful is woven into our very fabric, so much so that it would be truthful to say that to lie is human.⁴

The research study in the article found that 80% of the reasons we lie seem to fall under the motivation of personal gain.

- 22% of our lying is to avoid being exposed for personal transgressions
- 14% of our lying is for avoidance, to escape or evade other people (So you might say, "Thanks for the invite, but no I'm busy tonight; I have other plans...")

⁴ -Yudhijit Bhattacharjee, "Why We Lie: The Science Behind Our Deceptive Ways," *National Geographic*, June 2017, <https://www.nationalgeographic.com/magazine/article/lying-hoax-false-fibs-science>

- 16% is for economic advantage (exaggerating the condition of something your selling, or fudging the numbers on the sales report)
- 15% is for personal advantage outside the scope of financial benefit
- 8% is to give others a positive self-impression (we all want to be noticed, seen, or perceived in a certain way... I'll instagram the glories of my daily morning devotions even though that's far from reality...)
- 5% is for the purposes of humor, to make others laugh (maybe a fanciful, but less-than-truthful retelling of some wild situation that happened to you)

Do you notice yourself in any of that? Again, perhaps the Lord might indeed have you, this morning, recognize your tendency to *outright* lie. But I also might assume that the majority of us might see some of these ways of lack of truthfulness or integrity in our speech in a thousand other more subtle ways.

Parents, consider, have you ever spoken anything to your children with the intent to hide or shade the truth? Have you made commitments to them, whether in the context of discipline or rewards or so forth, that you didn't have full intention to follow-through on?

Christian, do you tell your hurting friend that you'll pray for them, with that intention only just fading away into nothingness?

Students, do you exaggerate the number of pages read or the amount of homework you completed in your reports? Do your eyes wander during test time, glancing at what your fellow classmates answered for that one particularly tricky question?

In your circles of community, do you color the truth differently so as to avoid a potentially uncomfortable or difficult conversation? Do you minimize or hide your sins or faults, even in venues where it might be appropriate to share such, so as to retain some kind of image or reputation?

In your workplace, perhaps there have been opportunities to fudge the numbers, boost up the sale, get a better shot at the raise by some amount of words spoken, even if they fall ever so slightly from complete integrity and truthfulness.

Again, in the home, and in the workplace, in the neighborhood, and in our friendships, where do you notice ruined speech? Where are you prone toward "acceptable lying," cordoning off certain areas of your speech from the lordship of Christ and rationalizing away your deceit?

Speech Ruined By The Fall

But don't miss what we've been seeing repeatedly in the Christ's Sermon here thus far. There is a deeper problem, a deeper source that gives shape to your lack of conformity to God's law. Whether it's adultery, whether it's murder, or even whether it's your speech, **the ultimate**

problem that drives all of these is a problem of the heart. Jesus says, himself, [Matthew 12:34](#), “For out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks.”

And so our whole world of communication is really just an outflow of the reality of our hearts.

In a verse that opens up, perhaps, a whole world of understanding for us in this is [2 Corinthians 5:15](#), “and he died for all that those who live might no longer live for themselves...” Do you see? Apart from the gracious working of God, you and I are fundamentally selfish people. We have divided hearts ([Psalm 86:11](#)) that are not wholly committed to the kingdom of God and wholly committed to the good of my neighbor, because I am committed to “me.”

I am committed to my wants, my needs. I use my energies and my time *and my words* to gain what is at the top of my list. And because I am committed to the kingdom of self, *telling the truth serves its purpose only insofar as it serves me.*

Author Paul Tripp helpfully says,

Whenever I am dishonest or “trim” or shade the truth, I am loving myself more than God or others. Trimming the truth is saying less than needs to be said. Dishonesty occurs when we look out for ourselves first. I want your respect or acceptance, so I trim the truth to hide my faults. I want your trust and confidence, so I am dishonest about my failings. I find confrontation distasteful, so I avoid issues that lead to conflict. There are things I want from you, so I shade the details to my advantage. I do not want the embarrassment of confessing wrong to you, so I cast past events in a light that is favorable to me. I do not want you to know that I failed you, so I concoct some acceptable excuse. **Truth is the casualty when I love myself more than I love you.**⁵

When our hearts are caved in on ourselves, the whole world of our speech becomes massively complicated and it makes it virtually impossible to take words at face value, since they’re injected with endless hidden agendas that spring from a selfish heart.

Again, Paul Tripp, “[Because the kingdom of self reigns] the people in my life have to live in the messy minefield of my communication. They can’t just walk through the field knowing it’s full of the lilies of truth because right next to those lilies are landmines.”

People aren’t my problem. Situations aren’t my problem. **The problem of ruined speech is a problem of the heart.**

⁵ -Paul Tripp, *War of Words: Getting to the Heart of Your Communication Struggles* (Phillipsburg, N.J.: P&R Publishing Company, 2000), chap. 13, Kindle.

The Call to Whole Speech

But of course we don't end here. Speech ruined by sin is the backdrop to the situation of [Matthew 5](#). But Christ is calling his people out of that. So let's, perhaps more quickly here, consider point #2 and the kind of "whole speech" that Christ commands here.

Back to our passage, we've already read this, [Matthew 5:34–36](#), "But 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."

The law is good, it points you toward honesty, oaths can be good and can bolster up confidence in one's word. But because of the way our divided hearts have made a mess of it all, Christ says "enough."

"Don't think that you can phrase your language in a way that excuses dishonesty, because *I'm God*. I am over all and in all and through all. You swear by heaven? I'm there! You swear by the earth? I'm there! Jerusalem? That's my city! **I am no less Lord over your speech depending on the nouns that you choose, nor by your words will you manipulate me to lower my standard of holiness and truthfulness in all things.**"

So in all the ways in which the Pharisees concocted systems to give passes on dishonesty, in all the ways that the law has been abused to reward deceit, all the forms of culturally acceptable lying, all the ways in which false speech was even societally accepted thereby making oaths even necessary... *and all the ways in which deceit or anything less than full integrity of speech are seen in us too...* be done with them. They should not be so for the people of God.

[Psalm 24:1–4](#), "The earth is the Lord's and the fullness thereof, the world and those who dwell therein, for he has founded it upon the seas and established it upon the rivers. Who shall ascend the hill of the Lord? And who shall stand in his holy place? He who has clean hands and a pure heart, who does not lift up his soul to what is false and does not swear deceitfully."

Do you hear the words of [Matthew 5](#) echoed here? What Christ longs for for his people is purity in heart, to not be engaged in falsehood, to be upright and free from deception in their speech, to have complete and absolute surrender in all of their language to the one who is Lord over their tongue.

We must be a people who live as the Heidelberg Catechism lays out, helpfully: "I must not give false testimony against anyone, twist no one's words, not gossip or slander, nor condemn or join in condemning anyone rashly and unheard. Rather, I must avoid all lying and deceit as the devil's own works, under penalty of God's heavy wrath. In court and everywhere else, I must love the truth, speak and confess it honestly, and do what I can to defend and promote my neighbor's honour and reputation."

For a people who are *this* truthful, *this* full of integrity, oaths just feel superfluous. Instead of *them*, he says in verse 37, “let what you say be simply ‘yes’ or ‘no.’” One commentator phrases it this way: “Jesus’ followers should be people whose words are so characterized by integrity that others need no formal assurance of their truthfulness in order to trust them.”⁶

Again, many legitimate questions of application do surface from this. *Is* this a ban on oath-taking for the believer? Or, what about scenarios where it might seem that truthful speech actually *isn’t* the best and most helpful thing to do.

Well, permit me to answer this way, by drawing us back to the principle underneath it all: remember, deceit happens when I sacrifice truth on the altar of self-love. Again, “truth is the casualty when I love myself more than I love you.” And so I think, in our speech, Christ is calling us to a u-turn. When I aim my speech to love the one in front of me... to genuinely honor them... to seek their good... to use my words for their betterment and their flourishing, whatever given scenario I might find myself in, I can be confident I’m heading in the right direction.

[Romans 13:8–10](#), “Owe no one anything, except to love each other, for the one who loves another has fulfilled the law. For the commandments, “You shall not commit adultery, You shall not murder, You shall not steal, You shall not covet,” and any other commandment, are summed up in this word: “You shall love your neighbor as yourself.” Love does no wrong to a neighbor; therefore love is the fulfilling of the law.”

And so when Christ commands his followers to “let what you say be simply ‘yes’ or ‘no,’ he’s aiming you after love. Christ’s people should be such honest and truthful people that they don’t use oaths evasively to get around a commitment. Nobody has to second-guess if your speech is muddied with selfish motives. They don’t have to exegete your words to try and decipher if you are *for* them or not. They are not wondering if you are sacrificing truth for personal ease. They are not wondering if you are trying to buy what you want with the currency of falsehood. They can be confident that you love them.

The Promise of a Healed Heart

Well lastly let’s consider our third point: **the promise of a healed heart.**

Understand that this is the only path to true transformation of our speech. If the mouth speaks only out of the abundance of the heart, then **in order for me to have whole speech, I need a new heart.**

Notice the end of verse 37. As Christ points his followers back to whole speech, full of integrity and truthfulness, “[Let what you say be simply ‘Yes’ or ‘No’; anything more than this comes from evil.](#)” Or perhaps your translation (or your footnote) says, “from the evil one.”

⁶ -Craig Blomberg, *Matthew*, vol. 22, *The New American Commentary* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1992), 112.

We are to understand that lies and deceit ultimately find their source in the enemy. He has done nothing but lie from the beginning. You remember the scene in [Genesis 3](#), he slithers into the garden and tempts Eve to disobey God. [Genesis 3:1–5](#) “[The serpent] said to the woman, “Did God actually say, ‘You shall not eat of any tree in the garden?’” And the woman said to the serpent, “We may eat of the fruit of the trees in the garden, but God said, ‘You shall not eat of the fruit of the tree that is in the midst of the garden, neither shall you touch it, lest you die.’” But the serpent said to the woman, “You will not surely die. For God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.””

He phrases himself in just the right way, he shades the truth, and he outright lies to the woman. And the effect on the woman in verse 13, “The woman said, “The serpent *deceived me*, and I ate.”” For the enemy, words are nothing but weapons and the truth is to be discarded for ulterior purposes. He is about nothing but lies, nothing but deception, and offers nothing but promises that just fall flat and only lead to destruction.

But understand, **his ways are not our ways because we are not his.**

[John 8:44](#), as Christ interacts with seemingly falsely believing Jews, he says, “You are of your father the devil, and your will is to do your father’s desires. He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks out of his own character, for he is a liar and the father of lies.”

But believer, he is not *your* Father. As the author of that National Geographic article said, “being deceitful is woven into our very fabric...” The good news of the gospel means that’s *old* fabric. You have a new heart because you have a new God... one who has proven himself faithful to you... one who has used *his* words to promise you life, and freedom, and blessing!

In fact, [Hebrews 6:13–18](#), “For when God made a promise to Abraham, since he had no one greater by whom to swear, he swore by himself, saying, “Surely I will bless you and multiply you.” And thus Abraham, having patiently waited, obtained the promise. For people swear by something greater than themselves, and in all their disputes an oath is final for confirmation. [Hear this next part, this is for you] *So when God desired to show more convincingly to the heirs of the promise the unchangeable character of his purpose, he guaranteed it with an oath, so that by two unchangeable things, in which it is impossible for God to lie, we who have fled for refuge might have strong encouragement to hold fast to the hope set before us.*”

Do you see? God uses his words to promise you hope. He uses his words to promise you blessing (verse 14), he uses his words to promise to be a strong refuge for you (verse 18).

And [Hebrews 6](#), here, tells us, He sets himself to give you the highest confidence that such hope, such promise of blessing to you, his people, is *not* a sham, *not* laced with lies and shaded to be less than fully true. So he swears by himself, and he guarantees his word with an oath,

“saying, Surely I will bless you.” **God means for you to have as much confidence in him and his promises as is possible to have.**

Yes, we are undeserving! Yes, we had traded truth for lies! But our faithlessness does not nullify *his* faithfulness ([Rom. 3:3](#)). And so we can trust him!

Do you see, this is how his truthfulness severs the root of untruthfulness in our hearts. His truthfulness is all the grounds you need to flee the ways of your old god.

Because we can trust *him* that any promise of life or blessing we think we see on the other side of a lie *is itself a lie*. There is nothing for you there!

You don't have to shade the truth to gain something that you think you need.

You don't have to use falsehood as a currency to buy something at the expense of another.

Because your true Father has already promised you all the life and all the blessing your heart can fathom, and unlike your old god, he delivers!

So this morning, for the first time or the thousandth time, turn to him. Don't cordon off your speech, or your *anything*, from his lordship.

Louisa Stead wrote the old hymn:

“Tis so sweet to trust in Jesus. Just to take him at his word. Just to rest upon his promise. Just to know, ‘thus saith the Lord!’ Jesus, Jesus, how I trust him! How I’ve proved him over and over. Jesus, Jesus precious Jesus. O, for grace to trust him more.”

That is our prayer. O, might he give us grace to trust him more.

Closing.

So let's take some time now, quietly to yourselves, to pray and take anything to the Lord he might be provoking within you...

Prayer.

Assurance of Pardon.

Be encouraged this morning from the words of Paul in [2 Corinthians 1:19–20](#) “For the Son of God, Jesus Christ, whom we proclaimed among you, Silvanus and Timothy and I, was not Yes and No, but in him it is always Yes. For all the promises of God find their Yes in him.”

If you doubt the faithfulness of God to you this morning, look to Christ. So let's sing to him now.

Sermon Discussion Questions:

1. Read Matthew 5:33-37 again. Are there any parts of the text that still remain confusing?
2. Where do you notice deceitful speech in your own life? How has that had an affect on people around you?
3. Read 2 Corinthians 5:15 again. In what way does selfishness motivate deceitful speech?
4. Discuss if there are any situations that might necessitate untruthfulness. How are we to navigate those situations? How might the principle of “love as the fulfillment of the law” help?
5. *"God means for you to have as much confidence in him and his promises as is possible to have."* In this season of life, what level of confidence do you have in God's promises to you? Discuss the correlation between trusting in his truthfulness and our being truthful in speech.