

The Sermon on the Mount: *People of Our Word*

Matthew 5:33-37

Swearing Oaths (v. 33)

- The practice in Jewish culture was to swear oaths as a means of showing one's truthfulness or earnestness in fulfilling one's word
 - Oath: a solemn statement affirmed to be true before God
 - This includes sworn testimony, promises, & vows
- This is reflected in 2 of the 10 commandments:
 - Misusing God's name (3rd) (Ex 20:7)
 - Not primarily about using God's name as a profanity
 - About misusing God's name as a vow to one's honesty
 - Bearing false witness (9th) (Ex 20:16)
 - Lying about another, especially in court
- This is repeated multiple times in the OT (Lev. 19:12; Num. 30:2; Deut. 23:21; Ps. 50:14; Zech. 8:17)
- On its surface, this does not seem to be an issue if one is being honest

The Correction (v. 34-36)

- Again, Jesus is correcting the interpretation of Torah
- People began abusing the practice of oaths as a means of deceiving people
 - Using 'technicalities' as a means of getting out of being honest or fulfilling promises (Mt 23:16-22)
- Jesus calls out even the most religious people for trying to lie, cheat, and steal
 - And seeking to justify their actions on technicalities and hair-splitting

The Call to Integrity (v. 37)

- Jesus is not prohibiting oath-taking in any context
- Rather, He is calling His disciples to be the kind of people who are trustworthy
- It is a call to integrity
 - To have such a reputation of character that people do not question our honesty or whether we will keep our word
- As citizens of the Kingdom of God, we should not *need* to take oaths or give other reassurances of our honesty (Jas 5:12)

So What?

- Are we known for our integrity, honesty & earnestness?
- Are we trustworthy, reflecting Jesus to the world?

Meditation Verse: *Matthew 5:37*