

Committed to Excellence in Communicating Biblical Truth and Its Application

Orcutt Christian Church

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Emmanuel

Sermon on The Mount - 25 Matthew 5 - 7; Luke 6:17-49 You Shall Keep Your Vows September 12, 2021

Communion: Robert Domingos, Ph. D.

- 1 🎵 **Doxology** [DH 1981]
- 2 🎵 When Morning Gilds the skies 215
- 3 🎵 Numbers 6:24-26
- 4 🎵 Cares chorus 627
- 5 🎵 Holy Spirit light divine 392
- 6 🎵 All the way my Savior leads me 680
- 7 🎵 **Family of God** [DH 2357]

"Sic et Non"

"Matthew 5:33-37 (World English Bible)

33 “Again you have heard that it was said to the ancient ones,,
‘You shall not make false vows, but shall perform to the Lord
your vows,’ **34** but I tell you, don’t swear at all: neither by
heaven, for it is the throne of God; **35** nor by the earth, for it is
the footstool of his feet; nor by Jerusalem, for it is the city of
the great King. **36** Neither shall you

swear by your head, for you can't make one hair white or black. 37 But let your 'Yes' be 'Yes' and your 'No' be 'No.' Whatever is more than these is of the evil one.

Numbers 30:2 (NASB)

² "If a man makes a vow to the LORD, or takes an oath to bind himself with a binding obligation, he shall not violate his word; he shall do according to all that proceeds out of his mouth.

Deuteronomy 23:21-23 (NASB)

²¹ "When you make a vow to the LORD your God, you shall not delay to pay it, for it would be sin in you, and the LORD your God will surely require it of you. ²² "However, if you refrain from vowing, it would not be sin in you. ²³ "You shall be careful to perform what goes out from your lips, just as you have voluntarily vowed to the LORD your God, what you have promised.

Ecclesiastes 5:4-6 (NASB)

⁴ When you make a vow to God, do not be late in paying it; for *He takes* no delight in fools. Pay what you vow! ⁵ It is better that you should not vow than that you should vow and not pay. ⁶ Do not let your speech cause you to sin and do not say in the presence of the messenger of God that it was a mistake. Why should God be angry on account of your voice and destroy the

work of your hands?

Numbers 30:1-15 (WEB)

Moses spoke to the heads of the tribes of the children of Israel, saying, "This is the thing which Yahweh has commanded. **2**

When a man vows

a vow to Yahweh, or swears an oath to bind his soul with a bond, he shall not break his word. He mouth. **3** "Also, when a

woman vows a vow to Yahweh and binds herself by a pledge, being in her father's

house, in her youth, **4** and her father hears her vow and her pledge with which she has bound her soul, and her father says

nothing to her, then all her vows shall stand, and every pledge with which she has bound her soul shall stand. **5** But if her

father forbids her in the day that he hears, none of her vows or of her pledges with which she has bound her soul, shall stand.

Yahweh will forgive her, because her father has forbidden her.

6 "If she has a husband, while her vows are on her, or the rash utterance of her lips with which she has bound her soul, **7** and

her husband hears it, and says nothing to her in the day that he hears it; then her vows shall stand, and her pledges with

which she has bound her soul shall stand. **8** But if her husband forbids her in the day that he hears it, then he makes void her

vow which is on her and the rash utterance of her lips, with which she has bound her soul. Yahweh will

forgive her.

9 “But the vow of a widow, or of her who is divorced, everything with which she has bound her soul shall stand against her. 10 “If she vowed in her husband’s house or bound her soul by a bond with an oath, 11 and her husband heard it, and held his peace at her and didn’t disallow her, then all her vows shall stand, and every pledge with which she bound her soul shall stand. 12 But if her husband made them null and void in the day that he heard them, then whatever proceeded out of her lips concerning her vows, or concerning the bond of her soul, shall not stand. Her husband has made them void. Yahweh will forgive her. 13 Every vow, and every binding oath to afflict the soul, her husband may establish it, or her husband may make it void. 14 But if her husband says nothing to her from day to day, then he establishes all her vows or all her pledges which are on her. He has established them, because he said nothing to her in the day that he heard them. 15 But if he makes them null and void after he has heard them, then he shall bear her iniquity.”

Matthew 5:21-48 (NASB)

21 "You have heard that the ancients were told, 'YOU SHALL NOT COMMIT MURDER' and 'Whoever commits murder shall be liable to the court.'

22 "But I say to you that everyone who is angry with his brother shall be guilty before the court; and whoever says to

his brother, 'You good-for-nothing,' shall be guilty before the supreme court; and whoever says, 'You fool,' shall be guilty enough to go into the fiery hell.

23 "Therefore if you are presenting your offering at the altar, and there remember that your brother has something against you,

24 leave your offering there before the altar and go; first be reconciled to your brother, and then come and present your offering.

25 "Make friends quickly with your opponent at law while you are with him on the way, so that your opponent may not hand you over to the judge, and the judge to the officer, and you be thrown into prison.

26 "Truly I say to you, you will not come out of there until you have paid up the last cent.



27 "You have heard that it was said, 'YOU SHALL NOT COMMIT ADULTERY';

28 but I say to you that everyone who looks at a woman with lust for her has already committed adultery with her in his heart.

29 "If your right eye makes you stumble, tear it out and throw it from you; for it is better for you to lose one of the parts of your body, than for your whole body to be thrown into hell.

30 "If your right hand makes you stumble, cut it off and throw it from you; for it is better for you to lose one of the parts of your body, than for your whole body to go into hell.



31 "It was said, 'WHOEVER SENDS HIS WIFE AWAY, LET HIM GIVE HER A CERTIFICATE OF DIVORCE';

32 but I say to you that everyone who divorces his wife, except for the reason of unchastity, makes her commit

adultery; and whoever marries a divorced woman commits adultery.



33 "Again, you have heard that the ancients were told, 'YOU SHALL NOT MAKE FALSE VOWS, BUT SHALL FULFILL YOUR VOWS TO THE LORD.'

34 "But I say to you, make no oath at all, either by heaven, for it is the throne of God,

35 or by the earth, for it is the footstool of His feet, or by Jerusalem, for it is THE CITY OF THE GREAT KING.

36 "Nor shall you make an oath by your head, for you cannot make one hair white or black.

37 "But let your statement be, 'Yes, yes' or 'No, no'; anything beyond these is of evil.



38 "You have heard that it was said, 'AN EYE FOR AN EYE, AND A TOOTH FOR A TOOTH.'

39 "But I say to you, do not resist an evil person; but whoever slaps you on your right cheek, turn the other to him also.

40 "If anyone wants to sue you and take your shirt, let him have your coat also.

41 "Whoever forces you to go one mile, go with him two.

42 "Give to him who asks of you, and do not turn away from him who wants to borrow from you.



43 "You have heard that it was said, 'YOU SHALL LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR and hate your enemy.'

44 "But I say to you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you,

45 so that you may be sons of your Father who is in heaven; for He causes His sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous.

46 "For if you love those who love you, what reward do you have? Do not even the tax collectors do the same?"

47 "If you greet only your brothers, what more are you doing than others? Do not even the Gentiles do the same?"

48 "Therefore you are to be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect."

Not sure, but suspect we all use some form of regional expressions, such as

"Well, I'll swear"

"Well, I swan"

surprised, resigned, or slightly irritated with whatever. Linguists say it is equivalent to "I declare"

"Gadzooks!"

Used as a mild or ironic oath. An expression of surprise, shock etc.

"I'll be datgum!"

adj. Chiefly Southern US - Used as an intensive to express mild annoyance.

"Great balls of fire"

'Great balls of fire' originated as an expression in the southern states of the USA, around 1850. It derives from the many biblical references to the presence of God being indicated by a fire. The figurative use of the expression 'great balls of fire' clearly evokes imagery of something portentous, or, as current American terminology would have it, "awesome"

"Drats" - expression of disappointment.

"I'll be danged!"

G.B. Gordon - "Archie, do you realize that means 'damned?'"

What we so often gloss over is the effects of our words.

Your version of Matthew 5:33 possible uses the words "**Do not break your oath.**"

I prefer the word "**vow**," which conveys the general idea of making a verbal commitment to do something whether to God or to another person.

In our modern society, the word "**oath**" has come to mean the use of profane language.

And, as a brief review of the Sermon on the Mount, we remember that Matthew had been requested by the other Apostles to write down what Jesus had taught them, and this Gospel of Matthew was released to the churches around 45 AD. And in chapters 5-7, Matthew pulls together into a synopsis of the chief points Jesus had preached to His listeners.

The Beatitudes highlight the character Jesus wants us to develop.

Then Matthew gives us the idea of how Jesus wants us to live out our lives as His followers.

He does that by pointing out the hypocrisy of the Pharisees and Scribes, by saying "**You have heard... But I say to you**," and He does that 6 times.

The text today is looking at our speech and how we should be speaking to one another.

And how we speak to each other, and to God, is incredibly important.

And people say with the massive problems we have today should we waste time on how we speak to one another?

And, according to the New Testament how we communicate is extremely important because of the effect our words have on

others.

Words reveal our inner character.

Matthew 12:36-37 (NASB)

36 "But I tell you that every careless word that people speak, they shall give an accounting for it in the day of judgment. 37 "For by your words you will be justified, and by your words you will be condemned."

Historians have often speculated how the founding church of Jesus spread so rapidly throughout the Roman Empire. Church Historian, Alan Kreider, in his book "The Patient Ferment of the Early Church" makes a good case that the rapid spread was due to those Christians who took seriously the Sermon on the Mount.

He quotes Bishop Cyprian, who wrote in 256 AD

"we exhibit our wisdom not by our dress, but by truth; we show virtues by their practice rather than boasting of them; we do not speak great things, rather we live them."

Those early Christians looked at what Moses had written in the Torah, and saw over and over that God created by simply speaking.

God said "**let there be light and there was light.**"

God spoke into existence all of the elements of creation.

And those early Christians saw a model in God's speech they put into practice.

The pagan Roman Empire watched those early Christians live out lives of integrity, who recognized that everything a Christian says and does is important because of the effect on people.

I think it important to see how misunderstand Jesus' intention can have a very negative impact on the world.

I. The Negative Impact of focusing on the literal use of "let

your 'Yes' be 'Yes' and your 'No' be 'No.' "

I had the opportunity of attending for two years the premier Quaker seminary.

The Quakers have traditionally refused to take an oath even in a Court of Law.

Their exegesis of this scripture leads them to a complete and absolute ban upon taking an oath.

They say it says "**Swear not at all,**" and they are committed to taking His words as they are.

Christians have long read Jesus' words in this totalizing and literalistic way.

The Mennonite and Amish separate themselves in part from society by reading this text legalistically.

They, also, avoid any sort of vow or oath what would bind them. No house mortgages.

No military service.

No holding government offices.

But, think about this text Scripturally.

Think about how Jesus always went to the heart issue, and not just the surface words.

Isn't God consistent with what He says?

You see, God in the OT gave His legislation on how and when vows could and should be taken.

So, think for a moment about the OT practice of vow taking.

When Abraham was old, he sent his servant to find a wife for his son Isaac.

And he makes his chief servant make a vow:

Genesis 24:2-4 (NASB)

2 Abraham said to his servant, the oldest of his household, who had charge of all that he owned, "Please place your hand under my thigh, **3** and I will make you swear by the LORD, the God of heaven and the God of earth, that you

shall not take a wife for my son from the daughters of the Canaanites, among whom I live, ⁴ but you will go to my country and to my relatives, and take a wife for my son Isaac."

Jacob made a vow with his son Joseph
Genesis 28:1 (NASB)

¹ So Isaac called Jacob and blessed him and charged him, and said to him, "You shall not take a wife from the daughters of Canaan.

When Joseph was near death, he wanted to be buried in the Promised Land,

Genesis 50:25-26 (NASB)

²⁵ Then Joseph made the sons of Israel swear, saying, "God will surely take care of you, and you shall carry my bones up from here." ²⁶ So Joseph died at the age of one hundred and ten years; and he was embalmed and placed in a coffin in Egypt.

And Jonathan made a vow with David

1 Samuel 20:16-17 (NASB)

¹⁶ So Jonathan made a *covenant* with the house of David, saying, "May the LORD require *it* at the hands of David's enemies." ¹⁷ Jonathan made David vow again because of his love for him, because he loved him as he loved his own life.

You just can't read the OT without seeing that on certain occasions oath taking was common.

And you see the same thing in the NT.

Consider the custom practiced by the apostles, who had been taught these matters by our Lord.

You will find they frequently took oaths.

The apostle Paul says in

Romans 9:1 (WEB)

1 I tell the truth in Christ. I am not lying, my conscience testifying with me in the Holy Spirit

and in

2 Corinthians 1:23 (WEB)

But I call God for a witness to my soul, that to spare you, I didn't come to Corinth.

And, then Paul makes a very interesting argument based on this whole matter in

Hebrews 6:16-19 (WEB)

13 For when God made a promise to Abraham, since he could swear by no one greater, he swore by himself, 14 saying, "Surely blessing I will bless you, and multiplying I will multiply you." ☆ 15 Thus, having patiently endured, he obtained the promise. 16 For men indeed swear by a greater one, and in every dispute of theirs the oath is final for confirmation. 17 In this way God, being determined to show more abundantly to the heirs of the promise the immutability of his counsel, interposed with an oath, 18 that by two immutable things, in which it is impossible for God to lie, we may have a strong encouragement, who have fled for refuge to take hold of the hope set before us. 19 This hope we have as an anchor of the soul, a hope both sure and steadfast

Paul is trying to give his readers assurance and strong consolation, and his argument is that God has taken an oath in this matter.

In the light of all this the case for not taking an oath in a Court of Law as based upon this Scripture is something which indeed seems unsatisfactory.

The conclusion we can come to, based upon Scripture, is that, while oath-taking must be restricted, there are certain solemn, vital occasions when it is right, when it is not only legitimate, but actually adds a solemnity and an authority which nothing else can give.

II. What is the Heart of the Matter

The problem our Lord was addressing was the way the Pharisees and the Scribes changed the OT teaching about vows to mean what they themselves wanted.

They were like Humpty Dumpty in **Lewis Carroll, Through the Looking Glass"**

“When I use a word, ’ Humpty Dumpty said in rather a scornful tone, ‘it means just what I choose it to mean — neither more nor less.’

And in this text on vows, Our Lord exposes the sham and falseness of the Pharisees and Scribes misrepresentation of the OT Law.

And in doing so, He brings out the real intent of the law that He Himself gave to Moses.

The Pharisees and Scribes opened a door for themselves to avoid the spirit of the Law.

men to multiply oaths at any time or with respect to any matter whatsoever.

They said some oaths were binding while others were not.

If you took an oath by the temple, that was not binding; but if you took an oath by the gold of the temple, that was binding.

If you took an oath by the altar you need not keep it; but if you took an oath by the gift that was on the altar then it was absolutely binding.

Our Lord poured His scorn and ridicule on this perversion of the law

He pointed out the utter dishonesty of it all.

And it is good for us to observe that our Lord did do this.
Why?

Because God is Lord over all His creation; thus any breaking of an oath insults His name.

The fact that the Pharisees and Scribes made a difference between oaths, making it more serious to break some of them than others, led to evasions of the truth and to less and less faith in each other.

In contrast, the follower of Christ ought to be simple, honest, and sincere.

Our Lord is saying in the common course of everyday speech "our word is a guarantee" of our reliability.

Jesus commanded His followers not to make an oath of any kind, because a disciple must be dependable enough that his word alone is adequate.

The passage is not concerned with taking an oath per se, but with the unconditional integrity of the disciple.

Swearing by heaven or earth is actually swearing by God for the heavens are God's throne and the earth His footstool.

Jerusalem is "the city of the great King" and that is God.

Swearing by something other than God is thus tantamount to swearing by God, for nothing exists outside Him; everything depends upon Him for life.

It is clear from this also that every oath involves God whether the name of God is used in it or not. One cannot avoid breaking the third commandment by substituting something else for the

name of God. False swearing was, of course, condemned both by the words of

Exodus 20:7 (WEB)

7 “You shall not misuse the name of Yahweh your God,† for Yahweh will not hold him guiltless who misuses his name.

And, I think back to Brother G.B. Gordon, who said Christians should also avoid using euphemistic substitutes for the name of God, or of Jesus, such as "Gee!" or "Gosh!"

Swearing by one's head implies one has powers he does not possess.

He does not have control over it, for he cannot by the most concentrated mental effort make one hair change color.

Furthermore, to swear by one's head, or in other words one's life, over which only God has power, is indirectly swearing by God.

Jesus thereby explained that any swearing by God is consequently binding.

Above all, taking an oath implies one's mere words are somehow less reliable.

Jesus desires that all His followers be reliable and trustworthy.

Their "yes" is to mean "yes," and their "no" is to mean "no."

For this reason, He frowns on a believer reinforcing his words with an oath of any kind.

Fallen human nature under the influence of Satan feels the need for the reinforcement of oaths.

Redeemed Christians have a new nature that conforms to truth and does not need any such reinforcement.

The double "Yes, yes" and "No, no" is a Semitic expression which is best translated "let your yes always be yes and your no always no."

If more than a simple agreement is required, it implies there is "evil" of some kind—the person cannot be trusted.

So, let us resolve to live our lives with integrity, and in doing so we shall be changing this world which is under the sway of the Father of lies.

John 8:44 (WEB)

44 You are of your father the devil, and you want to do the desires of your father. He was a murderer from the beginning, and doesn't stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaks a lie, he speaks on his own; for he is a liar, and the father of lies.

What we say and do is so important.

Just as the Roman Empire watched the early Christians live lives of integrity, they were drawn to do the same.

Our culture is observing us.

Let's resolve to live out our lives of integrity as did the Apostle Paul

Romans 15:18 (WEB)

18 For I will not dare to speak of any things except those which Christ worked through me for the obedience of the Gentiles, by word and deed