

A sermon preached by Dr David Jones in St Mary's Church, Market Drayton on Sunday 19th June 2016 at 10.30am

Bible Readings: James 3 v1-12 Matthew 5 v17-20

COMMANDMENT 9 "No lies"

Continue series on 10 Commandments, using J. John's book "God's Top Ten" or "Ten, Living The Ten Commandments in the 21st Century". Looking at Commandments backwards, two weeks ago Ian preached on **Commandment 10, "Do not covet"** and to day we are looking at **Commandment 9, "Do not Lie"**, or, in full **"You shall not give false testimony against you neighbour"** (Exodus 20: 16).

Play tape of J. John's opening sentences.

Problem today is that this commandment not taken seriously. This commandment thought to be the least important among the "Do Nots". Surely the odd white lie is not covered here? What's the harm in telling a lie so as not to offend, and we all accept that you don't believe all that the newspapers and politicians tell us? Euro elections - Who do you believe? Lies are not told; we are "economical with the truth". We accept not to take seriously a company who says they will "phone you back", or "hold the line, our representative will get back to you shortly" or "there's a cheque on the post". I received a cheque last week that was promised last November! It's easy to say "I won't be a minute" when we know that we will be occupied for for a while before we will be ready.

Today we are deceived into thinking that lies are harmless. We were told in the schoolyard: "*Sticks may brake my bones but words will never hurt me.*" We all know from experience that this is wrong. James tells us how dangerous our tongues are: "*The tongue is a small part of the body, but it makes great boasts. The tongue is a fire, a world of evil among the parts of the body. No human can tame the tongue. It is a restless evil, full of deadly poison. With the tongue we praise our Lord and Father, and with it we curse human beings, who have been made in God's likeness*" (James 3: 5-9)

From the tongue come lies, and with these lies great harm can be done to both the person telling the lies and the one who is the recipient of the lies. Lying can have major consequences. Fraudulent claims cheat the social services of millions if not billions of pounds each each; millions of pounds and hours of time are wasted in the courts because people lie; people's lives are destroyed because of false accusations. Lies destroy relationships, and for the liar there is often no peace, because a lie once told cannot be taken back again. (A man went to a monk and confessed to spreading malicious rumours. What should he do? The monk told him to go and place a feather on the doorstep of each house in the community. He went and did his penance and then went back to the monk. The monk told him now to go back and pick up the feathers. The man said this was impossible as the wind would have blown the feathers away. The monk told him this is exactly what had happened to his malicious words.

This commandment may not be taken seriously today, and so called white lies may be acceptable by our society, but lying is not acceptable to God. No matter how insignificant lying is thought of in society today, Jesus warned us "*If you ignore the least commandment and teach others to do the same, you will be called the least in the Kingdom of Heaven*" (Matt. 5:19). So this commandment has to be taken seriously.

One of the difficulties, today, is that there is a lack of acceptance of the truth. *"The only difference between truth and lies is your own viewpoint". "Each person is entitled to their own opinion".* What people fail to realise that this leads to a total breakdown of a civil society.

The question asked, therefore is: *"What is the truth?"* This is the question that Pilot asked Jesus at His trial.

What we all have to understand is that this commandment was not made up by society but was given by God, who throughout the Bible we are told is truth, e.g. *"He is the Rock, a God of truth and without iniquity, just and right is He"* (Deut.32:4, A.V.), *"You, O Lord, are a compassionate and gracious God, long suffering, and plenteous in mercy and truth"* (Ps.86:15, A.V.).

God sent His Son, Jesus, into the world to show us the truth and how to live in the truth. When Jesus was answering Pilot, He said: *"The reason I was born and came into this world is to testify to the truth. Everyone on the side of truth listens to me"*. Therefore, if we are in doubt about the truth and want to know what the absolute truth is we have to listen to Jesus. The most important truths are to do with our relationship with our creator, God, and with each other.

About our relationship with God, Jesus said: *"I am the way, the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me"* (John 14:6); He said: *"I am the living bread, whoever eats this bread will live for ever"* (John 6:51); He said: *"I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down His life for the sheep"* (John 10:11); He said: *"I am the resurrection and the life. The one who believes in me will live"* (John 11:25). What Jesus is saying is that the most important truth is this: the way to an eternal life with God is through Him.

With regard to our relationships with each other, God's teaching is clear: *"You must put off falsehood and speak truthfully to your neighbour"* (Eph. 4:25); *"Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths, but only what is helpful for building others up, that it may benefit those who listen"* (v.29). Perhaps it is that you find lying comes easily, and you wonder how you can control your tongue. Here are words from Jesus: *"If you hold to my teaching, you are really my disciples. Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.....Very truly I tell you, everyone who sins is a slave to sin,.....(but) if the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed."* (John 8: 32, 34, 36). If you have this problem or any other problem, ask Jesus to set you free. And, here is some practical help from J. John's book (it comes from the minister and evangelist, **Alan Repath**). When people in his church were going through a tough time because people were spreading untrue gossip, he said he was starting an **MEF, Mutual Encouragement Fellowship** and who would like to join? Everybody wanted to, but there was one qualification - **I promise to THINK before I speak**. He came up with this **acrostic - THINK**. Five things to ask yourself before you speak:

- T - is it true
- H - will it help
- I - is it inspiring
- N - is it necessary
- K - is it kind

Let us be challenged by the words in Ps.15 (1-3): *"Lord, who may dwell I your sacred tent? Who may live on your holy mountain? The one whose way of life is blameless, who does what is righteous, who speaks the truth from their heart; whose tongue utters no slander, who does no wrong to a neighbour, and casts no slur on others."*