

Crossroads Community Church

Sunday Mar 1st, 2015

The Lord met with us this morning as we Praised and Worshipped Him with all our hearts. Pastor Don welcomed us with a smile, shared announcements and prayed, "Dear Father God, we thank you for your Son and for leaving us your Spirit to strengthen us in our faith when life makes it difficult to go the extra mile for you. Help us show your love to those around us, In Jesus name Amen." As we continue our journey through the teachings of Jesus, specifically the "Sermon on the Mount" and we looked at how we ought to live and at how to deal with anger and lust. Today we will examine honesty, integrity and going the extra mile in loving others even if they don't like us. Jesus spoke about making and keeping our vows which involves integrity, honesty and uprightness of character. These are the essence of the ninth commandment, "You must not testify falsely against your neighbor," Exodus 20:16. Telling the truth at all times can seem very difficult as it was depicted in the famous Jim Carrey movie "Liar, Liar". He was a lawyer and often had to bend the truth, his son then wished for him to always tell the truth and we see how painful it was to be truthful in all things. However, Jesus doesn't want our excuses; he expects truthfulness from us even if it might be difficult. Being honest is more than just the words we speak; it is an inner quality that we will be truthful even if it causes us hardship. We ought to say what we mean and mean what we say and if we mislead someone we should correct it as soon as we realize it.

Our Vows should be kept simple, not swearing or vowing by anything or anyone but just letting our yes be yes and our no be no, anything other than that is not godly, it is from the father of all lies, the devil, (Matthew 5:33-37, John 8:44). As children we have probably used the term, "I swear I am telling the truth" and even in court we are asked to put our hand on the Bible and swear to tell the truth, but doing these rituals does not make a liar honest, and it doesn't make a lie truth. It is important to take time and consider the cost before making any promises; we ought to promise things we know we can keep. Honesty is the best policy our grandmas have taught us, and they are wise words to live by. Honesty is equivalent to transparency, it is an important attribute of our Christian life not hiding anything and not pretending to be something we aren't. When Jesus lives in us it should be seen, we are to be transparent and genuine and let His love shine for others to see. People get turned off from coming to church when they see and feel that love is forced and worship is a facade, but when love flows freely and worship touches people's hearts people come back because they feel God's Spirit, (Luke 8:16-17).

Integrity is who we are not just what we say and do. Integrity is an inner strength that enables us to be faithful, truthful and honest in all things, and the more we develop a relationship with Jesus, the more filled with integrity we become, (John 8:31-32). Jesus is the source of truth and the perfect standard of what is right. The Christian Life is more than just a list of beliefs and moral values; it is a way of life, a close relationship with Jesus which will enable us to go the extra mile in forgiveness and love.

God's purpose for commandments and punishments was to show us his mercy, his wisdom and justice. Punishment needed to fit the crime to show the severity of the sin and consequently the importance of receiving His forgiveness. He gave a guideline so that no one would seek revenge, but people used it as an excuse to hold grudges and vendettas against each other. God on the other hand tells us that vengeance belongs to Him, and Jesus taught us a higher standard of living, He tells us not to retaliate and turn the other cheek; this doesn't mean to sit there and take the beating, it means to peacefully walk away showing grace, mercy and forgiveness, (Matthew 5:38-39, Hebrews 10:30, John 18:22-23, Leviticus 19:18). In our Christian lives there will be times where people will mock us, and criticize or judge us for our faith, but God will ask us to go beyond just brushing it off and walking away, He asks us to bless those who persecute us, to love our enemies not hate, in other words be the exact opposite of what they are, this is what will point them towards God, (Matthew 5:40-45).

Beloved we are called to make peace, to be gracious and merciful, to demonstrate God's extravagant love which knows no limits. We are not to hold grudges which are a deterrent for others coming to Jesus. Our love and forgiveness towards others is what will draw people to God. When we go the extra mile even when it costs us pain it testifies to what the Lord has done for each of us. For God so loved the world, we are to love everyone as He does. Jesus even forgave his tormentors from the cross and God the Father elevated Him to the highest place of Honor. If we love only those who love us and treat us well, it doesn't cost us anything, and no reward is due, however if we love even those who hate us, we imitate Jesus. This week my friends let us be perfect in love even as our Father in Heaven is perfect, Asherey Shalom.

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