

Return to Truth

Matthew 26:57-68 ⁵⁷ And those who had laid hold of Jesus led *Him* away to Caiaphas the high priest, where the scribes and the elders were assembled. ⁵⁸ But Peter followed Him at a distance to the high priest's courtyard. And he went in and sat with the servants to see the end. ⁵⁹ Now the chief priests, the elders, and all the council sought false testimony against Jesus to put Him to death, ⁶⁰ but found none. Even though many false witnesses came forward, they found none. But at last two false witnesses came forward ⁶¹ and said, "This *fellow* said, 'I am able to destroy the temple of God and to build it in three days.'" ⁶² And the high priest arose and said to Him, "Do You answer nothing? What *is it* these men testify against You?" ⁶³ But Jesus kept silent. And the high priest answered and said to Him, "I put You under oath by the living God: Tell us if You are the Christ, the Son of God!" ⁶⁴ Jesus said to him, "*It is as* you said. Nevertheless, I say to you, hereafter you will see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of the Power, and coming on the clouds of heaven." ⁶⁵ Then the high priest tore his clothes, saying, "He has spoken blasphemy! What further need do we have of witnesses? Look, now you have heard His blasphemy!" ⁶⁶ "What do you think?" They answered and said, "He is deserving of death." ⁶⁷ Then they spat in His face and beat Him; and others struck *Him* with the palms of their hands, ⁶⁸ saying, "Prophecy to us, Christ! Who is the one who struck You?"

The eighth commandment (some call it the ninth the number doesn't matter) teaches us not to bear false witness. We have the ultimate example of this in our text today. The chief priests paid people to purposely tell lies in court about Jesus so that they would have an excuse to put him to death.

Our daughter Kaylee is getting rather good at stacking blocks, one on top of another. it's something we work on with her. In our text we have a bad type of stacking. Stacking one sin on top of another.

Lying is bad.

Lying in court is worse.

Lying in court for money is worse yet.

Lying in court for money knowing that what you say will harm or kill another individual is still worse.

Being the one paying another to lie in court so that you hurt or kill another person is worst of all.

But it all starts way down there at the root, at the root is the simple act of lying. Many times, we do it for what seems like expedient or good reasons. I remember one guy years ago in my ministry. I asked him why he kept lying. His response was it just seemed easier. It does sometimes seem easier, but its like

trying to warm our garage by running the car. It might warm the garage but it will also slowly poison us. Lies poison all our thoughts and all of our relationships.

Jesus calls us to return to the truth. I am the way the truth and the life he reminds us. He invites us not simply to stop lying but to be his people, people who are of the truth. In our text he speaks the truth of who he is. "I am the son of God." In that one sentence we see the truth of who we are. But we also see those sins washed away in him. His call to return to truth is not simply a call to stop lying but rather a call to live in the truth he give us.

The Sanhedrin was more concerned about painting Jesus in a particular light rather than finding the truth about him. They lied in court because they were already lying in their thoughts. That is to say they had accepted Satan's lie about Jesus. It is not just the lies we *say* but even more so the way we *think* about other people. We live in a world and a cultural of lies, they surround us like the poisoning fog of a factory, polluting everything we say and think and do.

Sometimes we lie to other and about others. Sometimes we simply tell ourselves and others convenient stereotypes about those with opposing views so that we don't have to engage in the difficult process of actually understand the truth about one another and the world we live in.

For example, its way easier to paint all liberals as socialist baby killers or on the other hand for liberals to paint all conservatives as out of touch racists white bumbkins rather than actually engage and seek to understand their point of view and what might be some truth at the heart of their concerns.

Jesus accepts these lies saying nothing. He stands there while all these people tell vicious lies about him and says nothing. Jesus accepts more than the lies that were said that day. He accepts the guilt of all the lies of the whole world. All these lies that we think about each other are heaped upon Jesus. Jesus says nothing. He accepts these lies because he is the lamb of God who bears the sin of the world. He accepts our sins and carries the burden and the poison of our lies so that we might be clean.

It is not just the lies we say and think it is also the lies that we hear. It is so much more fun to listen to gossip about other people than to hear good things. It is so much more entertaining to know negative things about others. Oh so and so did this and that, it makes us feel like we are part of the inner circle. It is so much fun when we are gossiping about others, but it is so hurtful when it is we who are being talked about. When others assume the worst about others and pass on gossip that makes other look bad.

We do this even though we know how much it hurts when others speak this way about us. But when other people mock and jeer us. When other people speak evil about us, we remember what Jesus says about us.

Jesus the one person who alone would have right to speak evil about us is the one who defends us before the Father. Whatever anyone else says Jesus stands before God's throne and speaks on our behalf before the Father. When Satan speaks evil about us and when evil is spoken of us he defends us. He protects our reputation even though we do not deserve it. "We have an advocate with the Father, Jesus the righteous."

We learn to walk in the truth only when we learn to confess (in our own hearts not just with our lips) chief of sinners though I be, Jesus gave his life for me. When we seek pride and self-worth in our own ideas, we walk in lies. When we comfort ourselves by putting down others, we walk in lies. When we accept the lies of Satan because they promise us better things than Jesus offers, we walk in lies. We return to truth only in the humility of a sinner for whom the only salvation is the Savior who had to die in my place, and not for me only for the sins of my neighbor as well, even if that neighbor is a liberal hippie democrat or a foolish bumpkin republican. Return to the Lord, return to truth.