

TELLING IT AS IT IS

(Sermon Summary)

Reading: Colossians 3: 1-11 / Exodus 20:16

Our words are expressive of our aims, intentions, goals and purposes. They are personal and can be used against other people. This is an offence to God as we are speaking against people who are image-bearers of God. The use of words against our neighbour is selfish so that we can gain some advantage, or money, or respect, or esteem or the admiration of others. It is to show disrespect towards others as though we are saying that they are not worthy of being well thought of. When we lie to other people, we are saying to that person that we are looking at them as a means to an end and are wanting to manipulate them to secure some outcome. Hatred makes us lie. Adultery makes us lie. Theft is built around a lie. Some people lie about what they are entitled to and so they lie to society and steal from them, such as bogus furlough claims. Lying is condemned (Colossians 3: 9-10; and Revelation 22:15).

1. What the commandment covers.

It does not just include the words we speak but the words we do not speak. It includes our inner world and invites us to think about why we are tempted, or actually, do lie to other people. It also includes hearing lies willingly and taking in things about other people that are unproven or false. It includes paying attention to gossip (Proverbs 18: 8). When we entertain falsehoods and untruths, we are breaking this Commandment.

Lying can be just straightforward untruths such as Ananias and Sapphira told in Acts 5: 1-11. It is seen in the words of the false witnesses at our Lord's trial (Matthew 26: 59-61). It might be conjecture that we state as fact. It might be exaggeration, or taking away something, or adding something, to an account. We might misrepresent something or give it a false context. Flattery is lying where we deliberately exaggerate a person's abilities or achievements, for example, because we are manipulating the person to get something from them. Lying can be when we make something obvious seem convoluted or involved because we are trying to cover something up or distract from the truth. Lying is when we say nothing when something untrue is said in our hearing.

2. Telling the truth.

Telling the truth is vital to the moral health of a society. It builds up trust and makes promises people make reliable.

If we tell it as it is, it shows we love people. We respect them, even if they disagree with us. We do not ill-treat them by telling an untruth about them or to them. If we tell the truth, it shows that we value relationships. We may not agree with our friends on everything, but we are not prepared to use lies against them. We train ourselves to see the whole person and not regard them as an object that we are free to lie to or lie about.

If we would avoid lying, we have to have a commitment to finding out the truth, however inconvenient the facts we discover might be. We have to review what we know, or think we know, and be teachable if new things are found out, ready to adjust our understanding. We have to be prepared to do the work of finding out things, asking questions if we have to.

We also have to accept that people do tell lies. All kinds of people do it. It does not mean that we cease to trust what anyone says. We should be satisfied if we are given good answers to our questions. But we should not be gullible and believe anything, especially if the answers we have been given do not make sense.

We ourselves should think carefully about the words we use. If we have a bad track record of being careless with words and creating trouble, we should be ready to stay silent more often. Silence can be a virtue (Proverbs 10:19).

We should listen carefully to make sure we have properly heard the words of others. We might need to check with people that we have heard something right if we are not sure or it is something important that we do not want to get wrong.

Always we should value the truth. God is a God of truth. He does not lie. He desires truth in the inward parts. It is part of common grace to have a desire to find out the truth. It leads to good science, good journalism, good judgments, and good policing among many things.

Truth may require negative words at times. We remember how Paul spoke about the people of Crete or how he spoke about the Galatian churches.

By valuing truth, we are acting as the Lord would have us act. We are getting nearer to His character.