

The Lord's Message: Am I Guilty? Not Being Truthful

Date: March 13, 2022

Where: Tilghman UMC

Scripture Reference: Matthew 21:12-13

We are continuing our sermon series, "Am I Guilty? Not Being Truthful!" In the United Methodist liturgical calendar, today (the second Sunday in March) would be the celebration of Scouting, Girl Scouts and Boy Scouts. Do we have people in attendance this morning that are, or were, members of the Girl Scouts or Boy Scouts? If you are able, please stand so that we may honor you. Every member in Boy Scouts is taught to memorize the Scout Oath, Motto and Law. In the Scout Law, there are 12 principles or what is referred to as points of light. The first point of light in the Scout Law is Trustworthy. As a person of God, we should also be known for our trustworthiness.

Let us pray.

We are helicoptering into the events of the last days of Jesus. This morning, Jesus is going to overthrow the money changers in the temple in Jerusalem. This occurs after Jesus has made what we know as the Palm Sunday entrance. Some people are standing on the road that leads to Jerusalem from the Mount of Olives, taking off their coats and laying them down on the road. Others are cutting and waving or laying down palm branches on the road. They are all shouting "Hosanna to the Son of David! Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord! Hosanna in the highest!" The people in the city are all stirred up, wondering who this man is.

After this grand entrance, Jesus goes into the temple and what He sees causes Him great angst. There are all the money changers. They are there to perform a valuable service. In **Leviticus 23: 1-2**, God tells Moses that the Israelites are to participate in appointed feasts. Most of these feasts could be done at home, but there are three required pilgrimages, or in Hebrew, "Chag." Those three feasts are Feast of Unleavened Bread which is day after Passover, Feast of Weeks or Pentecost and Feast of Tabernacles. During these pilgrimages, people would be traveling long distances and most likely from other countries and locales. During the feasts, the participants would offer sacrifices to God for their sins. If you are traveling from far away, it is very difficult to transport animals such as lambs, goats, bulls or even doves. What people would often do is to sell their animal and bring the money to purchase a sacrificial animal at the temple. The money changers were there to convert their money into the temple currency of Tyrian shekel. This currency would be used to pay for the sacrificial animal.

In addition to the payment for the sacrificial animals, God also required a payment of the temple tax. This is found in **Exodus 30:11-16**. This tax was taken to provide for maintenance of the Tent of Meeting. When the temple was built by Solomon, the tax continued to be taken. After the temple was rebuilt, the temple tax continued in Jesus' day to provide maintenance for the temple. We observe the temple tax today in the offering that will be taken. Some of the offering will provide for maintenance for our beautiful church, annex and parsonage. The money changers and the sellers of animals were important for the worship of God and the maintenance of the temple.

Why would the Son of God be upset at them? After all, His Father, God, required this to be done.

The problem came to be that the money changers and the sellers of animals were untruthful in their exchange of currency and the selling of animals. The money changers charged a high price for this exchange and the sellers of animals overpriced the sacrificial animals. Even the priests in the temple were complicit in this. They demanded that all money should be converted to the Tyrian shekel. All of these people were being untruthful with the people coming to worship God.

These are the reasons that Jesus overturned the money changers' tables and set the animals free.

How about us? There was a time when you purchased goods or services and paid and in cash. If you provided more cash than the goods or service cost, you would receive change back. Did you ever count the change? Was there a time when you got back more than you were supposed to receive? What did you do?

This happened to me a few times. At first, I would just pocket the money. God then started working on my heart. So, I started to check and even today I will check before I leave the store. On time, I got out of the store and I had my son and daughter with me. They were young at the time. I went and counted the change and found that I had receive more than I should have. I said to them, we need to gather up what we just bought and return to the store. I got back into the cashier's line and waited for my turn. I approached the cashier and explained the situation. She at first was puzzled, but then she looked at the receipt and I showed her the change. She was so grateful that I had returned. She told me that the difference would have come out of her paycheck. My son and daughter learned a valuable lesson. Taking advantage of others is showing that we are guilty of being untruthful. We all make mistakes and we should not take advantage of others.

Have you ever tried to sell something and misrepresented the item? This car was only used on Sundays. The engine has not used a drop of oil. This boat has no leaks. Payment of taxes is approaching. Have you ever misrepresented an item on your taxes? Have you ever told someone that you were going to do such and such, knowing full well that you would never do that? Have you ever tried to hide a wrong that you have done? Have you ever told a lie? In all these cases, and others, if we have been deceitful in any way, then we are guilty of being untruthful.

In **Luke 16: 10-13**, Jesus told the disciples, and He is telling us today what will occur to us for our untruthfulness.

Am I guilty of being untruthful, only you and God can answer that question? Allow God's Holy Spirit to search your heart for the answer. Amen.