

Proper 7 A  
Matthew 10:24-39  
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St. George's Bolton  
Fr. Chris

## Secrets

*"So have no fear of them; for nothing is covered up that will not be uncovered, and nothing secret that will not become known."*

Say or believe what you will, there are no truer words than these spoken by Jesus in the Bible or by anyone anywhere else ever since. They are a law of science. This is how reality operates. Try as we might to hide things from others, you know what? They always come out! There is nothing secret that shall not be revealed.

Sometimes we keep secret about what we don't understand, hiding it out of embarrassment. Yet sometimes what we don't understand is the big secret we wish to probe and learn about. There is nothing wrong with being honest about what you don't understand or wish to know about. There is no other way to learn than to ask. Why hold secret your lack of knowledge? You will be more respected if you ask questions about things you do not understand to get clarification and information. Secrets don't make sense here, however, low self-esteem may lead some to hide what they perceive as a lack of native intelligence in the cloak of secrecy.

Secrets abound. We have them. Secrets are sometimes things which we withhold from others because we wish to hide what we do not want them to know *about us*. It is shaping our image

to present ourselves in the best light, so that others will look kindly upon us, accept us, or at least not reject us because of our self assessed shortcomings and sins. Others have them, but we often just focus upon ourselves. We can be relieved to learn the secrets of others because then we don't feel so bad about ourselves, realizing we have some company at the bottom of the pond and that we are not alone.

Secrets can be hurtful. Some people tell secrets about us: that is called gossip. Gossip may be true, but is often filled with hyperbole based upon a kernel of truth. It has the purpose of making oneself feel better than the target of the gossip, and at the very, least, '*in the know*' about what is going on in the small pond in which gossip loves to fester. Sometimes the gossip is shared to show "I am on the inside- I know more about what is going on than you." Sometimes it is shared in the vein of, "*just saying...*"—in other words, some kind of '*warning*' about someone else and the risk of being friends with them. This is very hurtful. Often, gossip is based upon second and third hand information which turns it into the effect of the old children's game of telephone. Gossip is the sort of secret that should never be shared with others, yet it is bursting to be uncovered and often is. It is little different from the ridiculous gossip rags in the supermarket checkout lane, which all but a few of us find absurd, except for a few gullible souls. The gullible are those who are easily taken advantage of with such secrets, as they are innocent, good people who want to believe that everyone would tell them the truth. Hence a secret that is a lie is most hurtful, because it not only hurts the target of the secret, but also victimizes the listener.

We must be very careful with what we do with secrets.

We can be taunted by secrets in our personal lives. In our early school years, the paranoia was that everyone else knew the secret, and no one would tell you, and you were just not clued into what it was about. And so you felt left out, burned, and ostracized. We all remember what it felt like to have some other child whispering in another's ear, and we were left out. We cried out, '*what, what?*' However, our plaintive cries were left unanswered.

Too bad we didn't know the law that Jesus uttered, "*there is nothing secret that shall not be revealed.*"

We are also taunted by secrets in our public lives. Why keep something secret? We have the top secrets and the classified secrets that our leaders go into back rooms to discuss away from us. "I know something you don't know!" seems to be the oft-heard cry in Washington these days. And the fourth estate has the responsibility of uncovering these secrets and making them known. Those who supposed their behavior or actions would remain secret should not be surprised when these things are revealed. Again: there is the law of Jesus: "there is nothing secret that shall not be revealed.

And then there is our own secretive behavior that we do not wish revealed. This happens when we do things we do not wish others to know about, and these things are likely nefarious, and we know it in our heart of hearts, even if on a conscious level we may rationalize that such behaviors are good.

*Rationalize* is a fancy term for '*making excuses.*' These behaviors can range from dishonesty in the workplace, mishandling of what has been entrusted to you, or abuse of drugs for an escape, to having an affair while you are married or with a married person. There is nothing hidden that shall

not be revealed. Eventually the deeds of most all miscreants are exposed, even if it takes years to do so.

So what we hold in the dark recesses of our minds and hearts eventually will find its way to the light of day. And spiritually, this is not a bad thing. It takes a lot of energy to keep a dark secret. And the anxiety that builds up over having that secret revealed becomes a heavy burden to bear. The healthiest thing to do is to face the truth and come clean about it. The burden is lifted and the heavy curtain with which we have shielded ourselves from others seeing the truth we fear and from facing the truth is no longer necessary. That is a great relief. Sometimes confession is the healthiest and smartest move.

Now if you believe in God, you must surmise that you can keep no secret what-so-ever from God. God sees everything. God knows the good we do, and also those things which we wish we could hide. The very first dishonesty in the Bible came in the book of Genesis, when Adam and Eve covered themselves out of shame, and then tried to hide this from God. But there was no hiding anything:

*“Then the man and his wife heard the sound of the LORD God as he was walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and they hid from the LORD God among the trees of the garden. But the LORD God called to the man, “Where are you?” He answered, “I heard you in the garden, and I was afraid because I was naked; so I hid.” And he said, “Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten from the tree that I commanded you not to eat from?” The man said, “The woman you put here with me—she gave me some fruit from the tree, and I ate it.” Then the LORD God said to the woman, “What is this you have done?”*

If you can't be honest with God, likely you are dishonest with yourself, and when you tell lies to yourself, you become a very sorry and pitiful person indeed. Truth in place of dark secrets brings relief and God is merciful and will give you a fresh start to put your life back together. At least God will lift the heavy burden of such secrets from your shoulders. *"Take my yoke upon you for my burden is light."*

Not all secrets are bad. Some secrets are good. Most keep secret what they intend to give you for gifts at Christmas and on your birthday, so that you can have a nice surprise. Sometimes we wish to surprise others with our good news, and so we wait for the most opportune moment to share it. These secrets are for a good purpose.

God does not want His Good News kept secret or held over others as some sort of secret knowledge to the advantage of some and the benefit of few. God wants us to share God's secret. *"What I say to you in the dark, tell in the light; and what you hear whispered, proclaim from the housetops"* This is like the student who runs home to tell his family that he aced the calculus test. This is like the father who picks up the phone to call all his friends to tell them his wife has just had a baby. Good news is something we are bursting to share, and something we cannot simply keep to ourselves.

St. George's is one of the best-kept secrets, I believe, here in Bolton. Don't keep it a secret. AMEN