

“You Shall Not Bear False Witness Against Your Neighbor”

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### **Opening Prayer**

Good Morning Beloved, God’s blessings upon you on what is a beautiful Sunday morning. We are back indoors for worship, or at least many of us are, and I have to admit that I am thankful to be preaching in my normal pastoral attire for the first time since March. Whether you are worshipping with us inside the church building, outside the church building via FM transmitter, or at home through your computer screen, I pray that you would know first and foremost that you are loved. We may be separated in 2020 in almost every conceivable way, but God’s church has not changed. The church is not a building, nor is it a committee, but rather it is all of God’s people who cling to Christ. If you count Jesus as your Savior, if you have repented and have given your life to Him for forgiveness of your sins and hope for resurrection eternal, then you are a part of God’s church. Beloved we are redeemed, bought at a price back, by Him, and it is He who we worship together this morning in our various places. This month, the month of November, we will be seeking to complete our study of the Ten Commandments. For the past several weeks we have been working our way through them. We have gone mostly in order, but we have jumped around a bit, and this morning is no exception. Today we jump ahead to the 9<sup>th</sup> commandment, which is “You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor.” Being just a couple days away from a presidential election, it should be no mystery as to why we are looking at this commandment. Beloved this is not a call this morning for partisan politics. I am not here to preach politics, but rather this is a calling to not be deceived, to not deceive ourselves, and to not speak in a deceiving manner to others or about others. As always before we get

to deep, background on what we are studying is necessary to help us understand.

The Ten Commandments are God's moral statutes, given to the nation of Israel in its infancy after He delivered them from slavery in Egypt. While there are MANY laws and rules and covenants given in scripture, all of morality comes back to these ten commands. Four of them, the first four, deal with our relationship with God Almighty. Having no other gods before Him, not making any graven images, not taking His name in vain, and honoring His Sabbath Day to keep it holy all describe what right worship looks like. We finished those up last week. The second six commandments deal with our relationships to each other. Honor your father and mother, do not murder, do not commit adultery, do not steal, do not covet... and do not bear false witness. Focusing upon those commandments dealing with our relationships as humans amongst ourselves, every sane person who has ever lived has agreed that these rules are good. They are found in every culture worldwide regardless of race, religion, creed, etc. They in essence are universal... but as we all know, we as humans are horrible in following them. I don't think that gets any more true in our world than when we talk about today's commandment. The truth is we struggle mightily with bearing false witness.

Exodus 20:16 reads "You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor." It is a simple commandment that we often interpret as meaning, "do not lie." While that is definitely part of it, there is more to this law than just not lying. Bearing false witness is actually a truly legal term. To bear false witness is to testify that something is true that is not. In scripture there are plenty of places where someone did just this, bore false witness, and the result was horrendous. One such place

where false testimony is given, where lying is involved, is in the final day of Jesus's life when He is tried before the high priests.

We read from Matthew 26 this morning the trial of Jesus before the high priest. This was already an illegal trial, held in the middle of the night with a select group of Pharisees, with the sole purpose being to find a way to put Jesus to death "legally." We read in verses 59-62 "Now the chief priests and the whole Council kept trying to obtain false testimony against Jesus, so that they might put Him to death. They did not find any, even though many false witnesses came forward. But later on two came forward, and said, 'This man stated, 'I am able to destroy the temple of God and to rebuild it in three days.' The high priest stood up and said to Him, 'Do You not answer? What is it that these men are testifying against You?'" Jesus knew full well that they were seeking to put Him to death, and eventually He told them the truth that He was the Son of God, and for that they had Him crucified. In trying to kill Jesus they had many people flat out lie about Him, and when that didn't work they had two men twist Jesus's words to make Him sound as ghastly as possible. Jesus, in saying He would tear down the temple and rebuild it in three days, was talking about His own body. They, of course, wanted to make Him seem as a madman or an arsonist. As we know this was all a part of Jesus's plan, and in the end our salvation came from their false witness. But for us today, have you ever been in such a situation, where you have been lied about, and your words have been twisted? This example of false witness being borne against Jesus is something that all of us probably identify with, at least in a fashion.

I think all of us have been there, and all of us have felt the sting of having another bear false witness against us. It may have been in an

actual court of law, in the high school hallway, at work, or even in the family, but all of us have felt that sting of lying. There is nothing more infuriating and heartbreaking than having gossip spread about you Beloved, and there is nothing more heart wrenching than being lied to. It hurts having your character questioned unfairly, having your words twisted, having your feelings crushed, having harm in every fashion done to you. It should be no wonder that bearing false witness in all of its forms is forbidden in scripture. Telling lies, spreading gossip and rumors, etc. are evil to their core. Sadly, if we are honest, just as all of us have felt that sting of being on the wrong end of lies, gossip, and false witness... so often we too have been the ones perpetrating such things against each other. If you needed evidence, I would turn your attention to our country's current state.

With the election being the day after tomorrow, you have probably heard every lie about you under the sun. This is not a political callout Beloved, but rather this is the truth. You have heard that you are a horrible racist, or that you are a communist. You have heard that you don't care about babies, or that you don't care about the poor. You have heard that you don't understand economics, or health care, or social justice. You have been placed into the same camp as Stalin or Hitler, as Antifa or Nazis. If you are one of the few undecided then you have seen every argument under the sun about why voting for Trump or Biden is the same as choosing between the Black Plague or a nuclear holocaust. If you have chosen how you are going to vote, then you know very well how much lying has been done about you as a group. Beloved we shouldn't be surprised, it is a great lie from Satan himself to try and separate us. Unfortunately many of us have fallen for his great lie, and instead of focusing upon Christ we are engaged in evil actions towards each other. Spreading rumors, lying, is evil Beloved even if it is

about someone you don't like or disagree with. We often make room for the little white lies that we tell, and we will do the same for the lies our leaders make. Biden lies about his connections with illicit overseas dealings in Ukraine and China? If he is our guy we make room for those and discount those things, if he isn't then we drag him through the mud. Trump lies about having affairs outside of marriage? If he is our guy then we will talk about how moral he is in other areas, not mentioning this part of his life. If he isn't our guy then we drag him through the mud. Perhaps most egregiously we will take people who deserve to be treated as individuals in our lives, and we will lie and say that they don't have morals. We will say that they are deceived, that they don't care, that they are evil people... all based upon the sign in their yard. Beloved, don't be deceived by the world's lies. Don't be deceived by Satan's lies. God is not mocked, as the scriptures say, and no matter what happens on Tuesday He is still in control.

The truth is that those of us here who truly call Christ as our Savior are on the same team. We have been lied to about who our brothers in Christ really are. I am not talking about the politicians on tv, the activists who call our phones 24/7, or the evildoers who we have watched malign and loot and kill and destroy. I am talking about us here in our churches, and how Satan has sown lies within us to separate us. I am talking about the lies that we have spoken about the people who we normally sit in church with, who we worship with, who we pray with. Lies that generalize and hurt. We do it often. Beloved, in a time that is filled with lies, we are called to speak the truth to one another AND about one another.

In the previous two months my wife and I were blessed to see firsthand how God's people work. In our time of need, when we were at our

lowest, we got to see these two churches in action. Democrat and Republican and Independent voters blessed us with gifts, prayers, and cards. Taking this into our church as a whole, Democrat and Republican and Independent voters serve in our kitchen, serve on our committees, lead us in worship, share their talents with the church, send their children to Sunday School and Youth Group, participate in giving their own hard earned money so that God's message keeps being proclaimed here in our town, and so much more. Beloved, we can argue about many things, but let us not believe the lies that this world tells us that separates us, and let us not lie about our brothers and sisters in Christ.

There is one final charge for us this morning in regards to adhering to this commandment that we are going to end our sermon on. That final charge is for us to remain in sound doctrine, acting according to the Lord's call. To not be deceived by the world, or even by ourselves. Our final reading from 2<sup>nd</sup> Timothy 4:1-5 charges us in how we are to act to combat evil in this world.

"I solemnly charge you in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who is to judge the living and the dead, and by His appearing and His kingdom: preach the word; be ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort, with great patience and instruction. For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but wanting to have their ears tickled, they will accumulate for themselves teachers in accordance to their own desires, and will turn away their ears from the truth and will turn aside to myths. But you, be sober in all things, endure hardship, do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry." These were Paul's final words to Timothy, a young pastor that he had trained, and they absolutely apply to us today.

Beloved, in a world that loves to push us out of place, that loves to convince us that its lies are good, we are to remain ready at all times. Beloved, in a world where we are often tempted to act in ways that are unbecoming of one of God's people, we are to remain sober. In a world that loves to lie to us about everything, dragging us through the mud, that tries to tear us apart, that tries to convince you that you aren't worthy or that you don't matter or that you don't need Christ every day, don't believe the lies! Don't have your ears tickled by the myths, and don't believe the garbage that Satan throws at you. We are called to be sober in all things, endure the hardships, be evangelistic, and fulfill our ministries. There are many different facets to talking about "Do not bear false witness," but if I can leave you with anything this morning it is that you should not believe the false witness that is brought by the world. You are worthy of salvation. You are a united body of Christ here at KUMC/PCUMC, regardless if we always get along or not. You do need to interact with Jesus every day, you can't get by without Him. Beloved, in a world that loves the lies, our Lord is the truth. Jesus Himself says that "I am the way and the truth and the life, no one comes to the Father except through me." In a world that will lie in any way it can to keep you from Jesus, cling to the truth. Cling to Jesus.

Let us pray,

**Closing Prayer**