

## MORRISON ZION EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH

[www.mzluth.org](http://www.mzluth.org)

April 9, 2025

Pastor James Enderle

Lenten Midweek 5

Passion History: [Luke 23:26-56](#)

Reading: [Proverbs 6:12-19](#)

Reading: [1 Timothy 6:6-10](#)

Devotion Text: 7<sup>th</sup>-10<sup>th</sup> Commandments (*See last page & [Exodus 20](#)*)

### **LORD, HAVE MERCY FOR FAILING TO LIVE WITH INTEGRITY**

Welcome to worship today at Morrison Zion Lutheran Church. We exist to glorify God. We have set out to do this by gathering around the Gospel so that we may grow in the Gospel and go to others with this Gospel.

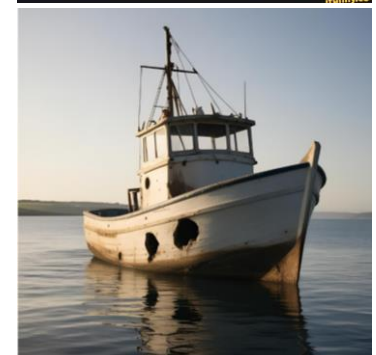
Grace and peace to you from God our Father and from Jesus Christ, our Lord:

You can hear in our theme today that we talk about integrity. When you think about integrity, maybe you think about people. But sometimes, to put it into a more visual thing, you can think about some things that maybe lack integrity and how that might affect you.

In this first picture, would you go up on that porch? You can see the porch is really tall and you can see that the supports are very thin and are kind of bendy. You look at that porch and you'd say that porch lacks integrity. It's not very strong. You wouldn't trust it. You wouldn't go out there and put too much weight on there because it is going to fall down.



In the next picture—this one was a little bit hard. I used AI to make this because it's actually kind of hard to find boats that lack integrity. Would this boat actually be out on the water? No. If you were going to a dock and you saw this boat that wasn't put in the water yet but has these giant holes in there and the captain is like, "We'll be fine. We'll just put this in the water and we'll get going," would you get on that boat?



It's the same thing with a car or an airplane. If you're rumbling up and the wheels are wobbling, would you get in that car? Or if a plane is getting ready and it starts smoking, are you going to get into that plane? You wouldn't trust something that lacks integrity.

You can see that in different vehicles and different things that are built, but what about people? What do these Commandments have to do with integrity? We've looked at several of the Commandments already. We looked at the first three that look at our relationship with God—how we can love God. Then the next ones we looked at (4<sup>th</sup>-6<sup>th</sup>) are love to people. But that love to people in 4<sup>th</sup>-6<sup>th</sup> are often more focused, especially on the people close to us. You can see it. If someone doesn't love someone, if they are committing adultery, it's very tangible. If someone isn't showing love to a parent, if they speak those words "I hate you," it's very tangible. We see that disrespect. When you think about murder, it's really saying "I hate you" but in a severe way, or, in your words and actions to someone.

But as we look at these commands (***you shall not steal, you shall not give false testimony, you shall not covet***), we are looking more at the **integrity** of someone. What we mean by that is when you look at integrity, it's more about what is going on inside. With the other commands, you can say these are big things and there might be people that say "I never committed adultery. I never murdered." But then we get into these commands and they are such sins of the heart. As they have to do with integrity, they also have to do with pride and contentment. That's not always an action. It also has a lot to do with where my desires are. *Am I happy with God? Am I happy with what God has given me? Do I need more? Do I need to put down others to make myself look better?* It's much more a matter of the heart. So we look at these commands and we say "God, you've got me." Whereas in some of the other commands you say "I haven't done those things." Of course, Jesus breaks it down to show how we have, but someone who just quickly looks at it might say that.

So let's look a little bit more about how these commands really convict us of our heart and show that we should actually have integrity even when people aren't looking.

When we look at ***you shall not steal***, often we think *that means I just take something from someone*. You might say "I don't steal." But are there other ways that you might steal? Think about one of the greatest distractions of our world or complications in our world today—technology. One of the problems in the workplace now—does everyone spend their time wisely? Or instead of doing work, what might they be doing? They might be scrolling on the internet, watching this, doing that, but they are wasting time. Wasting time when you're supposed to be working, is that stealing? Have you ever thought about that? If you're getting paid to do something but you're actually not doing it, it's a form of stealing. You're not being honest. You're not working. So, in a sense, you are stealing from your boss. You're stealing from the people who are paying you to do work if you are taking more hours to do it.

Think about buying and selling—is it natural in our heart to get the best deal we can even if we're going to deceive people a little bit? *Maybe I'll ask them to pay more when it's not worth that, or for me to find every way to pay the least I can*. Here's a big one—what season is it? Some of you know very well. There's something coming up a week

from now—tax day! What do we by nature really despise doing?—giving the government all that we are supposed to give them. Do we fiddle with this? Do we try to find every way to skew things a little bit and not give what we're supposed to? Is that stealing from the government? It's all about integrity, though. Do people know if you cheat them a little bit? It's this matter of the heart. Then also it has to do with contentment (as we read in [1 Timothy](#)). *Am I happy or do I feel like I need a little more, that I need to cheat people?* It's not just the taking but the dishonesty. So it's that matter of the heart of not being content.

Consider that's how it is with physical things, but then we look at the next Commandments, 8-10, and they also have to do with contentment and needing more. If I'm giving false testimony about someone, what am I doing? If you're tearing other people down and lying about them, making them look worse, are you content with your position? Are you content with what people think about you? Most likely you're doing that because you want other people to be lower than you. Maybe they hurt you or did something wrong and you want people to know about it and you want people to think better about you and worse about them. How often do we do that?

Think about this. I was reading about this Commandment in Luther's Large Catechism (not the Small Catechism), and he mentioned that the things that are secret, even if someone sinned against you, the things that are secret, that are not public, what should they be kept, unless it's something very public? They should be kept "secret." You should talk to them in private. This is what [Matthew 18](#) talks about—that you approach them privately and if they aren't sorry for that, if they don't admit that, then maybe you bring another person in, but you try to keep it as secret as possible and talk to that person so you don't hurt their name. But is that what we do? What do we do instead? We do the opposite. We go and tell everyone else what that person did and rarely do we actually go and talk to that person privately. Why is that? We're angry. We're jealous. We want them to suffer instead of seeking what is best for them. Maybe that person doesn't even know, and maybe they don't find out that you're the one who shared those things. It's all integrity.

Have you ever thought about this, and we see this in the world today with cancel culture, that how quick and easy it is to lose honor, to have a good name lost? A few years ago there was a scandal on the Duke campus in Lacrosse that this woman accused these men about doing this thing, and their lives were ruined. It came out just a year ago that she made it all up. Those guys were ruined! This happens in big scale where an accusation is made and yes, of course, if someone is guilty for something, they should face the punishment. But how hard when false testimony is raised against someone, how hard it is to regain that because people will always see that accusation.

If you know that's a public thing that happens in the world, what about privately, between your friends, between the Church? What gets even harder is when it is true, why do we always have to talk about it? So, yes, Paul's testimony does involve lying or

sharing false things about them, but also I think it has to do with spreading things that don't need to be shared. Instead, we want to build them up and to always assume the best until we know the worst. Really, we should only be sharing facts. And who do we share those facts with? Hopefully we share them only with the smallest amount of people because we want to protect someone's name and protect their reputation. That's what Luther talks about in his meaning. We want to help them, to defend them, speak well of them and protect them.

As this goes with reputation, this also goes with their things. We talked about this in the 7<sup>th</sup> Commandment but also the 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup>. This is where everyone is convicted. Stealing is the action. What about coveting? Coveting isn't even the action. It might be an action. It talks about how you might try to lead others away, to scheme to get your neighbor's inheritance or force your neighbor's spouse or these people away, but it's also just the thought—*that thing or person is better; my life would be better; they don't deserve that; I deserve that*. So that idea of pride, *I get this. I'm not content with what I have. I want that person to suffer*. It really has to do with that integrity of the heart.

We read in [1 Timothy](#) about contentment, but one of my other favorite passages to look at with contentment is one of the passages one of the confirmation kids picked for their confirmation verse. It comes from [Hebrews 13](#). ***<sup>5</sup>Keep your lives free from the love of money and be content with what you have, because God has said, "Never will I leave you; never will I forsake you." <sup>6</sup>So we say with confidence, "The Lord is my helper; I will not be afraid. What can mere mortals do to me?"*** I'm sure you are pretty familiar with the passage ***"Never will I leave you; never will I forsake you."*** But I don't think we always remember the context. ***"Never will I leave you; never will I forsake you."*** God is going to help you in your difficult times. God is always here. He will help you in sickness and difficulty, but He is talking about the love of money and being content. You don't have to worry. God is with you. The Lord will be with you. It's not just a physical thing but often, it's a matter of the heart, a spiritual thing. Why is that? If I can be content with God, if I can find my identity in Jesus, that I'm a redeemed child of God, that I'm forgiven, that I have peace, that He is going to help me in all times, even when it looks like everything is falling apart, then I can put things in God's hands. Part of the problem is if I put my identity in any of those other things, in my relationships; that false witness; if I need people to say good things about me and say bad things about others, if I need to think poorly of others, what is going to happen? That is always going to be shifting and people are always going to say different things. But if I put it in money, what does the stock market do usually, sometimes it goes up but it also, as we see right now, it's up and down and up and down, and our things can just be gone in an instant. So if we're putting our identity in any of those things that are temporary, we really have lost our hope. But trusting in our Lord, we'll never be afraid.

Why can we put our trust in Him? We saw it in our readings today. As we speak poorly of others, as we cry out and say "God, why would you do this to me" and we covet the situations of other people, what did God do with Jesus? Jesus was on the cross and He

willingly suffered and died for you. When the people are mocking Him, when they are taking His things and dividing them and abusing Him, what does He do? He forgives them.

These commands that we have are so important. They tell us how to live, but they also show us that we have fallen short. But our Savior has not. He kept them perfectly. Even in the most difficult situation, He was content with His Lord and trusting in His God that His plan was great; then, looking out for the best of people, not mocking the criminals but showing love to them and showing love to the soldiers. Regardless of how much we know that we fall short, we are going to struggle with that sinful nature day in and day out. So we use these to guide us, but that's not what saves us. Jesus saves us.

In the same way that criminal on the cross says "Remember me," we cry out to Jesus as well. "Remember me!" And He gives us the promise that when we are called from this world, He will say we will be with Him in paradise, but not because of what we've done. We deserve to be like the criminal on the cross. It's because He looks at the people that don't deserve it and says "Father, forgive them," and to the people that put their trust in Him, not in wealth, not in name and reputation, and says "You are forgiven and you will be with me in paradise."

So, we trust not in our integrity. We seek to have integrity, to build each other up, to trust in God, to show love to Him and to show love for others, but we put our hope in the one who has true integrity and has suffered and died and risen again for us. Amen.

***And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.*** [\(Philippians 4:7\)](#) Amen.

**The Seventh Commandment:** ***You shall not steal.*** *What does this mean?* We should fear and love God that we do not take our neighbor's money or property or get it by dishonest dealing, but help him to improve and protect his property and means of income.

**The Eighth Commandment:** ***You shall not give false testimony against your neighbor.*** *What does this mean?* We should fear and love God that we do not tell lies about our neighbor, betray him or give him a bad name, but defend him, speak well of him, and take his words and actions in the kindest possible way.

**The Ninth Commandment:** ***You shall not covet your neighbor's house.*** *What does this mean?* We should fear and love God that we do not scheme to get our neighbor's inheritance or house, or obtain it by a show of right, but do all we can to help him keep it.

**The Tenth Commandment:** ***You shall not covet your neighbor's wife, workers, animals, or anything that belongs to your neighbor.*** *What does this mean?* We should fear and love God that we do not force or entice away our neighbor's spouse, workers or animals, but urge them to stay and do their duty.