

Sermon on the Mount – Oath Making

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MAIN VERSES

[Matthew 5:33-37](#) • [Mark 1:14-15](#) • [Genesis 1](#) • [Genesis 3](#) • [Mount Hebrews 6:16](#) • [Revelation 13](#) • [Isaiah 43](#)

Continuing Through the Sermon on the Mount

Well, Shabbat Shalom, everybody. We continue. Hey, Julia. Hey, what's the code for this? Yeah, my notes. This is good stuff. Thank you so much. Well, we're continuing through the Sermon on the Mount, and this one has to be an easy one, right? I mean, it's a little boring, if we can be honest. Don't swear oaths. So bear with me as we endure something that is probably not relevant to us at all here in 2024. This one might actually be the one that sticks with all of us. The Sermon on the Mount. We've been traveling through just the weight of this. It's the Sermon of Yeshua introducing his few disciples at the time to what the world looks like when it lives out the ethic of heaven. This is how people act when heaven collides with earth. This is what the world looks like when it lives out the kingdom reign of Jesus Christ on earth.

And the sermon is filled with irony, hope, healing, sometimes difficulty, sometimes pain and suffering for those of us who cannot grasp the declarations of Yeshua and what he calls his followers to emulate. Blessed are the persecuted. Yeah, I'm persecuted. Have you seen those gas prices? Yes. Oil companies making record profits at our expense. Jesus is going to bless me, right? That's how we act, let's be honest. It's difficult for most of us to live in this time, in the most powerful empire that ever existed, to understand this concept.

Blessed are those who thirst for righteousness, starved, parched for justice to present itself somewhere. I mean, when it's convenient. These are things that, when we read the Sermon on the Mount, we can kind of balance, we can negotiate, we can fit them into our lives and kind of try to relate to. But then we get to the harder things. If you harbor contempt toward another individual, another person in your heart, no matter who it is, by the way, you're convicted of murder in the courts of Yeshua. That escalated extremely fast.

The Hard Teachings: Murder, Adultery, and Justice

If you glance at the pinky finger of another human being, another person, and choose to allow your mind to travel up the pinky, up their arm, down their body, you are convicted of adultery in the courts of Yeshua. You didn't want to man up and actually take your marriage vow seriously, so you kicked your wife out in the name of being the victim. Your wife is now an adulterer in her new marriage, and so is her new husband, and that responsibility is on you, not them. NIV phrases it perfectly. You make them the victim of adultery at your hands. You're convicted for causing multiple people to commit adultery because of your selfishness and the deception manipulative lens that you view your closest relationships through.

And this applies to women as well, as we discussed. You make other people the victims of adultery. And we say that's too hard of a thing because it sure does feel like it sometimes. But we should be saying, wow, how far has the world gone astray from where it was intended to be?

The Gospel: Kingdom Collision and Good News

You guys know what the gospel is? The gospel is the good news. And according to Mark chapter 1, verse 14 and 15, Yeshua tells us what the gospel is. He says that the kingdom reign of God is colliding with earth. Because that's the premise of the gospel. See, sometimes we start the gospel story in [Genesis 3](#). In the garden, where there is a deceptive talking snake and humans that curate the inception of sin into the world. And when we do that, we have a gospel where we're trying to get out of being punished for just how awful we are as people. And we grab hold of the gospel because we don't want to go to hell and burn forever, right? And there's definitely judgment in the scriptures. Judgment is definitely a part of the gospel, but it doesn't sound too good of news if that's the pursuit.

It's good news because I'm not going to burn because I said a prayer. But if we start the premise of the gospel in [Genesis 1](#), we are presented with a world that God calls good. And we're presented with humans that are created as God's image, that are equal, that treat each other as such. And these humans that rule and reign over creation with God. That's their vocation, being stewards of God's goodness and joy and love and mercy and grace. If we approach the gospel from [Genesis 1](#) moving forward, then the gospel becomes less about trying to escape God's fiery wrath, which is always a good thing to do, but it becomes more about pursuing, putting effort into participating and bringing about a new good world, a new good creation.

Because that is how the story of the Bible ends in Revelation, where as ambassadors of the king, we push toward the healing of all nations, even the ones we don't think should be there, where there will be no more curses on the land. And there will be the Lamb and His servants, and they

will reign forever and ever. And then we have a warning. Those who have washed their robes have the right to partake of the tree of life and to cross that threshold into the city of God. And those who choose not to participate in the gospel mission are left outside by choice. And that's the mission that we're involved in as followers of Yeshua.

Now: Living as Kingdom Citizens

It's not simply about not being judged, avoiding wrath after Adah. No, it's about now, what you're doing now, what you're representing now as a kingdom citizen. That's the mission. And the question is, are you participating in it? Are you wearing the lenses of what Yeshua did on the cross? Are you wearing the lenses of what took place at the resurrection? Do you see enemies or do you see people that need help? Do you mock the ones who are screaming because they're angry for some reason? Or are you hearing the cries of the oppressed? Are you working toward where Yeshua was leading us? Or are you content with what you've accomplished as a Christian?

And these are things I ask myself frequently. But that's why Paul says to die daily. And so, we continue our journey through the most radical sermon ever preached, the Sermon on the Mount.

Ancient Oaths and God's Name

Today we turn to Matthew chapter 5, verse 33. And here are the words of Yeshua. He says, Verse 37: All you need to say is yes or no. Anything beyond that comes from the evil one. Why does it got to end so hard? The devil, like this evil. It comes from evil. Albeit easy one, right? Finally. Because Yeshua is speaking about something we really have no clue of. Making oaths. When was the last time we took an oath through a vow? In court? I don't know. Right? Swear? Maybe, swearing allegiance to a flag, something like that. This is not a practice that seems too relevant to us like it did in the ancient world.

But I submit that it is because during the time of Yeshua, swearing oaths was a big deal. It had weight, especially when you invoked God's name or a synonym for it. So you could swear by God's name or something related to his name, like the temple or the throne or the altar. Why? Why would you do that? Why would you call upon the holy objects of the temple or the name of God to swear by? Well, in order to lend weight to a statement that you're trying to make. You're just adding some weight to it.

That's what [Hebrews 6.16](#) says. The oath confirms what is said and puts an end to any dispute. It's relevant. It's a big deal. And even today, see, we'll swear by God. All right, God, I swear. Or we'll swear in a stack of Bibles. And in our culture, we tend to have a habit of invoking God's name to damn people, right? Straight faces. What furniture in your home has been damned to burn in hell for all of eternity because you hit it with your pinky toe? Yeah, I'm starting to see a little bit of that. A little bit too casual for some people.

The Problem of Swearing Oaths

In the ancient world, you could invoke God's name as much as you wanted to as long as you fulfilled whatever you swore by, right? As long as it wasn't in vain, it was acceptable. But Yeshua doesn't mess around. He goes straight to the point of why people swear oaths. Because why would someone swear an oath? Why? They would do it to impress others with overwhelming sincerity or even piety in order to benefit from it, right?

If you invoke God's name, you apply the weight of who God is to your situation or even your request. And thus, you participate in leveraging God's reputation to get what you want. It's how you get your way. It operates, in essence, as a tool of manipulation designed to undermine the judgment and autonomy of those it targets around you rather than respecting others and allowing their decisions and actions to remain solely theirs.

Thus, Yeshua declares, don't swear at all. Not even by heaven, the throne, earth. Don't do it. You don't need to manipulate your circumstances or your words to sway others' opinion of you, to get them to do what you want. It's not a good quality, and it conflicts with the atmosphere of the kingdom of God.

Because when we use manipulation with God's reputation, like swearing oaths, for example, we try to use something that, though pretty impressive and pious, is irrelevant to the issues you're dealing with. It's a simple way to try to get others to believe you or do what you want them to do. And this is not how the character of God works. And it's also not how an ambassador of the good news of creation works.

And the level of how wrong this—lies in is how we... Essentially, it's how when we take another human being and we want to manipulate them for our benefit. Because that's the theme of the Sermon on the Mount: stripping someone else of their status as an image bearer of God, stripping them of their humanity, and making them an object that you can play with for your own benefit.

That's the whole theme. Anyone ever told you they heard from God, and now you have to do something because of it? Or they told you that they heard from God, and you need to give them something now? Or allow their next assertion to manipulate your life or decisions? Anyone familiar with this type of scenario?

Yeah, because as soon as someone invokes God's name, it's like all your weapons are taken away from you. I can't even defend or I can't counter or even ask questions because I'm stripped of everything. Because now I'm not dealing with the person, I'm dealing with God himself, allegedly. That's tough, isn't it? And it's just the most convenient thing ever for the other person to be able to invoke that authority.

"God told me to tell you, you need to repent. What? What? He just said, repent, repent."

And that's exactly the attitude that Yeshua is speaking about. I bring this up because I 100% believe God speaks to people in a variety of ways. Even in 2024, I don't think God has changed that. It could be through circumstances that God communicates or gives you a glimpse of a direction or wisdom. It could be through his word, right? And God can do whatever he wants. He can audibly speak to you or he can speak to you in the voice in your head. I believe that a thousand percent.

How God Speaks

And there are people that I trust and I take seriously when they come to me and they say, "Hey, I believe that God gave me a word or a situation or anything to talk to you about." But those people in my life are very few. I'll be honest. There's like two, three. And I'm speaking specifically about when people weaponize God's name.

I believe God speaks to many of us in our prayer life at home. When God leads us and guides us. Gosh, everything I believe God has been doing through Jeannie with her testimony—I think that's 1,000% authentic. Never doubted it. Because her faith is a testimony of what God has been doing in her life. But there are people that will weaponize God's name if you haven't met any yet.

I had a situation a couple years ago. A big meeting was called. Conflict. I sit down. "Okay, let's hear it." "God told me that you need to repent."

Okay, hey, I'm all ears. Tell me what I did. Tell me what I did. I don't know. I'll fix this.

"Well, God didn't tell me what you need to repent of."

Sometimes my decorum doesn't always remain static. And so I kind of looked around. "Can you do me a favor and ask him real quick so I can know? I mean, since we're all here and we're doing this thing."

I got a little bit of pushback after the meeting for not taking it seriously enough, minor. But here's the thing—why I don't take situations like that seriously enough: when there are clowns, it means you're in a circus. And I can't take that seriously.

The Internal Monologue

And so we have to be careful, especially with that internal monologue. Anybody know what I'm talking about when I say internal monologue? Yeah, okay.

So I recently discovered that there's like 30 or 40% of people that don't have an internal monologue. And this has caused me to just flip out. Like, what do you do? You just think about something and you do it? There's no guidance like that?

Like, "All right, man, you got up. You got to brush your teeth. Come on, just go do it."

"All right, fine. I'll brush my teeth first thing. That's fine. I got it. I want to go get my coffee."

"Nope, you got to take your pills. You got to take your vitamins. All right?"

Everybody know what I'm talking about? Internal monologue.

Internal monologue is amazing because most people have it, grew up with it, and it's usually the voice of your parents in one way or shape or another. Yeah, that's interesting, right? A lot of things start making sense now, right?

But you know what is fascinating about the internal monologue—or the internal speech? There's several different names. You ever notice that it never speaks in the first person? "Oh, I need to brush my teeth." No. It's always like, "Hey, let's brush our teeth." I realized this six months ago. And I'm sitting here talking to my internal monologue trying to think, who are you and who's talking to me? What do you mean, let's? What is this? And it's common. It's pretty common.

And deep dive, spiral into psychology trying to look this up. This is something that's been heavily studied and continues to be studied. They say it has something to do with the right brain, left brain, something subconscious. I don't know. It's just funny.

Waiting to Hear from God

But we've got to be careful of this internal monologue when we're waiting to hear from God, right? Because sometimes that internal monologue will start saying the things that you want to hear. And maybe some of you have struggled with this.

And right after you prayed, "Yeah, God's talking."

And I'm not here to say whether God's talking or not. I'm saying there's wisdom in recognizing that you're prone to interpreting certain things inside your own head. And with that wisdom comes responsibility.

"Doesn't speak in first person. That's crazy."

Maybe, maybe. But yeah, yeah.

The Language of Manipulation

In politics, there's a term for this: using your words to fluff up a crowd or to try to gain favor. It's called spin. Or being a spin doctor. You put a spin on something. Good stuff. It's the song and dance to the audience that all politicians play, especially now, right?

And it's part of politics, right? It's what it is. You want to get people to participate. You want to get them excited. Join this team. Vote this team. Give favor to this candidate. And they'll do it in a way that has nothing to do with the actual policies of what they're trying to accomplish.

Appealing to Patriotism

Anyone else see Hulk Hogan? Gosh, so many responses to Hulk Hogan at the RNC, the Republican National Convention. I've heard lots of responses. Some people are just disgusted by it. Like, "Gosh, it's so, ugh." Some people cringe. That's so embarrassing. Some people are like, "America, right? Yes."

And I admit I'm more in the middle. I was watching this thing, cringing, like, "Oh, this is so bad." And I kept hearing an American eagle screeching and someone cheering America in the background, and I realized it was me. How is this happening? I'm watching him rip the thing. I'm like, "It's about America, right?" Because it's meant to get you excited, and it works. I don't care who you are. It works, right?

Republicans aren't the only ones that do this. I mean, this is everywhere. This is standard, right? But it's a way to get people excited about something in a way that has nothing to do with

it, right? It's the spin. It is what it is. Just got overwhelmed with patriotism. Didn't even realize it. Yeah, I don't know what's happening. Yes. Rip my shirt off.

Politicians and God

Man, every politician tends to invoke God's name when they're running for office, right? Because they know who they're targeting. It's an instant red flag for me, but everybody has the red flag. Every politician does it because they know they're fighting for the Christian vote. And so they'll talk about God. They'll talk about God's country, God's nation, God's protection, God's favor, and that God is on their side.

And we have to be careful when we start falling down that rabbit hole of fully subscribing to that always. Because [Revelation 13](#) lays out the formula of the mark of the beast. And it's the mixing of faith in God with loyalty to empire.

The false prophet sways people to worship the beast of empire through religious song and dance spinning. And the end result is that the worship of empire becomes part of their faith.

God and Nation

But yeah, that's something that we tend to do a lot here. And not just generally when elections are running, but during the Cold War.

During the Cold War, we wore propaganda, and they did too—all of us. We made up a lot of propaganda. CIA actually hijacked media outlets to spread anti-communist and anti-Soviet Union propaganda, of course.

But one thing they did very well is they labeled the Soviet Union as godless. "It's an atheist state. They don't love God. They don't believe in God."

And in 1954, Representative Louis Rappall, a Democrat from Michigan, introduced legislation to add the words "under God" to the Pledge of Allegiance that kids were now saying every single day at school. And he argued that adding the phrase would give students a deeper understanding of the real meaning of patriotism, but also would provide a bulwark against communism—a defensive wall against communism—because we're now a nation that is under God, and they aren't.

"God's on our side, right?"

And it was a way to leverage both our devotion to God and our nationalism at a time when we were at war, because our country is God's country, right? Genius. It's genius how we do things, right? Because it works, right? Totally works.

Two years later, we expanded the motto "In God We Trust" to be printed on all currency for the same reason. We're at war. We're at war. Because if we trust in God, then God loves us more. Let's be honest, right? Genius.

Maintain Integrity

And so we have to be careful when we're trying to persuade someone or if we find ourselves in conflict with another individual, we have to be careful not to reach for the forbidden fruit and take a bite. Take a bite.

You don't need to spin things. You can maintain integrity by being direct and honest about the situation. And you can allow the other person to authentically decide how they want to respond to that data or information that you're giving them.

We don't know anything about that in Southern culture, though. Anyone ever been in a conflict and you or the other person ends up concluding it with "bless you"? In the South, that does not mean bless you. We'll leave it at that. But it has become part of our culture in the South to be passive-aggressive. It's how we communicate, even when there's no conflict. It's like our love language.

Why do so many men just look at their wives? I saw it. Y'all do it too. It's coming to a place where you sacrifice your integrity so that another person sees you in a way that makes them want to agree with you or buy what you have to sell or do what you want them to do. It's the recipe for sales. That's what salesmen do, right? A salesman does not give a hoot about you and their smile is not authentic. It's there so they look friendly. So they try to hook you into a variable rate mortgage in 2006 or a 72-month car loan that you can't afford. And Yeshua says someone who uses these types of tactics to try to manipulate people is from the evil one. That's harsh. It's hard.

When You Don't Know, Just Say So

Anyone ever been in a situation at work where a customer asked you a question and instead of just telling them that you don't know, you spend five minutes making a word salad, explaining absolutely nothing, and urging them to buy whatever you're trying to sell them? You're the

salesman. You're supposed to know about the product that you're selling. You don't want to say you don't know. "No, I can't do that. I'm the expert." So you do the song and dance instead of just saying "I don't know." And I really think that's the underlying root cause of what Yeshua is talking about.

Don't make oaths and swear by things of the temple and God to bolster your credibility. But under that, it's "hey, it's time to have kingdom honesty. Kingdom honesty." Even if it upsets people. Even if other people don't want to hear it put that way. Kingdom honesty. Man, that's hard. It's good to hear these words of Yeshua. That's the heart of the issue: having integrity and being honest and saying what you mean and doing what you say. That's the heart of the issue.

But there's good news. Because if you dare to begin putting this into practice, you're going to experience more peace in your life. And the people in your life who don't want to be around the genuine you—the honest you—they will drift out. And the people who want to be around the genuine you and the authentic you will begin to gravitate near. And you will have more peace. And you won't have to worry if your act was good or not. And you won't have to wear a mask all the time.

You Were Created Beautiful

And I know we've come a long way from where the verse says "hey, don't swear, don't make any oaths." But this is the root. You were created beautiful. You were created as the image of God. You're incredible. And I hope you come to a place where you understand that you don't need to wear a mask for everyone else so that they will see a faux incredible attribute that you don't really have. Instead, just show off what you have, what you do, what God has given to you and the beauty that sprouts from everything you touch and however you touch it. That's who God made you to be. You don't have to fake who you are. You're beautiful.

And even those that you don't like very much, they were created with insurmountable worth in the eyes of God. They too are beautiful and incredible, made as the image of God, striving through this life just like you. Because if we were made to be equal, stepping forward, inaugurating the good, good world that God has brought forth, then we're on the same team, even if we don't see it.

What if we all removed our masks? And I think we all do this. I think we all forget what God sees. And I think maybe we all need to come to a place where the lies can stop when we feel comfortable with who we are, that the masks don't need to be worn, and who we are is something that we're actually proud of as we struggle forward, participating with Yeshua and

cultivating this kingdom ethic. And I believe that someone needs to hear that today. Maybe it's me.

Because we tend to put on so many identities that sometimes it's hard to tell who we are anymore. We have so much communication with so many people today. I mean, seriously. We have social media. We have text messages. We have emails. We have job people, family people, church people. We have so many different spheres of communication. And so many different characters that we feel like we need to be depending on who we're communicating with.

The Testimony of Your Authentic Self

If that's you today, I want to encourage you and let you know that you're loved for who you are, even with your quirks. What if we chose to see each other as authentic humans that are just different and unique and that we don't have to do a song and dance for each other anymore?

See, the Torah tells us not to take the Lord's name in vain. The context is this: God told Israel that they bear his name. It's on them. They're wearing the jerseys of Yahweh written on the back of it, right? That's a cool shirt idea.

They bear their name. And when you act or swear in a manner that is contradictory to the character of the name that you wear, it tarnishes the reputation of the team that you're playing for. Liked it better when it was just about saying "oh my gosh," right? So much easier.

No, it's proclaiming you serve the God of Israel now and not participating in acting out the character of the God of Israel. And when you consistently turn your back on the character of the kingdom of God while wearing the name for your own benefit, God pulls his name down. So the word there—"do not take the Lord's name in vain." The word for vain just means common. Do not make the name of God common.

God's Name Set Apart

And when we pull it down to our messy, mortal, worldly ways, guess what? You might as well be wearing Tommy Hilfiger on the back. It's common. It doesn't matter anymore. It's not set apart. It's not holy. It doesn't mean anything. The command is not simply about verbalizing the name of God, but living out who God is.

Isaiah 43—amazing, amazing chapter. It's a section that speaks of a future Israel that bears God's name. And he says that he's going to lead them out. He's going to bring them all back to him. And he tells them: "Bring out all of those who are blind but have eyes, all those who are

deaf but have ears. Bring out all the people who are totally blind to the fact that they wear God's name. Bring them out and be a witness of who God is." That's what they're called: witnesses. The people to come and the Savior, his servant. That's Jesus, right?

Be the witness of who God is. And I just find that so beautiful in the context of that section of the chapter. God reveals who he is to those who have become blind and deaf to God and God's mission because of those who bear his name. And God calls his future Israel his witnesses, his ambassadors. That's what Paul calls us, right? Ambassadors of Christ, representatives of who Christ is, Yeshua is.

Yeshua Was Authentic

Was Yeshua authentic when he spoke? Pretty sure, yeah. Did Yeshua do a song and dance for people? No. That's what made everyone so mad. And he wouldn't swear by the oath. Remember Caiaphas? Caiaphas tried to get him to swear by the holy thing. "Swear by God. Swear by heaven. And tell us who you are." He remained silent. "I'm not going to do it. You have said." And here's another question: Does Yeshua love you? Yeah. Yeshua loves you without the mask on. Yeshua loves the authentic, raw, transparent me. Yeah, he does. And if he does, then you shouldn't have to work so hard to get others to. You don't have to try to manipulate others to get your way.

What's he say? It's Jeannie's testimony: "Trust in the Lord. Trust in the God that has already given us all a resume of his powerful work in our lives." Trust. That's all he asks of us, is just trust. So don't even take oaths, Yeshua says. Just let your yes be yes and your no be no. And over time, you will build a reputation for being honest, direct, and without an agenda. So you will never have to put on a mask to try to get people to actually trust your integrity if you live it out.

In a world where everyone has to swear by shiny, holy things, be the person that is the shiny, holy thing because that type of transformation is a part of the gospel mission and it starts in you and it becomes contagious to the world around you. And this is part of the gospel mission because it reflects the God that loves you so much.

And so I want to encourage you today: stop being manipulative—even if it's for protection in your own heart, protection from what other people might think of you, protection from that core that you don't want people to know about, or protection from that traumatic past that you might have. Quit being scared of what people think and live out who you were made to be.

Conclusion and Call to Prayer

Amen. Please stand as we conclude services today. And I don't know where you're at today, but you're here. Praise God. And I hope you'll join us in this last song that we sing. But if you need prayer today for any reason in your life, I don't know what you're going through, I don't know what your friends and your family are going through, but if you'd like someone to pray with you about a certain situation or about this situation or about something in your life or if you want to leave something here today, guys, this is the place to do it and this is the time to do it because we can be the people of God.

Living as God's Witnesses

And do you want to know why? Because Yeshua says we are if we're found in him. So let's reflect what that looks like in the world around us so we can truly be the light in the world and the salt of the earth.

The Closing Prayer

Alvina Malkinu, our father, our king, father, we thank you for this opportunity to come together once again to speak about the heart of the issue, to speak about the thing that God willing continues to be renovated every day in our life as we follow our king, that our hearts would be pure, and full of integrity, that they would reflect a kingdom ethic to the world and not a world ethic to the world. That we would be the ambassadors and the witnesses that would bring those who are blind and deaf forward and be the testimony of what God can do in their life.

We thank you, Father, for your mercy. We thank you for your grace. We thank you for your creation. We thank you for your peace and your forgiveness. We thank you for your love. Father, we thank you for you, and we thank you for us, and we thank you for each other.

In Yeshua's name, in Yeshua's mighty name, we declare. Amen.

The Shema and Final Blessing

Sing the Shema with me. Hear, O Israel, the Lord is our God, the Lord is one. Blessed is the name of his glorious kingdom for all eternity. And may the Lord bless you and keep you. May the Lord make his face to shine upon you and be gracious to you. May the Lord lift up his countenance toward you and give you peace. Shabbat Shalom.

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