

St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church, Perth
Sunday, June 30th, 2024
Guest Worship Leader: Rev. Beryl Orok

Integrity Speaks Loudly
Proper 8
Leviticus 19:1-18

Welcome

Announcements

Call to Worship

God, our Creator,
from nothing you made our world.
**You formed us, love us,
and give us all that we need.**

God, our Redeemer,
you rescued us from sin.
**You have given us new life
and hope of healing to the world.**

God, our Comforter,
you are with us always.
**You comfort us, renew us,
and guide us into your truth.**

Almighty God, for your gracious love for us,
we praise you. **Amen**

Prayer of Adoration and Invocation

Loving God,
we come to you in worship and thanksgiving.
You are greater than we can understand;
open our eyes that we may see the wonderful truths
you have shown to us in Jesus.
You are more loving than our hearts can respond to;
help us to give ourselves to you in worship
so that we learn what you want us to be.
You are wiser than we can know;

still our minds as we worship you
so that we can understand the things you are saying to us.
Loving God, in Jesus
you chose to come to the world in humility.
You chose the path the world saw as foolish.
You used what the world considered weak.
We worship and adore you. **Amen.**

Children's Hymn: "Oh Be Careful Little Eyes"

Call to Confession

Prepare the way of the Lord!
Let us make our confession to God.

Prayer of Confession

**Almighty God, we confess how hard it is to be your people.
You have called us to be the church,
to continue the mission of Jesus Christ to our lonely and confused world.
Yet we acknowledge we are more apathetic than active,
isolated than involved, callous than compassionate,
obstinate than obedient, legalistic than loving.
Gracious Lord, have mercy upon us and forgive our sins.
Remove the obstacles preventing us
from being your representatives to a broken world.
Awaken our hearts to the promised gift of your indwelling Spirit.
This we pray in Jesus' powerful name. Amen.**

Assurance of Pardon

There is no condemnation
for those who are in Christ Jesus.
For the law of the Spirit
of life in Christ Jesus
has set you free from the law of sin and death.
Anyone who is in Christ is a new creation.
The old life has gone;
a new life has begun.

The Lord's Prayer

**Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name.
Thy Kingdom come, Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread.
And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors.
And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the Evil One.**

For Thine is the Kingdom, the power, and the glory,
Forever and ever. Amen.

Hymn: "Joyful, Joyful, We Adore Thee"

Responsive Reading

Psalm 89:15-18

¹⁵ Blessed are the people who know the festal shout,
who walk, O LORD, in the light of your face,

¹⁶ **who exult in your name all the day
and in your righteousness are exalted.**

¹⁷ For you are the glory of their strength;
by your favor our horn is exalted.

¹⁸ **For our shield belongs to the LORD,
our king to the Holy One of Israel.**

Prayer for illumination
(Congregant Prepared)

Scripture

Leviticus 19:1-18

¹⁹ The Lord said to Moses, ² "Speak to the entire assembly of Israel and say to them: 'Be holy because I, the Lord your God, am holy.

³ "Each of you must respect your mother and father, and you must observe my Sabbaths. I am the Lord your God.⁴ "Do not turn to idols or make metal gods for yourselves. I am the Lord your God.

⁵ "When you sacrifice a fellowship offering to the Lord, sacrifice it in such a way that it will be accepted on your behalf. ⁶ It shall be eaten on the day you sacrifice it or on the next day; anything left over until the third day must be burned up. ⁷ If any of it is eaten on the third day, it is impure and will not be accepted. ⁸ Whoever eats it will be held responsible because they have desecrated what is holy to the Lord; they must be cut off from their people.

⁹ "When you reap the harvest of your land, do not reap to the very edges of your field or gather the gleanings of your harvest. ¹⁰ Do not go over your vineyard a second time or pick up the grapes that have fallen. Leave them for the poor and the foreigner. I am the Lord your God.

¹¹ "Do not steal.

"Do not lie.

"Do not deceive one another.

¹² “Do not swear falsely by my name and so profane the name of your God. I am the Lord.

¹³ “Do not defraud or rob your neighbor.

“Do not hold back the wages of a hired worker overnight.

¹⁴ “Do not curse the deaf or put a stumbling block in front of the blind, but fear your God. I am the Lord.

¹⁵ “Do not pervert justice; do not show partiality to the poor or favoritism to the great, but judge your neighbor fairly.

¹⁶ “Do not go about spreading slander among your people.

“Do not do anything that endangers your neighbor’s life. I am the Lord.

¹⁷ “Do not hate a fellow Israelite in your heart. Rebuke your neighbor frankly so you will not share in their guilt.

¹⁸ “Do not seek revenge or bear a grudge against anyone among your people, but love your neighbor as yourself. I am the Lord.

Sermon: Integrity Speaks Loudly

There is a story about a man who had a donkey that was meant to help him transport goods for his business. The donkey was loyal but lazy. It would often find ways to cut corners at work, causing his master's losses.

One day, the donkey was tasked to carry sacks of salt on his back to towns. One of the routes along the way required it to cross a river. As they were crossing it, the donkey slipped and fell into the water. His master immediately helped him up. To the donkey’s pleasant surprise, the load on his back suddenly felt lighter. The salt inside the sacks had been washed away by the water.

For the next few days, the donkey would “slip” and fall into the water. His master noticed that he was doing this intentionally. It frustrated the master because the salt goods he was supposed to sell kept getting damaged. To keep this from happening again, he decided to teach the donkey a lesson.

On their next trip, he filled the sacks with cotton. Not knowing this change in cargo, the donkey again fell into the water. The cotton absorbed all the water, making the sacks become much heavier. It got so heavy that he couldn’t get up at all!

His master then came to help him up, and from there, the donkey learned his lesson.

That being: *Be honest with your work. Don’t ruin the trust given to you in fulfilling your tasks and responsibilities. The quality of your work may be affected by your dishonesty, which can lead to repercussions.*

A Psalm of David. Psalm 15 1-5

1 Lord, who may dwell in your sacred tent?

Who may live on your holy mountain?

Referencing Mt Zion –place where the redeemed worshipped God; signifying entering the presence of God

2 The one whose walk is blameless,

Who does what is righteous,

Who speaks the truth from their heart;

3 whose tongue utters no slander,

Who does no wrong to a neighbor,

and casts no slur on others;

4 who despises a vile person

But honors those who fear the Lord;

Who keeps an oath even when it hurts,

and does not change their mind;

5 who lends money to the poor without interest;

Who does not accept a bribe against the innocent.

If we were to sum up these character traits in one word, and recognize the one lacking in our friend, the donkey ---I would suggest that word would be Integrity!

It is most familiar in society to see and hear of corruption, dishonesty, slandering, gossiping, judgmentalism and hypocrisy.

We only have to listen to the news or listen to the interactions between some politicians to recognize that integrity, as a virtue, does not often come to mind. Unfortunately, this is so prevalent! In fact; I risk saying that a person who lives by integrity is often looked upon with skepticism, and suspicion, in our society. You know, a sad truth today, is that the world is often just plain shocked by integrity!

Before we continue looking at the nature of an integrity filled heart, we need to clearly understand what integrity is!

A dictionary definition claims integrity to be: the state of being whole and undivided; being honest, and having strong moral principles, and uprightness; the practicing of righteousness.

It is important to recognize that true integrity is defined not by our words alone, but by living in truth; while harboring no deceit in our hearts.

Psalm 15: 1-2

“Lord, who may dwell in your tabernacle? Who may dwell in your holy hill? He who walks uprightly and works righteousness and speaks the truth in his heart.”

It is very apparent, that only an integrous heart can dwell in God's presence.

When speaking of the qualities necessary to have a true Christian heart; integrity is one quality that must be foremost; because a heart filled with integrity is the heart God desires us to have. We are created in His image! Our lives are to bring glory to Him always.

Proverbs 11:20 says the Lord detests people with a crooked and twisted heart but He delights in those with integrity.

When we think of some of biblical characters that had a heart of integrity –we remember David.

Psalm 78:72 records the author Asaph speaking of David, "And David shepherded them with integrity of heart; with skillful hands he led them."

After removing King Saul from office, David was made King.

In Acts 13: 22---the Lord's testimony of David says." I have found David the son of Jesse, a man after My own heart, who will do My will."

If David had a heart after God's heart, and if David's heart was integrous, therefore; it can be concluded, that integrity is a quality of God's character.

So much more so; is the reason we, as Christians, need to practice integrity. As Christians; integrity means we adhere to the truth and a code of values based on God's Word, not the social norms, or the pressure of peers. It is perhaps best defined, in how it's fleshed out in our lives.

I say practice integrity, because we are not perfect. David was not perfect! We know of his sins; murder and adultery to name a couple. But David had a repentant heart and loved God. He took responsibility for his wrongdoings, sought forgiveness and grieved over his failures, because they offended God. God forgave and loved him.

It is very true that we are not perfect; but we should be different. Our attitudes should be better, our habits should be healthier, our actions should be beyond reproach, and we should exhibit love in all we do and say.

Job was another man of integrity!

Job 27:3-6

New International Version shares with us Job speaking to his meddling, accusatory friends.

**³ as long as I have life within me,
the breath of God in my nostrils,
⁴ my lips will not say anything wicked,
and my tongue will not utter lies.
⁵ I will never admit you are in the right;
till I die, I will not deny my integrity.
⁶ I will maintain my innocence and never let go of it;
my conscience will not reproach me as long as I live.**

Job's life was one God was pleased to remind Satan of. "Have you considered my servant Job," He said to Satan.

We can ask ourselves an important question at this point.

Would God be apt to say the same about us?? Would He ask our accuser "Have you considered my servant Tom, Jean or Sally?" Something to think about!

Even in the midst of all his trials and losses; even in the midst of accusing, unsupportive friends and a wife who strongly suggested from the depth of her bitter spirit, that he should just curse God and die; in all of this, Job maintained his integrity! This just did not passively happen. It was a conscious, purposeful decision.

He had lost his family, his livestock and finally his health.

Did he question, did he grieve, and was he hurt, exasperated, devastated? Of course he was; he was human. Read Job chapter 40 for all the details. But; like David, he had integrity in his heart and he lived by its standard. He refused to become bitter and give up on God. And God blessed him for it.

Integrity starts on the inside and is characterized on the outside, influencing our life decisions, comments and definitely our actions.

We need to remember that integrity cannot be destroyed by others. Neither Job's wife, nor his accusing friends, could rob him of his integrity. It must have been so painful to listen to them in the midst of his suffering. Job clearly illustrated that circumstances cannot rob us of our integrity.

Yet Job 27:5 says; "In all things Job did not sin with his lips." Choosing as Job did leads to peace, rather than, a life filled with turmoil and regret.

One of the things I used to stress often to my Junior Youth Group, concerning choices they were faced with, was a caution; to choose wise, Godly thoughts, and actions; so that, their life would not be filled with regrets later.

We choose our response in our life trials and sufferings, and in so doing, we become co-creators with God of our character.

Isn't that amazing! God is invested and involved in the development of our character, as His children. This solid realization can be pivotal; in the formation of our identities as children of God! We are not alone!!

Integrity is not some intangible, obscure characteristic, but rather, it is something we can readily observe in our own and the lives of others. It is manifested in having moral uprightness, honesty and strong principles.

1 Kings 9:4-5, again –God is speaking to Solomon;

“As for you, if you walk before me faithfully with integrity of heart and uprightness, as David your father did, and do all I command and observe my decrees and laws, 5 I will establish your royal throne over Israel forever, as I promised David your father when I said, ‘You shall never fail to have a successor on the throne of Israel.’

There it is again. In this passage of Scripture God is cautioning Solomon, who had just finished constructing the temple of the Lord. God is pleased with Solomon's efforts, and in the verse preceding this one, He says that His eyes and His heart will always be there. Even so; God admonishes Solomon to guard his heart and to walk before Him, to serve Him, with integrity as his father David had done.

Matthew 23:25-26

²⁵ “Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You clean the outside of the cup and dish, but inside they are full of greed and self-indulgence. ²⁶ Blind Pharisee! First clean the inside of the cup and dish, and then the outside also will be clean.

You know Jesus was harder on the hypocrites, i.e. those lacking integrity, than he ever was on the prostitutes and sinners.

The term hypocrite in the Greek language comes from the theater experience.

In Greek theater productions, the actors played more than one role, and they wore masks to cover their faces for different parts, so that their true personhood would not be revealed.

Hypocrisy means, the wearing of a mask, to hide our true nature, which is the direct opposite of having Integrity!

So where do we start grappling with becoming people of integrity?

Integrity begins with repentance, cleansing of our hearts. It is a guarding of our hearts as well, because as scripture says:

Jeremiah 17:9:

**“The heart is deceitful above all things
And it is extremely sick;(evil)
Who can understand it fully *and* know its secret motives?
¹⁰ “I, the Lord, search *and* examine the mind,
I test the heart,
To give to each man according to his ways,
According to the results of his deeds.**

The only way we can maintain our integrity is to turn to Jesus for forgiveness and ask God’s help to keep us true to Him and His Word.

1 John: 1:9

If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

That’s a promise we can trust in.

So, a person of integrity is free of hypocrisy, and is honest about their true condition before a Holy God. They don’t wear a mask to hide their identity; to make people think they are something, or someone, they are not. Rather; they are one who confesses faults, shortcomings, and sins; while actively seeking to turn from them.

So, in plain language:

People of integrity are real; or authentic people.

Unfortunately; we may tend to compartmentalize our lives and identities.

We can often find ourselves to be:
the person we are as professionals at work
the person we are when we are with our families
the person we are in social gatherings
the person we are spiritually, or at church
the person we are in our private lives and thoughts.

Sometimes we have very different personas, in different situations. Without integrity, we can lose our real selves i.e. the person God created and calls us to be.

We need to be aware of when we are compromising to fit into a situation, or appease another person, and purpose to reflect God’s character in ours.

Integrity is not our reputation; which is who others think we are. It is rather a reflection of our true, authentic self. Having integrity shuns hypocrisy!

In Hebrew integrity means –completeness, moral innocence; perfection. Compromising God's will and purposes leaves us sadly lacking in the area of integrity.

No matter how enticing an offer is made, or how grand the prize is; if it goes against our Christian values of honesty; we must turn our back and walk away. That's having integrity.

Integrity is simply put—doing what you said you would do! Keeping your word is the hallmark of integrity.

It is not a stagnant virtue; but is always evident and demonstrated largely as a matter of will.

It is important to note that people of integrity seek the community of others who practice integrity i.e. being transparent, seeking feedback and accountability in relationships.

Rob and I recently hosted members of the Wototo African children's choir. Stewart aged 10 and Josiah aged 13, as well as, an 'Uncle'; a young man about aged 20, who was responsible for the boys while on tour.

They called me Auntie Beryl –I loved it.

Nick; the "uncle", stayed up late after the boys were in bed, and visited with us in the evening. He told us about life in the Wototo church and village. He is the music director and a member of a young adult group. They meet for Bible study, prayer and social times together. They often eat meals together. He told us that they purpose to have no secrets and openly share struggles; like sexual temptation. There is no judgement allowed. They pray together and hold each other accountable, for living their lives pleasing, and in accordance with God's Word.

This is Integrity in action I believe.

Sin, of course, is the greatest eroder of integrity. We are all tempted and we often fail, unfortunately. We need to support one another in our Christian walk, in good and tough times.

Integrity doesn't happen overnight, nor is it lost overnight. Rather; it is built into our lives overtime; as we live according to God's will.

I think of Joseph as another biblical character who had an integrous heart. Circumstances weren't kind to Joseph. He was despised by his brothers and sold into slavery, lied about by Potiphar's wife, thrown into prison where he was forgotten about. But all these situations and more, he did not allow to dictate his actions. He kept his integrity throughout it all.

It cost him dearly. But in the end, God blessed him, and saved the entire Jewish nation through him

Jesus, of course; was the undefiled, sinless epitome of integrity!

So, these are some questions we need to consider for ourselves today.

I know; I'm always suggesting people ask themselves questions! I do this because I believe in opening ourselves up to questions so that we can hear the voice of the Spirit, and be led to be truthful with ourselves, and with God.

The important question to start with is: How demonstrable is integrity in our lives?

Would our coworkers, our neighbors, our family, recognize integrity in our lives?

So, in real living today; what does practicing integrity look like?

- 1) It is having a deeply rooted honesty; truthfulness and transparency in all our dealings; not wavering or misconstruing the facts to suit the situation or altering facts to benefit ourselves.

This relates to personal and professional dealings, where we are to be deemed trustworthy.

Mark Twain said, 'Integrity is doing the right thing, even when no one is watching.'

An integrous heart speaks the truth, through a loving spirit, looking to heal, not hurt!

It is standing on the truth of God's Word, and not succumbing to the prevalent subjective truth culture, so prevalent in our society today.

Has anyone ever said to you ---well that's your truth!

There is a popular fallacy that would tell us there is no absolute truth. It says that my truth, may not be your truth; because truth is relative and subjective.

One of the best examples of this is found in the Bible in:

John18:28-40

Jesus Before Pilate

²⁸ Then the Jewish leaders took Jesus from Caiaphas to the palace of the Roman governor. By now it was early morning, and to avoid ceremonial uncleanness they did not enter the palace, because they wanted to be able to eat the Passover. ²⁹ So Pilate came out to them and asked, "What charges are you bringing against this man?"

³⁰ "If he were not a criminal," they replied, "we would not have handed him over to you."

³¹ Pilate said, "Take him yourselves and judge him by your own law."

"But we have no right to execute anyone," they objected. ³² This took place to fulfill what Jesus had said about the kind of death he was going to die.

³³ Pilate then went back inside the palace, summoned Jesus and asked him, "Are you the king of the Jews?"

³⁴ "Is that your own idea," Jesus asked, "or did others talk to you about me?"

³⁵ "Am I a Jew?" Pilate replied. "Your own people and chief priests handed you over to me. What is it you have done?"

³⁶ Jesus said, "My kingdom is not of this world. If it were, my servants would fight to prevent my arrest by the Jewish leaders. But now my kingdom is from another place."

³⁷ "You are a king, then!" said Pilate.

Jesus answered, "You say that I am a king. In fact, the reason I was born and came into the world is to testify to the truth. Everyone on the side of truth listens to me."

³⁸ "What is truth?" retorted Pilate. With this he went out again to the Jews gathered there and said, "I find no basis for a charge against him. ³⁹ But it is your custom for me to release to you one prisoner at the time of the Passover. Do you want me to release 'the king of the Jews'?"

⁴⁰ They shouted back, "No, not him! Give us Barabbas!" Now Barabbas had taken part in an uprising.

Pilate's question makes an abrupt and open-ended conclusion to their conversation. It is an attempt to side track the real and spiritual truth of Jesus's identity.

People will often do this when they don't want to hear what we have to say or want to end a conversation on a topic they are uncomfortable with.

Subjective truth is a big topic, and we don't have time to get into today.

However; the notion that there is no universal truth is very dangerous. If truth changes from person to person, and from situation to situation, there is no firm ground or reference point.

We know that God's Word is the definitive truth! Our life needs to be in alignment with God's holiness and standards. This is internal purity; not merely external compliance.

2) Integrity is not deferring accountability.

Having integrity means holding ourselves accountable for our actions, and decisions; accepting the consequences of doing so.

No scapegoating others. It is striving to make amends. This requires humility and courage; taking responsibility and being willing to learn and grow.

3) People with integrity are authentic.

What you see, is what you get.

They do not pretend to be something they are not. Most importantly they reflect their true self, as followers of Christ.

They form genuine connections with others and people are often drawn to them.

They live by their principles and stand up for what is right.

They don't take short cuts, manipulate situations, or step on others to get ahead.

People of integrity are found to be standing for the right, even when it's unpopular or inconvenient.

They treat others with respect. Everyone is treated with equal respect and kindness, regardless of their social standing or professional status.

They believe in dignity, and respect for all individuals; without prejudice.

This sounds lofty; but it can be reflected in simple everyday actions, such as; listening attentively when someone is talking to us, or expressing appreciation for a job well done,

So, what does living with integrity do for us?

It blesses us with security and peace of mind; knowing we are in God's will and that He will help us; never leave us or forsake us.

It spares us from fear of judgement; hoping others don't find out who we really are, or what we have done.

It protects us from shame, and guides us in our living.

Proverbs 11:3, "the integrity of the upright shall guide them; but the perverseness of transgressors shall destroy them.

It defines us so that it provides opportunity to share the Gospel, because we have established credibility, and our witness is strong.

**Joshua 24:15:
As for me and my house we will serve the Lord.**

In conclusion:

Integrity is a vital element in a Christian's heart and one that needs to be nourished by God's Word and maintained by prayer and personal diligence.

We need to guard our hearts; and the best defense is being sold out to Jesus Christ, and filled up with the truth of God's Word.

Let us pray: Almighty God, Your Word gives us clear and abundant direction on how You desire us to live our lives as Your children. We do not walk this journey alone. Thanks be to God!

We ask Your abiding presence and assistance to lead, guide and create in us a clean heart; a heart that is pleasing and brings honor to Your name in all that we do, or say.

This morning, we are once again reminded, and admonished, that to live with integrity is Your will and purpose for us.

Thank You for the opportunity to serve You and the hope of all eternity to dwell in Your Presence.

Amen.

Hymn: “Blessed Assurance”

Invitation to Offering

Offertory Prayer
(Congregant Prepared)

Closing Hymn: “In Christ Alone”

Pastoral Prayer

Our gracious and loving Heavenly Father, we thank You for the privilege of being able to gather together in this place of sanctuary; where all are welcomed in Your name. We thank you for the presence of your Holy Spirit who has been amongst us this day.

We thank you for your mercy and grace towards each of us and Your faithful presence in our lives: for the wisdom and peace You impart to each of us

Thank you for those who serve in this assembly.; those who prepare the sanctuary, those who look after the surrounding property, those who work diligently behind the scenes to make sure this service is in order, those who greet us at the doors and welcome everyone; those who care for the children, those who take up the offering, those who pray, read Scripture and share their gift of music and song. And lastly, we give thanks to all the faithful parishioners of this assembly who serve with a cheerful heart.

We realize there are those in our midst who are grieving, those who may be ill, those who are carrying heavy burdens; too private to even verbalize. We humbly ask You to be the God of all comfort to them; to bring healing where it is needed, to calm the anxious thoughts to meet the needs, and to forgive the sin that so easily keeps us from relationship with You.

We believe You care about us, and hear our prayers and we will be careful to praise you, and give to You all the glory for answered prayers.

We live in a community, a country, and indeed, a world that is in such need of a Savior. So many are lost, suffering the effects of war, corrupt governments, who have no concern for the people they govern. We pray for the leaders in countries around the world that they might hear Your voice, and bend their knee to Your sovereignty. May we be an influence for holiness and righteousness; help and lead us to make a difference where You have placed us to reside.

May we do what we can to be your hands extended to those in need and to reflect Your heart of love in all our interactions with others.

We pray blessing upon Pastor Gerry and his family as they take this well-deserved time away. Keep them safe and well on their travels, and may he return restored and refreshed, to carry on with his ministry here at PCC.

As we go our separate ways may we have many opportunities to reflect your character in our lives; to be strong witnesses to the love of Jesus in this community. May each day of our lives be lived intentionally, with integrity; bringing honor and glory to You. This prayer is made to You, the one true God, and our Savior Jesus Christ. To You be the glory forever and ever. **Amen.**

Benediction

Go now as those renewed in Christ, wondering at God's great love and telling the story of your salvation to all who will listen.

May God nourish your souls for He is faithful.

May Christ Jesus ever renew your lives into the image of our Creator and all He intends us to be

May the Holy Spirit lead us with cords of kindness and love.

Go now in peace to love and serve the Lord and each other. **Amen.**