

## **Opening Prayer:**

Well, Good Morning...My name is Pastor Byron Bradshaw..Today is a great day here at Calvary... It is such an honor and privilege to be here this morning...I am so honored to be here this morning and to be your next senior pastor...

I'd like to open our time of the Word with Prayer...Before we open up in prayer...I'd like to pray not only for the harvest of God's word this morning but also pray for those in Houston and surrounding areas as well as those affected by Irma...and finally for the friends and families of those affected by the September 11<sup>th</sup> attacks...it was 16 years ago tomorrow that America was forever changed...Many of us still remember where we were that day but few of us still carry heavy scars of the families and friends that were directly affected...Let us pray for them and this morning...

Let us pray...

## **Scripture Reading:**

Thank you Joie, and Frank for sharing that with us this morning....Thank you also Dwight, Stephen, Jerry, Drew and the whole team that make Sunday mornings work...I appreciate your faithfulness...

Please go ahead and turn in your Bibles to Matthew 5:33-37 for our scripture reading today...Matthew 5:33-37...And I will ask you to please stand if you are able to do so for the reading of God's Word...

Matthew 5:33-37 states, "<sup>34</sup> 'Again, you have heard that the ancients were told, 'YOU SHALL NOT MAKE FALSE VOWS, BUT SHALL FULFILL YOUR VOWS TO THE LORD.' <sup>34</sup> But I say to you, make no oath at all, either by heaven, for it is the throne of God, <sup>35</sup> or by the earth, for it is the footstool of His feet, or by Jerusalem, for it is THE CITY OF THE GREAT KING. <sup>36</sup> Nor shall you make an oath by your head, for you cannot make one hair white or black. <sup>37</sup> But let your statement be, 'Yes, yes' or 'No, no'; anything beyond these is of evil.'"

"May God bless the reading of His Word"...Children are dismissed to children's church...Please be seated...

## **Introduction:**

Introduce Myself: Well, Good Morning...My name is Pastor Byron Bradshaw..Today is an amazing day... It is such an honor and privilege to be here this morning...It is a bit surreal and a dream come true...We are privileged to be part of this church family again...

Throughout the process of my candidacy, I have been thoroughly impressed as to the leadership team here at Calvary...From the board of elders and deacons who have worked diligently to lead the church and to preach the Word...From the leaders of the children, youth, music, nursery, Sunday school teachers and many other leaders that have worked so faithfully to honor God in

their service...to the staff who have made this day seamless and who have been magnificently helpful...And to Garry, who has mentored myself for years...To Garry...Your faithfulness is awe inspiring and you provide a good example for me to follow...To all of you, I say thank you...We have a great team of leaders, elder, deacons, ministry leaders, teachers and staff...and I am honored to be back on the team...

**Season of Transition:** Here at Calvary, this is a season of transition...Sometimes church members feel that a season of transition is a good time to begin looking around at other churches and transition out of a church...But before you even think about this...Let me provide you a story...

**To tell you a quick story...**After about a year of being the youth pastor at Southside Baptist Church, I had a mother of one of my students approach me and tell me something that I will never forget...

She said to me, “Byron, ya know when you first started here I thought about switching to a different church where my son would have more friends...I thought about switching but I decided to give this a shot...And you know what Byron? I am glad I stayed because the Lord has allowed my son to growing abundantly in this ministry and he is forever changed...

Listen friends, a season of transition is not an opportunity to leave...but rather an opportunity to see the Lord move and to get plugged in and be involved... I encourage all of us here this morning...No matter if this is your first Sunday or your 10,000<sup>th</sup>...I encourage you to stay, get plugged in and see what the Lord will do...

But Why Calvary? Why should you say and be involved? Like I said before, Laurel and I both believe that Calvary’s greatest days are not behind it but before it...The reason is because I believe 99% of church are missing something...The element that is missing is this...(Hold up the Bible)...And I believe people are starving...I mean starving for the Word....Preaching the word is our legacy...Preaching the Word in a clear, exegetical and practical way is missing from so many churches and it is our burden and desire to continue this at Calvary

It is my hope and prayer, it is my goal and mission, it is my vision and ministry to preach the Word of God in a way that is clear, exegetical and practical that will activate our feet to obedience...It is what we do with the Word after we hear it that really matters...James 1, “Let us be doers of the Word and not merely hearers that delude themselves...”

**Transition:** As we begin this morning...this morning’s passage is in Matthew 5 and is about keeping your promises, keeping your promises...Specifically, it answers the question, “How do I keep my promises...?”

Yet, in preparing for this morning's message...I began to reflect upon the culture around us...I began to reflect upon the 21<sup>st</sup> century culture that we currently live in...

And Ya know, what? This may come as a shock to some of you...We live in a world FULL of broken promises...We live in a culture, in a world, in a time that is filled with broken promises...

**ME:**

**We have companies that do not keep their promises...** We have companies that defraud the American people...We have companies that defraud investors by promising billions and billions in profits yet have billions and billions in losses...Companies like Enron and Bernie Maddoff appear as a house built on a rock but are a house of cards waiting to collapse

We have athletes that smash home run records that suddenly look like Arnold Schwarzenegger then blame it on vitamins...

Athletes that promise...that give their word to purity...then after winning 7 Tour de Frances are found out to be liars...

We in America have products that fly off the shelf promising weight loss, good looks, and hair regrowth that only fall short...

Listen Friends...Watch this...Our culture is FULL of products, companies, and celebrities that are constantly giving their word but only deliver rotten eggs...

**Transition:** But let's be honest for a second though...The culture of broken words and promises is not just out there...It isn't just out there in our culture but it can be found in here...it can be found also inside the church...

Because...So many Preachers throughout America are promising health, wealth and prosperity...Preachers often promise that if you give to the Lord then He is obligated to give you in return a 100 fold...**Or,** Preachers like to rip out of context verses like Psalm 37:4 and say That God is obligated to give you every desire of your heart as long as you delight in Him...God is obligated to give you a million dollars as long as you delight in Him...

**To tell you a quick story...**A few years ago...I decided to do a little bit of investigation...I decided to scout out a famous preacher in Houston, TX...I wanted to hear what he was all about...To hear what His typical message was...

So I tuned into this curly haired, sparkly white teeth preacher...He began by standing before His

people holding up a Bible stating that this is God's Word and we can apply it to their life...but then never even discuss the words on the page... He then went on to tell his congregants that 2015 was their year...That God would bless them and He only wants good to come to their life and never adversity or persecution...

His word and promises never came from the Bible and actually contradict the Bible...

**Transition:** Yet, unfortunately, it isn't just preachers in Houston that struggle to keep their word but oftentimes it can be the God fearing, Great Commandment and Great Commission loving Christians that can struggle with it too...

**Transition:** I would bet that everyone in this room can think of a time we were hurt by another Christian not keeping their word...

**WE:**

Perhaps, it was a Christian brother or sister that promised to check on you during a hard time but never followed up, perhaps it was a Christian brother or sister that promised to stay in touch after you came forward but were never heard from again...

But listen friends, it is easy to shine the light on another's failed word and forget to look in the mirror...It is easy to place fault on another without even looking at ourselves...Because I would bet that all of us can think of a specific time when even we struggled to keep our word to another person or even another Christian...

Well, this morning we are in Matthew 5, and in this section it discusses keeping one's promises or keeping one's oaths or promises...

**Transition:** As you turn to Matthew 5, one of the reasons I am eager to continue on with the Sermon on the Mount is because of its practical guide to Godly living...The Sermon on the Mount was extremely applicable THEN and it is still extremely applicable now...

**Transition:** Because we can all identify with Matthew 5:33-37...

And It is my hope this morning for each of us to walk away with the central key principle of this passage and then practically apply it with 4 insights for our daily life... So, come with me to Matthew Chapter 5...

**GOD:**

We will begin discussing verses 33-36...Let us look at them together...

**Read Matthew 5:33-36** "Again, you have heard that the ancients were told, 'YOU SHALL NOT MAKE FALSE VOWS, BUT SHALL FULFILL YOUR VOWS TO THE LORD.' <sup>34</sup> But I say to

you, make no oath at all, either by heaven, for it is the throne of God, <sup>35</sup> or by the earth, for it is the footstool of His feet, or by Jerusalem, for it is THE CITY OF THE GREAT KING. <sup>36</sup> Nor shall you make an oath by your head, for you cannot make one hair white or black.”

**Transition:** One of the prominent themes in this section of Matthew is not to focus on the Letter of the Law but rather focus on the principle of the Law...

And Before Jesus gives us the principle in verse 37, Jesus gives us of list of don'ts...

The List of Don'ts include that they should not make oaths or promises upon heaven, earth, Jerusalem or even upon themselves...But I want to look closely at these verses...

If you notice with me...Behind heaven, earth, Jerusalem or head there is a “for”...As I looked at the original language I expected to see the Greek word “gar” but instead I saw behind each of the four “oti” which literally means “because”...which gives us the reason for not making oaths on these things...

**So Jesus is really saying this...**We are not to make an oath upon heaven **because** it is God's throne...We are not to make it upon earth **because** the earth is God's footstool...We are not to make it oaths on Jerusalem because it is the City of the Great King...We are not even to make an oath upon ourself “**because** we cannot make one hair white or black”

**But there is still a question to be answered...** Friends, let's be honest...this list makes no sense to us 21<sup>st</sup> century American Christians... Why would Jesus include all of these don'ts? Why would I promise ever upon earth, heaven and Jerusalem?

If we were to step back into Jesus' day we would realize that Jesus is not just stepping on the toes of the Pharisees but He is literally smashing the toes of the Pharisees... Because What we don't realize is that the Pharisees were taking oaths to **an extreme...**

The cultural reason Jesus smashes oaths upon all these specific holy items is because the Pharisees would go to the extreme by pledging upon Jerusalem, the own body or earth or even heaven... to show the sincerity of their oaths

**In fact, they would even take it a step further...**They would even wish a curse upon themselves if they did not stand by their oath...They would say something like this “I rain down a curse upon my head and I promise upon heaven that I will repay you the 100 denarii”...

But then they would purposefully and flippantly then break their word with no thought of consequence...They would make pledges with never even intending to keep them...

**But I'd like to take a minute and I'd like to go a little deeper...** I like to dig down just a bit...The real question in my mind is Why? Why would the Pharisees swear by the Almighty, make a promise upon the very presence of heaven then swear curses upon themselves without fear of consequence?

I think it boils down to something so simple yet so profound...I believe their behavior boils down to their view of God...

**You know why the Pharisees gave oaths they would not keep?**

It is because they had no fear of God...They had no fear that God would cause them to recompense for their flaky oaths...In my opinion, they thought they were above the law...That God would hold others accountable but not themselves...They had no thought that God was a God of justice but in their mind...God was meek and malleable to their will...

Listen Friends...Can I put this in today's world for a second? Your view of God dictates your behavior...If you view God as a teddy bear in the sky who will give me everything I want then I can skip a mortgage payment or can pledge on the Bible but secretly filter out the truth...But if I view God as a good Father who disciplines the child he loves...Then suddenly I realize the seriousness of keeping my word...

**Transition:** So what is the principle of the Law in this section? What is the principle we should live by today? Let's look at verse 37...

**Read verse 37,** "But let your statement be, 'Yes, yes' or 'No, no'; anything beyond these is of evil."

What is the principle of Matthew 5:33-37?

**The Principle and My Point Today is: Let your Yes be Yes and your No be NO...** Literally in the Greek the NASB states it well...But let your word be **“ναὶ ναί, οὐ οὐ”** “Yes Yes, No No”...

**In other words, in simpler terms...What is the proper understanding of Matthew 5:33-37?**

**#1:** Promises shouldn't be needed...Oaths shouldn't be needed...When you tell someone you will do something then do it...You should never need to say “I promise I will be there”.... All you should ever have to see “I will be there”....That you should stand by your word so much and so often that when you say “Yes” then people believe it... When you say Yes then do it....When you say No then don't do it..

**#2: Let your Yes be Yes and your No No continuously.... Let it be ongoing...**The command here **“Let your word be...”** is a **Present Active Imperative Verb**...The active voice tells me it is a my decision...It is left up to me for my yes to be yes and no to be no...But then the present tense tells me that it is ongoing...That throughout your days...Throughout the years to come let your yes be yes and your no be no...It isn't just a one-time thing or it isn't just while you are around other Christians...But you should keep your words in every area of your life...

One that stands by their word fears God and cares for the fruit they produce...

**Transition:** Some of you may be saying **So what?** What difference does this passage make in my life? How can I use this in my life tomorrow?

I'd like to slow down for a minute and give us 4 key practical insights to truly apply it to our lives...

**YOU:**

**Insight #1: Let your yes be yes and your no no...**When you say you will be somewhere by a certain time...As far as it depends on you, be at that place and the certain time...Be reliable...stand by your word...If your wife asks you to get Tide laundry detergent don't come back with Downy...If your spouse asks you to pick up Little Rosies...Don't pick up Taco Bell...If your boss asks you to put a proposal together by Friday then put the best proposal together you possibly can by Friday...Let your yes be yes and your no be no...

**Insight #2: Be Slow to Respond:** when someone asks you to do something be slow to say yes or no...Think and Pray Before Responding: Be Slow to Respond...Because listen friends...The enemy of commitment is over-commitment...There is nothing wrong with saying to someone, “Give me some time...I'd like to pray about it...I will get back to you...”

**Insight #3: Be Slow to Ask:** Pastor Garry used to say that church is like a football game...There are 22 players desperately needing rest and 50,000 people desperately needing exercise...Isn't this true? We as church members definitely know who says “yes” to everything...And these are the ones we wear out the quickest...If you are a leader and have a need, be slow to ask...Don't just ask the person who always says “yes” because you may be setting them up for failure...

**Transition:** As I head toward closing I'd like to share a story of how keeping your word can change someone's life...Of how standing by one word can truly change lives...Now, I share this story not to pat myself on the back but to give you a real life example...For there are other instances where my word was tested...

**WE:**

As some of you may know, while I was in seminary in Dallas, TX Laurel and I led an inner city

ministry...And through the course of this ministry....I met a young man named Ronnie...

Through the course of this ministry I began to find out his story...Ronnie was a typical inner city kid...He had never met his biological father and the only person he had to rely on was his mother...Come to find out this 14 year old boy dropped out of school in sixth grade...When he was 12 years old he came home from school one day and he opened his front door and all his stuff was gone and his mother abandoned him...His mom had been evicted and instead of taking responsibility...she ran away..This young man decided at 12 years old to walk down the apartment complex and knock on a friend's door living there for the next two years...

So, through the ministry, we encouraged him to reenroll in school...So this 14 year old drop out who had not been in school in 2 year reenrolled and began to take classes...To make a very long story short...Ronnie and I began to meet up for tutoring and he began passing his classes...Well, time went by and in his second semester which was 8<sup>th</sup> grade now...Ronnie failed only one class...

And I will never forget how I found out he failed this one class...I went up to this young man to check in on his schooling...He said to me, "Byron, I passed everything but English..." So I somewhat defeatedly asked him "Ok, what is going to happen?"...He said "Well, I don't know...I meet with the principle Friday..." I immediately quipped back and said "What time?"

Ronnie said Friday at Noon... I immediately said, "I will be there"...I didn't have to say "i promise I will be there...."All I had to say was "I will be there" Ronnie knew I'd be there because my Yes was Yes and My No No

So, I show up Friday at 1145am...I walk into this stale middle school waiting for Ronnie's arrival...and noon comes and he isn't there...12:05 comes and goes...now my heart is beating....The principle comes out and says...Where is Ronnie? So I call Ronnie and tell him to get his rear end over there as quickly as possible...

So, I see this kid running out of his apartment in flip flops...I see him and I say what happened? He said "Byron, it's not my fault...My guardian thought it was at one not noon, I'm sorry..."

The principle then walks out call Ronnie back to his office and then surprisingly calls me back as well...So, here I am walking back with this student into the principle's office to hear Ronnie's fate...

Then, I'll never forget what happened next...The principle said to Ronnie, "You're a good kid...because of that I signed for you to move into 9<sup>th</sup> grade, your teacher signed and can this man sign for you to go to 9<sup>th</sup> grade? The principle pointed to me as his guardian to move him to 9<sup>th</sup> grade...In shock and aw... I signed him to go to 9<sup>th</sup> grade..."

Keeping my word that day changed his life...Because not only did he move on to 9<sup>th</sup> grade but that young man stuck with school and graduated high school this year...

The story gets even better...that young man also became a Christian...And furthered his life through a simple keeping of someone's word...

Listen friends, I do not take credit for changing his life...But it was the power of the Gospel and God's sovereign plan to have me part of Ronnie's life...Now, If you are sitting here this morning never having believed in Jesus Christ as your personal Lord and Savior then I encourage you to trust God to keep His word that if you believe you will be saved from your sin, redeemed to eternal life and adopted into His family...if you have never believed I encourage you to do so this morning...

Listen, friends let us be Christians that keep our Word...Let us as believers in Jesus Christ let our yes be yes and our no be no...For we do not know the impact it can have...

Let us pray