

Necessary Sins Week 1 – Lying

St Peter's Lutheran Church, Loxton

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(Sermon series adapted from life.church series on same topic)

Introduction:

What the biggest lie you have ever heard?

Have you heard of Charles Ponzi? He made a fortune off lying to people. In the US in 1920, Ponzi tricked thousands of people into investing in a postage stamp speculation scheme.

He promised investors that he could provide a whopping 50 per cent return in just 90 days. Each time a new investor gave him money, he'd use those funds to pay off earlier investors, creating the illusion that they were profiting from a legitimate business.

At the height of his scam, he raked in \$250,000 a day, about \$3 million in today's money. But his days of scheming and scamming caught up to him in August of 1920, when he was charged with 86 counts of mail fraud. So significant was his deception the US government named a type of fraud after him—the Ponzi scheme.

So why do we lie?

One of the first abilities toddlers develop is the art of lying. There are endless youtube clips of toddlers attempting to cover up something they have done wrong; the child sitting on the kitchen floor covered in flour and they look up and innocently and assert, it wasn't me...

We don't need to get lessons in how to lie, it comes naturally. It's hardwired into our sinful nature.

In the book of Proverbs, we discover some confronting words: *Our Lord God hates lying. The Lord detests lying lips. But he delights in those who tell the truth. Proverbs 12:22*

How does that sit? There is no hiding on this one. But as we look deeper into the Hebrew word for detest, it implies a nauseous feeling. Sick to the gut. Vomiting. God can't hold down lies.

So why is God so strong on this?

In the bible, we also discover that there is evil in the world, the things that are opposed to God and his goodness, evil and sin are in a relationship, they both challenge God's way, and the one who is behind sin and evil is Satan or the devil. **Jesus calls him the father of lies.** His native language is lies.

That's why God detests lying. And Satan still uses lies to pull us away from God.

There was some research done on who lies the most, I'm not sure how credible this is, but I'm sorry to say, ladies, the research revealed that women lie on average three times a day. That's about 1000 times a year – that doesn't sound too good...

Blokes, before you sit up all proud, the average man lies 6 times a day. The research doesn't say why, perhaps it's because the fish caught is an extra 10 cm. Maybe it's trying to save face when running late, blaming traffic when you really overslept – and that lie doesn't work in Loxton anyway.

A friend asks for our true opinion, and we can't bring ourselves to speak the truth, so we tell, a white lie, they are the harmless ones apparently.

We lie to others to cover mistakes with a better, less shameful, story...

We don't want to embarrass ourselves; we want to protect ourselves. It becomes necessary to preserve our image. Why do we do that? And what is that doing to our soul?

Another way people lie is to God.

In Acts 5, Luke shares the account of Ananias and Sapphira, they made a pledge to the church, they were going to sell property and gift the money to the church. For whatever reason they held back money; so they offer to God in the midst of their church family only a portion of the sale, while declaring it was the full amount. But like a small town, word got around, and Peter held them to account and asserts that they have not only lied to the community but to God.

I reflect on this story, and I'm challenged to ask myself, and I invite you to do the same – I ask myself, am I misrepresenting the truth to my church family; am I deceiving my brother and sisters in Christ? Is my public life completely different from my private life?

What I mean is do you put on a holy show on Sunday, and come Monday, the fruit basket of the Holy Spirit is left on the pew... When we lie to our church community, we are also lying to God.

So we lie to others, we can lie to God, and another way we lie, is we lie to ourselves.

Psalm 119:29

28 I weep with sorrow;

encourage me by your word.

29 Keep me from lying to myself;

give me the privilege of knowing your instructions.

Maybe a trusted friend or family member has approached and lovingly said, I'm worried about your drinking, and you respond, I'm ok, I don't have a problem...

Or in a marriage relationship, you will hear one person say, I'm not the problem, he is, she is... and what you don't realise is that you are part of the problem...

Or even in our relationship with Christ. We lie to ourselves and justify behaviours that are contrary to the life of discipleship, we lie to ourselves about our spiritual growth and maturity, thinking I've made it, I don't need to grow anymore, I don't need to serve – I've done my time, I don't need to go to worship regularly, I don't need to pray for my family...

If you were asked by me or a church leader, how are doing spiritually at the moment? How would you respond? Yeah, I'm ok... I would love to be praying more, but you know life is so busy... Or I haven't found the right resource to help me...

When really it is a deeper spiritual issue at play... we lie to ourselves to hide the truth that growing in spiritual maturity is just not as important to me as other parts of my life...

So why do we do this! Why do we think believing a lie is easier, that a lie is better than the truth?

We might say:

I don't want to hurt someone's feelings, I want to make myself look better, I believe this lie will help me get ahead...

But the more we lie, the more we're tempted to lie, and the more we can't find the truth.

We snowball...

Little lies, turn into bigger lies, we start to live the lie, it shapes our identity, and tarnishes our integrity, our true self darkens...

Years ago, a large church in the US released a website called "My Secret T.V." it got national media attention, and it went viral. The website allowed anonymous confessions of what people's secrets were. Others could see the confessions. It revealed why people lie...

This first person said this: "My whole life, I've struggled with telling the truth. My problem is -- here's the lie -- my problem is that I hate to disappoint people, so if I've failed them, I lie about it. I also lie because I'm trying to impress people and to convince people to do something I want them to do. I've even lied to women in the past to get them to sleep with me.

This next person said this: "I pretend that everything in my life is perfect, but the truth is I hate myself, and most days, I wish I would die. My family and friends don't have any idea. No one knows that I think about ending it every single day."

Why do we go to such lengths to hide the truth?

Some of you might say, "Well, I do it mostly to protect the feelings of others."

Some of you might say, "I do it to make myself look better."

Some of you might say, "I don't really like the truth. I don't like what's going on in my life, so I say something else because I think that's better."

Some might do it to impress other people. Some might say, "I'm afraid of what other people will think if I told them the truth."

My friends, there is a spiritual enemy who is called the "Father of lies" and wants to distance us from truth.

Think of it like this. God's Truth and your true self. As we keep lying to ourselves, to others and to God, our true self moves away from God's truth. God's truth is fixed, but every lie pushes us further away from God's truth, every lie we speak or think, moves us away from God's truth of who God has created us to be.

God's truth is not an idea, God's truth is a person. Truth is Jesus, He is the way, the truth and the life.

And the Truth (capital T), Jesus speaks into your life, and he says, you are loved, you are forgiven, you are mine, your true identity is found in my Father's love. You have been set free from the lies of this world, the lies that set you back, the lies that cause you to doubt, the lies that rip at your heart and pierce into your core being, saying you aren't loved, you aren't good enough, that I need to put on a fake show to be accepted, that I can get away with lying about my spiritual health.

The Truth, Jesus, has won the victory over the father of lies on the cross, it is through what he has done, what he speaks, that is truth.

All the lies you believe and have used are nailed to the cross, and Jesus says, you are free my friend, you don't have to sin anymore, because I am the truth.

Jesus says, *“You are truly my disciples if you remain faithful to my teachings. ³² And you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.”*

When we lie, we are being pulled away from the truth Jesus, we have convinced ourselves that my lies are better than being loved in the security and grace of God. When you catch yourself, turn to God, and ask him to help you, and that you are a person of truth.

If you're late for work, be honest, and set a few alarms to wake you up, or don't watch that extra 50 minute episode on Netflix at night and get a better sleep – don't lie to yourself that you need it or you deserve it!

End in prayer