

**Oregon City United Methodist Church**  
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**January 17, 2021**

**Series: Into the Woods**  
**Sermon: Kissing Frogs**

**Matthew 5:33-37 (NIV)**

33 “Again, you have heard that it was said to the people long ago, ‘Do not break your oath, but fulfill to the Lord the vows you have made.’ 34 But I tell you, do not swear an oath at all: either by heaven, for it is God’s throne; 35 or by the earth, for it is his footstool; or by Jerusalem, for it is the city of the Great King. 36 And do not swear by your head, for you cannot make even one hair white or black. 37 All you need to say is simply ‘Yes’ or ‘No’; anything beyond this comes from the evil one.

**Psalm 15:1-4 (NIV)**

Lord, who may dwell in your sacred tent?

Who may live on your holy mountain?

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;

**Sermon**

A wealthy businessman lay on his deathbed. His preacher came to visit and talked about God’s healing power and prayed for his parishioner. When the preacher was done, the businessman said, “Preacher, if God heals me, I’ll give the church a million dollars.” Miraculously, the businessman got better and within a few short weeks was out of the hospital. Several months later, the preacher bumped into this businessman on the sidewalk and said, “You know, when you were in the hospital dying, you promised to give the church a million dollars if you got well. We haven’t received it as of yet.” The businessman replied, “Did I say that? I guess that goes to show how sick I really was!” Trust me the jokes are not going to get better today. That’s a promise.

In these uncertain times, our metaphor we are using for worship, at least for the next five weeks, is INTO THE WOODS. That feels like where we are, right? In a place of uncertainty, lost, unsure of which way is north. It happens. People get lost in the forest. Every year, we hear of folk who can’t find their way through the Oregon Wilderness. It’s great to have a compass that you can trust. Or a GPS that you can trust that gets you back on the right path. And if you are uncertain about what’s going on the world, you need to stick to those you can TRUST. With their promises. With their Actions. With their integrity. Or you’ll be lost. And we need to be people that can be trusted. With our promises. With our actions. With out integrity. Or you’ll be lost.

The very first story that every Grimm Fairy tale begins with is the Princess and the Frog. Or the Frog Prince. It goes by different names, but the Grimm brothers loved it so much that it was the first story in every edition they published. It is a story about keeping promises. If you listened at the Children’s Time, you caught the story - although it is way different than the one Disney came up with a few years ago. Samantha, our youngest, loves

the Princess and the Frog. She has a Tiana bed sheet and pillow, and she wants to go to New Orleans - their setting for this Princess story. We've been making Beignets and listening to jazz and dixieland just to get the flavor. But Grimm's story is different. It's all about honoring your promises.

In light of that story, and in conjunction with our scriptures today, I want to challenge you in three areas this morning: 1st ) KEEP YOUR PROMISES...EVEN WHEN THEY SEEM INSIGNIFICANT.

When you start to justify a little dishonesty because it seems insignificant, be careful because you're one step closer to doing what you never thought you would do. The little lies will grow to be larger lies. Thanks Pinnochio. The little areas test our integrity. God takes stretching the truth very seriously. Every time a casual commitment is broken, an incremental amount of damage is done. How many of you are familiar with these common "lies"? Honest, I only need 5 minutes of your time. Your table will be ready in just a few minutes. The check is in the mail. I will get to that 1st thing in the morning ...If elected, I promise...

We might be very familiar with those lies but there are other lies that destroy our integrity: There are several ways we can be careless with the truth on a daily basis because we don't see it as a big deal. We lie to cover up our mistakes. We exaggerate. We mislead. We give false flattery. We deceive or cheat.

Sort of goes against the good book: Eph. 4:25 – Therefore each of you must put off falsehood and speak truthfully to his neighbor...

Be careful with your little lies, for they are seeds for the larger lies we will harvest.

Number 2: KEEP YOUR PROMISES...EVEN WHEN YOU REGRET MAKING THEM

This was the story of our frog prince, correct? Imagine you had to keep every single promise you've ever made. That would scare me to death, I've made some promises in the past that I haven't kept.

Maybe you regret making a promise because things didn't turn out the way you had hoped. Maybe when you made the promise, you'd hoped that you would have: More time, More money, More knowledge, More energy, More whatever (you fill in the blank). Maybe you made a promise to do something because you thought you'd get something in return: money, favors, popularity, position

Integrity is the word here. We get the word integrity from the word Integer. Yes, think math. An integer is a whole number. Not part of a number. Not a little more than a number. Just a number. Whole. Integer means wholeness. What you see is what you get. Integrity means not lacking in anything. You have one face. You live by principle, not by blowing in the wind. We were at the store, this is a December years ago now, and we heard the common threat by a parent - you stop doing that or you're not getting anything for Christmas. And I thought, really??? Nothing for Christmas? Are you serious? Of course, it was an embellishment, a hollow threat. And now that I have kids, I get it, I understand the desire to say outlandish and exaggerated claims - but each time you don't follow through. People notice. The kids notice. If you don't follow through on what you say, no one is going to believe it the next time, right? Of course, what that means is to be very selective in your promises, or your threats...Don't threaten something that you are not committed to following through. Don't promise something you cannot fulfil. That's integrity. Let your yes be yes, let your no be no.

There's the story of two brothers who were very rich and very wicked. Both of them lived lives of sinfulness and corruption and used their wealth to cover up a lot of their wickedness. Both were members of a local church and used their money to be in positions of influence. The old preacher at this church had retired and a new preacher had been hired. This preacher was a woman who preached the gospel with zeal and courage and lived an exemplary life and did not care for the brother's shenanigans. The congregation began to grow at such a rapid rate that they needed to build a new church building. At this same time, one of the brothers got sick and died.

The new preacher was asked to do the funeral. The day before the funeral service, the surviving brother pulled the preacher aside and handed her an envelope. He said, "There's a check in this envelope that is large enough to pay off the new building. All I want you to do is tell all the people at the funeral tomorrow that my brother was a saint. Do you think you can handle that?" The preacher shook the brother's hand and said, "I will do precisely what you have asked."

The preacher immediately took the check to the bank and deposited it to the church's account. The next day, the preacher stood in front of the large group of people who had come to the funeral and said, "This man in the coffin was an ungodly sinner and wicked to the core. He was unfaithful to his wife and abusive to his children. He was ruthless in business and a hypocrite in the church. But compared to his brother, he was a saint!" See, I promised the jokes wouldn't be any better... But the pastor kept her promise!

Ps. 15:4 describes a righteous person as one "who keeps his oath even when it hurts."

And lastly: KEEP YOUR PROMISES...EVEN WHEN YOU'RE THE ONLY ONE WHO KNOWS. When you can keep a promise to yourself, you will tell the truth to others. Promises to ourselves are sometimes the hardest ones to keep. There is no accountability and seemingly no consequences. Once you start breaking promises to yourself, it becomes much easier to break a promise to others.

God takes lying very seriously. Prov. 12:22 – The Lord hates liars, but is pleased with those who keep their word. Or if you want it a little more harshly: Rev. 21:8 – But the cowardly, the unbelieving, the vile, the murderers, the sexually immoral, those who practice magic arts, the idolaters and all liars—their place will be in the fiery lake of burning sulfur. This is the second death."

But take hope! Did you know that several of the Bible's greatest "heroes of the faith" were liars? Abraham lied to the Egyptian Pharaoh saying that his wife Sarah was actually his sister. Jacob lied to his father Isaac saying that he was actually his brother Esau, so he could receive the blessing meant for the eldest son. Peter lied to the servants and soldiers surrounding the fire outside the trial room where Jesus-Peter's friend, teacher and Lord-was being tried, convicted and sentenced to the cross, saying, "I tell you I never knew the man!"

However, the Holy Spirit can work miracles and change a liar into a person of integrity. Abraham came to a point and place in his life when he was able to trust God for everything, even the life of his beloved son Isaac. Jacob, after a night of wrestling with God, was able to trust God with everything he had, and so he returned to face his brother Esau whom he had cheated and betrayed. Peter was able to trust God before the same crowd that had called for Jesus' crucifixion when he stood up at Pentecost to proclaim the same name he had denied a mere 50 days before.

Jesus faced the gut-wrenching choice of keeping a costly promise God had been promising for thousands of years to send His Son to save the world through His death and resurrection. But when the moment of truth came in the garden of Gethsemane, Jesus felt the weight of the difficulty of keeping this promise. In fact, He asked His Father, "If there is any other way, please let this cup pass from me." --Jesus knows what it's like to face a promise you don't want to keep

But in that moment of truth, when He realized there was no other way to save us, Jesus became the ultimate promise-keeper. --Jesus kept His word to die in our place, to absorb all of our sin, so that we could live and be forgiven and be reconciled to the Father. The Bible calls the evil one, the Father of Lies. The Bible calls Jesus, the way the Truth and the life. We have to decide how we want to live our life - even if we have to kiss some frogs along the way. And the family of God said, AMEN!

Intro: Filmed in the Gorge

Children's Time: Hello kids, today's lesson comes from Grimm's Fairy Tales, and it is called, The Frog Prince.  
(READ BY DENISE BEASLEY)

There once was a Princess. She was not an ordinary princess, however. This Princess loved to play alone in the palace gardens while she tossed around her favorite toy, a beaming golden ball.

Now, the problem with playing alone was that no one was ever there to catch the ball if she tossed it too high in the air. One day, as she was running around lilies and daisies and hedges and roses, she tossed her ball higher in the air than she ever had before.

SPLASH!!

Her beautiful golden ball had plopped right into a deep well! She ran over to the well. Her precious ball was too far deep to retrieve. Frustrated with her situation, the princess began to cry.

Suddenly, the Princess heard a strange noise coming from the bottom of the well. Hop! Hop!

It was a frog. The frog asked from the bottom of the well, "What troubles you, princess? You weep so hard that even a stone would pity you."

She looked at the frog with its big ugly head sticking out of the water, "I am weeping for my golden ball, which fell into the bottom of the well."

"Well, I suppose I could get it for you..." the frog started.

"You can? Oh! Please do! Please do!" she cried.

The frog then asked, "What will you give me in return for grabbing your golden ball?"

"Oh! You can have anything you desire!" the Princess replied, impatient to be playing again.

"What I would like is a friend. That's all. A friend to spend time with me, to eat supper with me, to read for me, to sleep beside me, and to kiss me goodnight!" the frog said.

"Anything! Anything!" the Princess cried.

And with that, the small green frog dove into the water and retrieved the Princess' gold ball, climbed the well and gave the princess back her precious toy. The minute he handed it over, the girl ran around giggling and tossing her beloved ball up in the air; she had completely forgotten all about the frog.

At supper, the girl was seated at the table with her father, the King. Before either of them could take a bite, there came a small knock at the door. The King got up and walked to open it. Hop! Hop! Hop! In walked the small green frog.

"I have come to eat supper with you, Princess!" the frog said happily, hopping up on the table. The Princess gently grabbed the frog and placed him outside the door.

SLAM!!

She turned her heel and sat down at her spot once more, ignoring the suspicious look from the king.

“And who was that, Princess?” he asked her.

“Oh, no one,” she replied.

The stern look from her father caused her to go red with embarrassment. She told him that she had promised the frog that she would spend time with him, and eat supper with him, and read for him, and let him sleep with her, and kiss him goodnight.

“But I don't want to hang out with him. He's gross!” she continued.

“A promise is a promise, Princess. We must always keep our promises,” the King said wisely. With that the girl slowly shuffled over to the door and opened it up.

Hop! Hop! Hop!

The frog ate supper with her, and then followed the Princess into her bedroom where she began to read.

“What are you reading?” he asked trying to peer over her shoulder to see.

“Nothing,” she replied shrugging him off.

Sadly, the frog hopped over to her bed and sat down on her pillow. Before he could get comfortable, the Princess ran over to him, picked him up, and placed him by the window.

“But you promised!” he cried.

She sighed and took him back with her to bed. She read him a bedtime story and, surprisingly, the frog was quite smart and funny. She actually enjoyed his company.

When it was time to sleep, the frog asked her for a bedtime kiss. She refused, scrunching her face once more at the sight of the green creature before her.

The Princess shut out the light and tried to go to sleep. Suddenly, she heard the sounds of weeping. She turned the light back on to see the frog beside her, wiping tears from his eyes.

She was hit with a wave of guilt for making the poor frog cry. She tucked him in bed beside her and kissed him gently.

WHOOOSH!!

All of a sudden, the small green frog transformed into a handsome young prince right before her eyes; she jumped back from the bed in surprise. The Prince informed her that an evil witch had put a spell on him and only a kiss could return him back to his original state. It just so happened that the Princess was the first one to break the spell.

Forever after, the Prince and Princess were able to play together in the palace gardens. The Princess was happier than ever to have a playmate and, whenever she accidentally threw the ball too high in the air, she was ecstatic to have a companion to go and fetch it for her. The End.

Prayer:

On the steps of the Lincoln Memorial, 1963, Martin Luther King, Jr., described a dream of equality "deeply rooted in the American dream." King drew upon the Bible, the Declaration of Independence and the Gettysburg Address for the inspirational texts of his secular sermon, but to express the substance of his dream, he turned to the lyrics of a song most of his audience had learned as schoolchildren. He asked his listeners to imagine a

day when all of God's children will be able to sing with new meaning--"My country! 'tis of thee and he sprinkled Let Freedom Ring over a dozen times in the closing moments of his most famous oration.

For our Pastoral Prayer today, in light of the festering and dangerous mood of our nation, our prayer shall be the lyrics to that hymn, found in our hymnal page 697. Even as we share it, we still hear the inclusive language within. And may we continue towards and strive for that unfinished work of liberty, and justice for all.

My country, 'tis of thee, Sweet land of liberty, Of thee I sing;  
Land where my fathers died, Land of the pilgrims' pride, From ev'ry mountainside Let freedom ring!

My native country, thee, Land of the noble free, Thy name I love;  
I love thy rocks and rills, Thy woods and templed hills; My heart with rapture thrills, Like that above.

Our fathers' God to Thee, Author of liberty, To Thee we sing.  
Long may our land be bright, With freedom's holy light, Protect us by Thy might, Great God our King!

Let us join together in our Lord's Prayer...

Offertory:

Welcome to the Offering, our chance to give back. As United Methodists, we support many ministries, within the church, outside the church, at home and abroad. There are six special Sundays in the United Methodist Church that every congregation celebrate with a special offering. The first one is Human Relations Day, taken on the day before Martin Luther King Day. What is Human Relations Day, I hear you ask? Watch this quick video to find out: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=r1sGxXqW2lE&feature=emb\\_rel\\_end](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=r1sGxXqW2lE&feature=emb_rel_end)

Closing: Filmed on location in the Gorge.