

FIVE FORKS BRETHREN IN CHRIST CHURCH

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SERMON: *The Last 10%*

SERIES: *FATAL*

SCRIPTURES: *Acts 5*

SPEAKER: *Shaun Kipe*

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**Indebted Scott Scruggs series from “Sanctuary”; Tony Campolo “Seven Deadly Sins”; and John Ortberg; for insights/illustrations/concepts in this sermon.*

Well good morning, it so great to worship with you. Want to say welcome to all of you in this room and to so many gathered on-line, at home, tuning to the live stream.

Are you familiar with the phrase “**the hand of God**”? And I’m not referring to the story in your Bible in the book of Daniel.

Many of you know I am huge soccer fanatic. This phrase is related to perhaps the most infamous goal ever scored in a soccer match.

And even if you don’t know much about soccer, you probably know the primary rule in soccer, is what? “No Hands.” That’s right. You can’t use your hands.

So, in the 1986 World Cup, which is a worldwide soccer tournament, that occurs every 4 years...it’s the biggest soccer tournament in the world. In a quarterfinal match, between the nation of Argentina and England. A player by the name of Diego Maradona, considered one of the greatest players of all time, scored a dramatic goal, appearing to use his head (**PIC OF HAND OF GOD image 1**), that put his team ahead by one goal and proved to be the difference in the match. His team eventually went on to win the World Cup tournament that year.

Of course this was before immediate and clear video replays. Now check out a closer up view of this image of that goal...(**PIC OF HAND OF GOD image 2**).

It turns out, in a streak of deceitful ingenuity, snuck his fist up beside his head and punched the ball with his hand. None of the officials were able to see it. Later on when he was asked about the goal, he said, the goal was scored "**a little with his head, and a little with the hand of God**".

(**Sermon series graphic**). We're in the third week of a sermon series called FATAL. Taking a look at 8 vices that are fatal to walking with Jesus.

This morning we want to talk a little bit about...**deceit**...our tendency to conceal or misrepresent the truth.

Jesus said...

Mark 7:21-22 -²¹ For it is from within, out of a person's heart, that evil thoughts come—sexual immorality, theft, murder, ²² adultery, greed, malice, deceit, lewdness, envy, slander, arrogance and folly. ²³ All these evils come from inside and defile a person."

And I told you a couple of weeks ago when this series started that deceit is not part of the original 7 deadly sins, but we decided to include it in our 8 fatal vices. And part of the reason is because the prophet Jeremiah said this about deceit.

Jeremiah 17:9 - The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately sick; who can understand it?

I. What is deceit?

Have you ever done this before? *You're in a conversation with somebody and they mention to you a person, or a book or a location or something you felt like you should have known? Even though you didn't, you pretended like you did. Ever done that?*

Or how about this one? *You're driving in your car and the person in the other lane is trying to catch your eye so that you'll let them over. You have no intention of letting them over. So you pretend like you don't see them. Instead of looking like a jerk, you make it look like you're just an unobservant nice guy.*

How about this? *You're at home, watching TV and a car pulls into the driveway...maybe your parents or spouse or a close friend...you quickly turn off the TV and pretend you've been really busy doing something productive?*

(Examples above adapted from John Ortberg, "Authenticity in the New Community")

A. Ananias and Sapphira

It turns out, stories about deceit are all over the Bible.

The serpent deceives Adam & Eve. Cain deceives Abel.

Jacob's deceives his brother Esau. Only to be later deceived himself by his father-in-law Laban.

Pharaoh deceives Moses.

King David deceives Uriah.

But this morning I just want to look at one particular story that you may not be as familiar with. If you have a Bible turn with me to Acts 5 and starting in verse 1...

Now a man named Ananias, together with his wife Sapphira, also sold a piece of property.

Alright so pause here for just a moment. You need to understand what's going on.

The earliest followers of Jesus were made up of a vast assortment of people. Jews, gentiles, rich, poor...and so they lived in a society of **communal sharing**, sharing wealth, property, sharing meals. They lived together. They prayed together. Everybody helping each other. People within the community bought and sold property and then shared it with the entire community.

This appears to be what is taking place with Ananias and Sapphira.

But now watch what happens...

² With his wife's full knowledge he kept back part of the money for himself, but brought the rest and put it at the apostles' feet.

³ Then Peter said, "Ananias, how is it that Satan has so filled your heart that you have lied to the Holy Spirit and have kept for yourself some of the money you received for the land? ⁴ Didn't it belong to you before it was sold? And after it was sold, wasn't the money at your disposal? What made you think of doing such a thing? You have not lied just to human beings but to God."

⁵ When Ananias heard this, he fell down and died.

⁷ About three hours later his wife came in, not knowing what had happened.

⁸ Peter asked her, "Tell me, is this the price you and Ananias got for the land?" "Yes," she said, "that is the price."

⁹ Peter said to her, "How could you conspire to test the Spirit of the Lord? Listen! The feet of the men who buried your husband are at the door, and they will carry you out also."

¹⁰ At that moment she fell down at his feet and died.

This in some ways is an astonishing story. And it raises some very challenging questions that we don't have time to dive into all it this morning.

But the crux of the story hinges on...deceit.

Do you see? The problem wasn't necessarily that Ananias and Sapphira only gave a portion of their money, it's that they deliberately chose to deceive the community about the money. It's that they agreed ahead of time to lie to the community. It's that they embraced their dishonesty. The story hinges on deceit.

Intentionally making people believe something that isn't really true.
Not telling the whole story.

Little lies built upon other lies to disguise the truth or the reality of the situation. It is trying to manipulate, influence the people around us by concealing the full story.

Now this is really important to understand with deceit...the tricky thing with deceit is that it **disguises itself in truth.**

Good ole Ananias. He brought 90%, but he wanted everyone to think it was 100%. That's how deceit works. Give people 90% of the information, but hold back or spin that last 10% to manipulate how people understand or think.

Have you heard of something called "**the spin room**"? Do you know what the spin room is, it's to take the information and spin it in such a way as to make people think the same way you do. "I want to pressure you. I want to manipulate you. I want to override your judgement so that you do what I want you to do. So that you believe what I want you to believe." It's kind of like a license to deceive people.

The human heart in many ways has become it's own little spin room.

That's what happened to Ananias. That's what happens to you and me.

The other day, Keagan (**PIC OF KEAGAN**), 6 years...came walking into the bedroom, tears running down his little face. Rubbing his arm. So I asked him, *"What happened?"* He said, *"Ady hit me. She just hit me."*

Now, I know my angel daughter (**PIC OF ADY**) is not perfect, but it's unlikely she randomly hauled off and just wacked him for no reason. I know Keagan is only giving me part of the story. So I followed up with another question...

"Why did she hit you?"

And now, I can see the wheels turning in little Keagan's mind. *"If I tell dad the whole story, all 100%, he won't think what I want him to think, and Ady won't get in trouble like I want her to."*

This is how deceit works. Try to spin this and get dad to believe what I want him to believe...

"Yeah, I just walked into her room and picked up a baby doll and she hit me."

Now see the story is starting to become clearer. The baby doll was not part of the initial story. Keagan is playing the spin game.

"Was she playing with the baby doll?"

"I don't know it was just sitting there and when I walked into the room she said, whatever you do don't touch the baby doll, but she wasn't playing with it so I picked it up."

Of course then after all of that and getting the full story from Keagan, I still have to deal with Ady hitting her brother. So I go to Ady and confront her about hitting her brother. *“Ady did you hit your brother?”* She looks up at me with those gorgeous blue eyes and cute little dimples. And said, *“No, of course not daddy.”*

I know she can't be telling me the truth...it's like here we go again with the deceit and manipulation. And the adorable little girl follows it up with, *“You don't think I would lie to you do you, daddy?”*

And for a moment my heart melts and I wanted to say, *“No, of course not. Not you sweetie pie. You would never do something like that.”*

Then suddenly I remembered, Jeremiah 17... **“The heart is deceitful above all things.”** *“Of course my little girl would deceive me. It's human nature. I deceive people. Everybody I know tries to deceive other people.”*

We deceive our spouses. We deceive our children. We deceive our bosses. We deceive our neighbors.

We deceive people about our intentions. We deceive people about why we're late. We deceive people about what we've really accomplished. About what we really said.

In fact, deceit happens so often our world we've actually started to come up with all new terminology related to our deceit. We now use words like **fake news** and **mis-information** today. I was reading an article in April of 2020 Webster's Dictionary actually added a new word to the dictionary...the word is **truthiness** – which is defined as **“having a seemingly truthful quality but not supported by facts or evidence.”**

That's deceit, I'll give you part of the story, I'll tell it in such a way to manipulate you into believing what you I want to believe, rather than the truth. I'll give you some truthiness.

“Tell me, is this the price you and Ananias got for the land?”

“Yes,” she said, “that is the price.”

While most of us may not have not reached the same level of premeditated, deliberate lying as Anninias and Sapphira, isn't it true that in far more subtle ways, we are all tempted to pretend we are something that we are not. That we know more than we actually know. That we are more productive and discipline in our daily habits than what we really are. That we are smarter, wealthier...

“The heart is deceitful above all things.”

II. Why it's fatal.

And I'll just tell you why deceit is fatal. Remember we said, each of these vices has some nasty side-effects? The nasty side-effect of deceit is that **it destroys trust.**

Think about it, the foundation of human relationships, of communities is trust.

Here's how one author puts it...

There are a few foundational principles that hold our world together. The one that's the glue of society is called trust. Its presence cements relationships by allowing people to live and work together, feel safe and belong to a group. Trust in a leader allows organizations and communities to flourish, while the absence of trust can cause fragmentation, conflict and even war.

When we deceive someone, that foundation is destroyed. And it's one of the hardest things to ever regain in a relationship.

If you've been lied to by someone, how hard was it to trust that person ever again?

Now you think about this, God is trying to develop a new community built around honesty, authenticity, vulnerability, and generosity and sharing and anything less will destroy the foundation of that community.

“Tell me, is this the price you and Ananias got for the land?”

“Yes,” she said, “that is the price.”

Rick Warren suggests sadly that honesty, transparency is often **the exact opposite of what you find in many churches. Instead...there is pretending, role-playing, politicking, superficial politeness, and shallow conversation. People keep their guard up, and act as if everything is rosy in their lives. These attitudes are the death of real friendship.**

Deceit is fatal because it destroys trust and relationships are built on trust.

So...

II. What we do about deceit?

A. Value honesty, accuracy & transparency.

Boy our society and our world could use a little bit of that right now, couldn't it? A group of people who are trustworthy.

The Apostle Paul wrote,

Colossians 3:9-10 - Do not lie to one another, seeing that you have put off the old self with its practices and have put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge after the image of its creator.

Jesus said to his followers one time, **“All you need to say is simply yes or no, anything beyond this comes from the evil one...”**

Value simple honesty. Simply let your yes be yes and your no, no...don't' get mixed up in truthiness.

Can I just give you one example closely related to real life, right now, where many of us are failing on this...before you go sharing *“something you heard someone say”* *“something you heard on the news”* or *“something you read on the internet”*...go and check out the reliability and accuracy of your sources.

You read an article or a post that is circulating around Facebook or Instagram or Twitter. The article supports your side of an argument. Wow it's really good. Other people need to hear this and read this, so that they'll think like I do. And so we immediately share it...pass it along...

Sadly, you find out later that the information you shared wasn't completely inaccurate. Now what do you do? Do you try to justify? Do you remove it quick? Do you do anything to try and correct the record?

Do you clearly apologize for the misinformation?

The theologian Charles Spurgeon...***“Discernment is not knowing the difference between right and wrong. It is knowing the difference between right and almost right.”***

We buy into the 90% that we like or that supports our side of an argument and we avoid or leave out the rest of the story.

This week, pay close attention to your words, your thoughts, your actions...

This week come clean in all those little areas where you've been purposefully getting fuzzy on details. Be trustworthy. Be honest. Share good and accurate information.

Deceit is not ok for followers of Jesus. It's wrong. If you haven't verified a story or if you can't verify the story, don't pass it along.

Romans 16:18 - For such persons do not serve our Lord Christ, but their own appetites, and by smooth talk and flattery they deceive the hearts of the naive.

Second, the reason we value honesty and transparency is because of Jesus...

B. Jesus.

There's a fascinating scene in the book of Luke 23, where Jesus is on trial and the religious leaders drag him before the Roman governor Pilate.

Luke 23:1-2 – Then the whole assembly (the religious leaders) rose and led him off to Pilate. ² And they began to accuse him, saying, “We have found this man subverting our nation. He opposes payment of taxes to Caesar and claims to be Messiah, a king.”

Do you see what's going on? The religious leaders are creating a spin room. They're using deceit to manipulate Pilate.

Jesus isn't interested in creating social unrest among the people. Jesus is not interested overthrowing the Roman government. Jesus' Kingdom is not about taking

Caesars crown or Roman military might. And even when Jesus was asked about paying taxes to Caesar what Jesus actually say, “Give to Caesar what is Caesar’s.”

But the Pharisees have created a spin room. And it worked. They convinced the Jews and the Roman authorities by lies and deceit that Jesus is an instigator. And the result is that an innocent man, was nailed to a Roman cross.

We might say, on a human level, Jesus went to the cross because “the human heart above all things is deceitful.”

Now think about this, and follow me on this for a second...listen really closely... what if Jesus chosen to respond to our deceit by deceiving us in return? What if Jesus would have chosen to deceive humanity?

What if Jesus way of life isn’t really the best way to live? What if sin hasn’t been overcome and heart transformation isn’t really possible? What if, he didn’t really die for human sin?

The apostle Paul wrote about what a great tragedy that would be, *“If Jesus would have deceived humanity and didn’t really come back to life, then it’s all a farce, it’s all been one big show, it means nothing...and we of all people should be pitied most.”*

Thankfully...Jesus was no deceiver.

Peter, one of Jesus closest disciples wrote these words 1 Peter 2...

²¹ ...Christ suffered for you, leaving you an example, that you should follow in his steps.

²² “He committed no sin, and no deceit was found in his mouth.”^[e]

23 When they hurled their insults at him, he did not retaliate; when he suffered, he made no threats. Instead, he entrusted himself to him who judges justly.

I don't have to hide anything. I don't need to manipulate you into believing certain things about life or this world or about Shaun. I'm a sinner saved by grace just like everyone else. Jesus knows all about Shaun, and Shaun's corrupt heart and the fatal vices anyway. And he chooses to love me and save me by his death and his resurrection.

24 "He himself bore our sins" in his body on the cross, so that we might die to sins and live for righteousness; "by his wounds you (we) have been healed."

25 For "you were like sheep going astray,"^[1] but now you have returned to the Shepherd and Overseer of your souls.

There is one in the world who is ultimately trustworthy. You can trust him and his word, his teachings, his way of life, his death and his resurrection. You don't have to hide the reality about yourself. You don't have to try to manipulate people into doing what you want them to do or believe what you want them to believe. This world is secure in the arms of the savior, Jesus. Give that deceitful heart over to Jesus, so he can nail to that cross.