**Yes or No**

***33****“Again you have heard that it was said to those of old, ‘You shall not swear falsely, but shall perform to the Lord what you have sworn.’****34****But I say to you, do not take an oath at all, either by heaven, for it is the throne of God,****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 take an oath by your head, for you cannot make one hair white or black.****37****Let what you say be simply ‘Yes’ or ‘No’; anything more than this comes from evil. (Matthew 5:33-37, ESV)*

 Telling the truth wipes out the need to swear by anything in our lives. Greetings dear brothers and sisters in Christ, as we continue to speak from the Lord’s “Sermon on the Mount” on this first Sunday of Lent. Generally, our moral principles all come from the Bible. What’s more, when we read Jesus’ words, we find ourselves in front of Divine and perfect logic. Thus, today we are going to talk about telling the truth – which, in this passage, was tied to taking oaths to God; however, in our lives, taking oaths can have a role in other areas of life as well. Again, telling the truth wipes out the need to swear by anything. Let’s talk about how this can be…

 For God, the truth comes before everything else – neither an oath nor other promises are needed in its place. In the culture of Jesus’ day, people were accustomed to taking oaths. When they wanted to guarantee that what they were saying was true, people would swear by something – whether it was by their family members, by their own heads, or by God. What, however, was the purpose of such oath-taking? Very often, when a saying aroused doubt or suspicion in the hearer, the one speaking would add an extra promise or oath, as if to calm the doubter. Jesus shows us the absurdity of all those empty promises. First, the heavens do not belong to human beings, because they are God’s throne – thus it is meaningless to swear by heaven (since we have nothing to do with its existence – or control). The earth is also not in man’s to control (since we are only caretakers of it), so it is again meaningless to swear by it. Neither Jerusalem nor a human beings own head is meaningful because Jerusalem did not belong to the average citizen, and the course of their own life span, or even the hairs on their head was not under their control. Instead of swearing by something in order that people would believe what was said, Jesus was saying that people needed to be faithful to their own words. By doing so, a path to sin would not be opened, which would only result in an endless pile of empty promises.

 How difficult it is sometimes, to tell the truth, especially when the truth can hurt the hearer. But woe to him who does not say what is right! He who does so builds a building of lies, which collapses with one breath of the Holy Spirit, thus wounding many. It is better to hear a pain-causing truth from a true friend than a thousand promises and then watch the building of lies fall.

 We, dearly beloved, are called to speak the truth in love. Many times, when we say the difficult truth, yes, we cause a wound, but it turns out better than trying to establish something that isn’t right or true from the beginning. Often, when we hear a string of promises tied to a statement, let us go deeper into the topic – let’s reach the truth of the matter. May our words be clear, and in the case of confusion, may be speak to each other and clarify our sayings. May each of us be true to our words, and may we encourage each other to tell the truth in love, no matter how sharp or sudden, rather than build up buildings of falsehoods that always fall under God’s scrutiny.

 For God, the truth comes before everything else – neither an oath nor other promises are needed in its place. Telling the truth wipes out the need to swear by anything in our lives. The Lord bless you all. Amen.