

# Shepherd of the Hills Lutheran Church



## Weekly Sermon Series

### **Taking Root: The Gospel Rules ...Speaking Truth Exodus 20:16; Ephesians 4:25-32**

If you have never told a lie or been lied to in your life, read no further. But for you, who know that at least once in your life, someone has lied to you, raise your hand. Oh my— what a forest of hands have gone up! Now for those of you who have told a lie in the last week, keep your hand up. Well, as one could imagine, it still remains a dense forest to be sure. So why do we lie? Are we better for it? Can we really say that we have benefited from a lie? If so, did someone else suffer as a result?

It seems everyone lies, from grown adults to those just learning to talk. There is even an annual lying contest in Burlington, Wisconsin. It's in good humor, of course, unless I have been lied to. What is the proper response to being lied to—a personal confrontation or a lawsuit or some other form of retaliation? What about forgiveness? I have read where false accusations or slander has ruined many a person's reputation and even their business. Even if the victim of such a matter is exonerated, who hears about it other than the family and close friends? It seems it really doesn't make as much news for the media as the initial charge. But to regain one's reputation again is not done overnight and then again, maybe never. We all suffer in some way when lies are told. Exodus 20:16 says, "Thou shalt not give false testimony against thy neighbor." What does this mean? "We must fear and love God so that we will not deceive by lying, betraying, slandering or ruining our neighbor's reputation, but will defend him, say good things about him, and see the

best side of everything he does” (The Small Catechism, Martin Luther). Not always easy, but essential in building healthy community.

Zechariah 8:16-17 says, “These are the things that you shall do: Speak the truth to one another, render in your gates judgments that are true and make for peace, do not devise evil in your hearts against one another, and love no false oath; for all these are things that I hate, says the Lord.” We will be known for the words we have either uttered or written. Were they the truth? Do we speak well of our neighbors? Do we use our words to slander or edify those we speak of? In 1 Peter 4:11, it says, “If anyone speaks, he should do it as one speaking the very words of God.” Are there relationships in your life that need healing? Pray this week for the opportunity to heal old wounds. Are there wrongs just waiting for your forgiveness. Pray for the strength to give it. Are their apologies that need to be made? Pray for the courage to make them. Let this be a week of using our words for lifting up...allowing God to work in us and through us.

-- Week of July 5, 2009