Today is the second-to-last message of our sermon series for this Summer, “Life Lessons from Proverbs through Disney’s Magic.” The sermon topic is “Honesty” and the Disney movie we will highlight is “Pinocchio.”

Let me start by saying that when I die, besides wanting to be remembered as a loving husband and father, I want to be remembered as an honest and fair man, “Here lies an honest and fair man,” I hope my tombstone would also say.

I say this because I place so much value on being honest and fair. I think honesty gives us meaning and direction in life. Doing what is good and right gives us a profound sense of purpose. That is what it means to be moral people, knowing the difference between right and wrong and then making wise choices.

Thomas Jefferson once said, “Honesty is the first chapter in the book of wisdom.” Indeed. From a different angle, honesty is the bedrock of good attributes such as kindness, discipline, truthfulness, and moral integrity. But it is not only about what honesty nurtures in us but also about what protects us against, like lying, cheating, stealing, manipulating, and so on.

But what does the Bible say about honesty? The Bible places a great emphasis on honesty. Many verses in the Bible, particularly in the book of Proverbs, provide wisdom and guidance on the importance of honesty. Here are some examples:

Proverbs 12:22: “Lying lips are an abomination to the Lord, but those who act faithfully are his delight.”

Proverbs 16:13: “Righteous lips are the delight of kings, and they love him who speaks what is right.”

Proverbs 28:6: “Better is a poor man who walks in his integrity than a rich man who is crooked in his ways.”

Proverbs 11:1: “A false balance is an abomination to the Lord, but a just weight is his delight.”

Proverbs 20:17: “Bread gained by deceit is sweet to a man, but afterward his mouth will be full of gravel.”

Proverbs 14:5: “A faithful witness does not lie, but a false witness breathes out lies.”

These passages from Proverbs underscore the profound importance of honesty and integrity in our lives. They reveal that God highly values truthfulness—another word for honesty. They collectively emphasize the importance of honesty and integrity in our actions and speech. They show us that truthfulness is pleasing to God and helps build trust with others.

This theme is highlighted by the clear distinction between those who act faithfully and speak the truth, even earning the respect and admiration of leaders and kings, and those who engage in dishonest practices, which may bring temporary benefits but ultimately lead to negative consequences. The passages underscore that the rewards of dishonesty are fleeting, stating that deceit may initially seem appealing, but it inevitably results in loss and regret.

Overall, these passages teach us that honesty is a vital virtue for building trust, fostering integrity, and advancing justice and fairness. This means that embracing honesty and living truthfully is fundamental to a fulfilling life.

In all of this, there is one underlying and recurring theme: honesty pleases God and reflects God’s character. Why and how so? When we speak and act honestly, we align ourselves with God’s will and bring glory to his name. Honesty pleases God because truthfulness is a testament to our devotion to God and our desire to please him.

Now, being dishonest means the opposite. Dishonesty goes against God’s character and tarnishes who God created us to be. It leads us away and astray from the path of life and fulfillment God means for us. With every lie, cheat, manipulation, and scheme, we get farther away from becoming who God created us to be and get into places and situations that harm us and others. And not only do we bear the consequences of our actions, but we also lose the blessings that God intended for us. It is a lose-lose situation.

Think about it, how many of the troubles in your life could have been avoided if you had been more honest? And how many blessings have you lost because you were dishonest?

To speak to this, there is a story of a well-known character from the classic movie “Pinocchio.” The story begins with Geppetto, a kind-hearted woodcarver, crafting a puppet named Pinocchio. As Geppetto wishes upon a star, the Blue Fairy brings Pinocchio to life but warns him that he must prove himself honest and brave to become a real boy. However, that proved difficult as he faced many challenges and temptations along the way.

One of those temptations was to lie. As he lied, he discovered his nose grew longer with every lie. He skipped school and got in trouble and lied about it. As Pinocchio continued to lie, his nose grew bigger. Here are a couple of videos that show part of Pinocchio’s journey: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rUdA54Xk8cg>

In this scene, Pinocchio is deceived by a Fox and a Cat who convince him to bury his gold coins in the Field of Miracles to grow a tree of gold. Pinocchio naively believes them and loses all his money, and is caught in a trap, locked in a birdcage. However, the Blue Fairy comes to his rescue, asking him what he is doing and why he is not at school. But Pinocchio lies about how he ended up in the cage, and as a consequence, his nose grows longer as a sign that he is not telling the truth. And the Blue Fairy says, “A lie keeps growing and growing until it is as plain as the nose on your face.” She tells him that lying will not get him anywhere and that he should be truthful and brave, two key attributes of being a real boy. After that, she forgives him, makes his nose return to normal, and sets him free, warning him she will not help him again if he continues to lie and make bad choices.

Did he learn his lesson? No. That was just the beginning for Pinocchio. Soon after that, he gets in trouble again. With every lie, he moved further away from the people who loved and cared about him and was changing him: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iJn1r5qXscE>

This scene takes place on Pleasure Island, where Pinocchio is lured because he was told he could do whatever he wanted without consequences. However, that was a trap to turn him into a donkey to work his “donkey” off. Immediately, Pinocchio realized he lost everything he loved in his attempt to have everything he thought he wanted. In his pursuit of quick riches, pleasure, and easy life, he discovered that lies and deceit cost him the things he held most dear: family, friends, and freedom.

As Proverbs, Pinocchio teaches us that selfish desires through dishonesty ultimately lead to pain, loss, and regret. It teaches us that dishonesty can have far-reaching consequences and that genuine happiness and fulfillment can only be attained through a life of honesty, integrity, and genuine concern for others. It teaches us that the pursuit of personal desires at the expense of our values leads to a loss of what truly matters, including the people we love, our freedom, and our connection with our Creator—to Pinocchio, that was Geppetto, to us, that is God.

You don’t want to be turned into an ass, I mean, a donkey, do you? You don’t want to lose your family, friends, and freedom and miss God's blessings, do you? Well, let’s be honest in what we say and do. When we choose to live with honesty, we align our actions with the character of God, who is the embodiment of truth. Honesty makes us the best version of ourselves. And when we align our character with God’s, we also align with his blessings. This means that honesty sets us on the path where God is ready to bless us. In this sense, the blessings don’t come to us, but we find them along the way as we pursue God and reflect his character in all of our dealings.

My friends, honesty is a reflection of our dedication to God, our desire to honor him, and a testament to our devotion. By conducting ourselves honestly in all aspects of life, we draw closer to God, experiencing the profound joy of his love and the fulfillment of walking in his path.

The apostle Paul expressed this desire well when he said, “We wish to conduct ourselves honestly in all things” (Hebrews 13:18). This sincere pursuit of honesty is a reflection of our desire to please God and remain in his love in any of our daily interactions, whether at church, home, work, school or anywhere else in our communities. Honesty reflects the truth in our words and deeds, embodying our ethical convictions and aligning us with God’s nature and purposes. When we are honest, we demonstrate our faith in God, commitment to his teachings, and willingness to be the people he calls us to be.

Here is the invitation and good news: Make a commitment to honesty. Embrace it as a core value that guides your actions and decisions. Choose to be truthful, even when facing challenging and tempting situations, knowing that God values honesty and rewards those who pursue it. We all face moments of temptation, moments when it is easier to be dishonest than to tell the truth. In those moments, remember the consequences of dishonesty and the blessings that come from living a life of integrity. Remember that honesty pleases God and aligns us with His character.

And the good news is that by choosing honesty, we align ourselves with God and are set to receive his blessings in our lives.

Let us pray for the courage to be truthful, even in the face of temptation, and for the wisdom to discern right from wrong. Let us ask God to help us live lives of integrity, pleasing God and reflecting his character in all we do.