TITLE: Are You a H.I.C.?

TEXT: Mt. 5:33-37, 26:63-64; 2 Co. 1:23; Heb. 6:17-18;

Deut. 6:13; Ps. 119:11; Mk. 7:18-23; Mt. 12:33-37;

1 Pet. 2:11-12

INTRODUCTION: How many HIC’s do we have here this morning?

 I love abbreviations. As do I suppose most people who have a hard time with spelling do as well.

 The world at large seems to like abbreviations as well… Think about it….

 We have the FBI, Federal Bureau of Investigation..

 The CIA, Central Intelligence Agency…

 PETA, People for ethical treatment of Animals. Or (people eating tasty animals)

MADD, Mothers against Drunk Drivers…

Locally we have SIRWA, Southern Iowa Rural Water Association…

 And there are literally thousands of other organizations that we know primarily by their abbreviations…

 Why do we like to use abbreviations so much?

 My conclusion is that many of us may have a hard time with spelling and we like the shortened forms or that we are just plain lazy and always looking for a shortcut..

 This morning I want to use some abbreviations of my own and talk about something that seems to be harder and harder to find in our world today and something that many of us may struggle with from time to time as Christians and that is HIC or H, I & C

 HIC is actually three things that are so intertwined that they are really one.

 HIC is my abbreviation for Honesty, Integrity and Character.

Three different words--- but they are so closely related that you can’t really separate them in thought.

 Each one is closely related to the other.

What kind of sparked my thought process for the message this week was something I read from the devotional “Our Daily Bread” a while back.

 The story was told about the Duke of Burgundy when he presided over the Cabinet Council of France.

 A proposal had been made by the ministers of the Cabinet that would have violated a treaty that they had made as a nation many years before, but the new proposal would secure important advantages for France.

 Many reasons were offered by the ministers to justify the deed.

 The Duke listened in silence as the proposal was made and when all had spoken he closed the conference without giving his approval.

 Then placing his hand on a copy of the original treaty

He said with a great firmness, Gentlemen, we have a treaty!

 The Duke of Burgundy was a man of HIC… Maybe a charter member. By his action he proved that he was a man of Honesty, Integrity and Character.

 That regardless of how many benefits this new proposal would provide for his country, that if it would come at the cost of a broken promise than whatever those benefits would be they would not be worth the price paid.

 The problem with a lack of HIC-Honesty, Integrity and Character, is not just confined to the world that we live in at large, but it has also been a problem within the Church today as well.

 A lack of Honesty and integrity and character is bad enough when we find it within our world at large but it is something that is devastating when we find it within the Church and more specifically when we find it within our personal lives as a Christian.

 So this morning we are going to talk about the importance and even necessity of Honesty, Integrity and Character in our life as a Believer.

Jesus addresses the issue in the Sermon in the Mount in:

 **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 keep the oaths you have made to the Lord.’** **34But I tell you, Do not swear at all: either by heaven, for it is God’s throne;** **35or by the earth, for it is his footstool; or by Jerusalem, for it is the city of the Great King.** **36And do not swear by your head, for you cannot make even one hair white or black.**

**37Simply let your ‘Yes’ be ‘Yes,’ and your’ No,’ ‘No’; anything beyond this comes from the evil one.**

 What was Jesus doing Here? Telling us that we are to never make an oath? Never make a promise at all? NO!

**33“Again, you have heard that it was said to the people long ago, ‘Do not break your oath, but keep the oaths you have made to the Lord.’**

The Mosaic Law forbade irreverent oaths, light use of the Lord's name, broken vows. Once God's name was invoked, the vow to which it was attached became a debt that had to be paid to the Lord.

 The Sophisticated elite of the day, the priesthood, judged how binding an oath really was by examining how closely it was related to God's name. Incredible distinctions flourished under such an approach. Swearing by heaven and earth was not binding, nor was swearing by Jerusalem, though swearing *toward* Jerusalem was.

 If oaths designed to encourage truthfulness and instead become occasions for clever lies and deceit then Jesus was saying that oaths should be abolished.

 So by reason, if one does not swear at all, one does not swear falsely.

 What Jesus is suggesting here is that whatever a man swears by is related to God in some way, and therefore every oath is implicitly in God's name--heaven, earth, Jerusalem, even the hairs of the head are all under God's sway and ownership.

 So Jesus says let your Yes be Yes and your No, no as everything else comes from the evil one!

 The Greek might more plausibly be translated "But let your word be, `Yes, Yes; No, No.'"

 If Jesus would have actually meant that it was always wrong to make an oath then He, Himself would never have made an oath or neither would any of His early Disciples…

But Jesus did make oaths on occasion…

 As Jesus stood before His accuser’s just before going to the cross we have one such instance…

**Matthew 26:63 - 64 (NIV)** **63But Jesus remained silent. The high priest said to him, “I charge you under oath by the living God: Tell us if you are the Christ, the Son of God.”** **64“Yes, it is as you say,” Jesus replied. “But I say to all of you: In the future you will see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of the Mighty One and coming on the clouds of heaven.”**

This was not just an oath but an oath in which the name of God had been invoked..

**The high priest said to him, “I charge you under oath by the living God: Tell us if you are the Christ, the Son of God.” 64“Yes, it is as you say,” Jesus replied.**

 By answering the high priest question Jesus was speaking under the oath that the high priest invoked!

**“I charge you under oath by the living God: Tell us if you are the Christ,****£** **the Son of God.” 64“Yes, it is as you say,” Jesus replied.**

The Apostle Paul swore an oath in:

**2 Corinthians 1:23 (NIV)** **I call God as my witness that it was in order to spare you that I did not return to Corinth.**

I call God as my witness.. Paul was invoking the name of God in an oath..

In the Scriptures God himself "swears" and by so doing invokes an oath.
 **Hebrews 6:17 - 18 (NIV) 17Because God wanted to make the unchanging nature of his purpose very clear to the heirs of what was promised, he confirmed it with an oath.  18God did this so that, by two unchangeable things in which it is impossible for God to lie, we who have fled to take hold of the hope offered to us may be greatly encouraged.**

The best way for God to invoke a promise to us is with an oath because it is impossible for God to lie. If God says it He will do it!

Jesus said: **37Simply let your ‘Yes’ be ‘Yes,’ and your’ No,’ ‘No’; anything beyond this comes from the evil one.**

 What did Jesus mean here by saying this?

 He wasn’t saying only use those two words, yes and no, in your correspondence with our fellow man but he was saying always be truthful.

 If you think yes then say yes! If you think no then say no! Don’t think yes and say no or think no and say yes regardless of the situation or the circumstances.

 Always be a person of HIC, a person of honesty, integrity and character…

John Wooden former UCLA basketball coach once said:*Be more concerned with your character than with your reputation, because your character is what you really are, while your reputation is merely what others think you are.*

 How true that statement is…

 As a Christian we need to be more concerned with our character because our character is what we really are, while our reputation is merely what others think we are.

 Actually, we can possess one of these HIC traits and still find ourselves lacking in one or more of the other two.

Charles Swindol, in his book: “**Growing Deep in the Christian Life”**, tells about a man who bought fried chicken dinners for himself and his date late one afternoon. The attendant at the fast food outlet, however, inadvertently gave him the proceeds from the day's business--a bucket of money (much of it cash) instead of fried chicken.

 "After driving to their picnic site, the two of them sat down to enjoy some chicken.

They discovered a whole lot more than chicken--over $800! But this man was unusual. He quickly put the money back in the bag. They got back into the car and drove all the way back to the Chicken place. By then, the manager was frantic.

 "Mr. Clean got out, walked in, and became an instant hero. 'I want you to know I came by to get a couple of chicken dinners and wound up with all this money here.'

 "Well, the manager was thrilled to death. He said, 'Let me call the newspaper. I'm gonna have your picture put in the local paper. You're one of the most honest men I've ever heard of.'

 The man quickly responded, 'Oh, no. No, no, don't do that!' Then he leaned closer and whispered, 'You see, the woman I'm with--she's, uh, somebody else's wife.' "

 One can be honest and still not have integrity or a good character.

 George Munzing, writes in **"Living a Life of Integrity**.. If you cheat in practice, you'll cheat in the game. If you cheat in your head, you'll cheat on the test. You'll cheat on the girl. You'll cheat in business. You'll cheat on your mate.

 Sow a thought, reap an act. Sow an act, reap a habit. Sow a habit, reap a character. Sow a character, reap a destiny.

 To reap the destiny of heaven instead of the destiny of Hell will require us to be a member of HIC in this life..

So how do we do that? How do we become the men and women and children of Honesty, integrity and character that God wants us to become?

 A man by the name of Gary Oliver once said this:

 If a farmer doesn't plant seeds, he will never harvest a crop. It doesn't matter how weed-free his ground is; he must also plant and cultivate good seed.

 In the same way, we can only reap a harvest of Honesty, integrity and character by planting the good seed of God's Word into our lives.

 I'm not talking about merely reading the Bible. I'm talking about allowing the Holy Spirit to plant the truths of Scripture deep into our hearts and minds through consistent Bible reading and memorization, meditation and prayer. To be effective, and to remain pure, truth must be planted in our hearts each and every day..

That is what David was talking about in the Psalms when He said:

 **Psalms 119:11 (NKJV) 11    Your word I have hidden in my heart, that I might not sin against You.**

David didn’t say that he dropped God’s word into his heart or casually let it fall onto the soil of his heart but that He Hid the word in his heart.

 To hide something takes effort and motivation and thought! You have to dig and then bury something that you intend to hide and protect.

 The only reason that you hide something is because you see great value in it and you treasure it.

Honesty, integrity and character are byproducts of being saturated in God-- Saturated by His word--Saturated in His presence, Saturated in His Holy Spirit…

 **Mark 7:18 - 23 (NIV)** **18“Are you so dull?” he asked. “Don’t you see that nothing that enters a man from the outside can make him ‘unclean’?** **19For it doesn’t go into his heart but into his stomach, and then out of his body.” (In saying this, Jesus declared all foods “clean.”)** **20He went on: “What comes out of a man is what makes him ‘unclean.’** **21For from within, out of men’s hearts, come evil thoughts, sexual immorality, theft, murder, adultery,** **22greed, malice, deceit, lewdness, envy, slander, arrogance and folly.** **23All these evils come from inside and make a man ‘unclean.’”**

How often as Christians today are we more concerned what we put into our mouths then what we put into our minds and hearts?

Don’t drink too much Pepsi cola or coffee! Stay away from shellfish and cranberries! Don’t eat that piece of chocolate cream pie!

 Hey, I have managed to stay away from all of these things—Man, I must really be spiritual!?

 **Don’t you see that nothing that enters a man from the outside can make him ‘unclean’?  19For it doesn’t go into his heart but into his stomach, and then out of his body.”**

**“What comes out of a man is what makes him ‘unclean.’  21For from within, out of men’s hearts,**

**come evil thoughts, sexual immorality, theft, murder, adultery,  22greed, malice, deceit, lewdness, envy, slander, arrogance and folly.  23All these evils come from inside and make a man ‘unclean.’**

This is why it is so important what we plant within our hearts! What we allow our minds and hearts to feed upon.

David cried out: **Thy Word have I hid in my heart that I won’t sin against you O Lord!**

 IT goes without fail, show me a Christian that is having a problem with things such as honesty, integrity and Character and I will show you a Christian that is starving them-selves spiritually or has become spiritually malnourished by not hiding Gods Word in their heart and daily feeding and meditating upon it.

 **Matthew 12:33 - 37 (NIV) 33“Make a tree good and its fruit will be good, or make a tree bad and its fruit will be bad, for a tree is recognized by its fruit.  34You brood of vipers, how can you who are evil say anything good? For out of the overflow of the heart the mouth speaks.  35The good man brings good things out of the good stored up in him, and the evil man brings evil things out of the evil stored up in him.  36But I tell you that men will have to give account on the day of judgment for every careless word they have spoken.  37For by your words you will be acquitted, and by your words you will be condemned.”**

Jesus Said: **36But I tell you that men will have to give account on the Day of Judgment for every careless word they have spoken.  37For by your words you will be acquitted and by your words you will be condemned.”**

**For out of the overflow of the heart the mouth speaks.**

What we take in is what will eventually come out.

Our Words are expressions of ourselves!

**35The good man brings good things out of the good stored up in him, and the evil man brings evil things out of the evil stored up in him.**

A good tree will produce good fruit! A bad tree will provide bad fruit!

 God has called us to be good trees within our world that produce good fruit!

 Here is the thing… We are the trees that God has planted within our world and it is the world that our fruit was intended for!

 Fruit that will lead them to Christ!

It is what Peter is talking about in:

**1 Peter 2:11 - 12 (NIV)** **11Dear friends, I urge you, as aliens and strangers in the world, to abstain from sinful desires, which war against your soul.** **12Live such good lives among the pagans that, though they accuse you of doing wrong, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day he visits us.**

There is only one way that a non-believer will glorify God on the day that He visits us and that is if they come to believe in Him before that day arrives.

Our striving to become a people of HIC, People of Honesty, integrity and Character---Our living Godly lives in front of them bearing the fruit of God in our lives for them to see will draw them, not to us, but to Him! And they too then will glorify God along with us on that day when He returns…

 Church this is our calling as a Christian. This is why we are here. To strive with all of our hearts and minds to become the men, women and children of Honesty, integrity and Character that God has called and ordained us to be to help reach out to and lead a lost world to the Savior.

 This morning are you proud to be a HIC?

Are you striving to live a life of honesty, integrity and Character in the part of the world that God has placed you?

 Are we, day by day, striving to become more and more like Jesus reflecting His glory within our world to draw other to Him?