The selection of whistle blowing as this morning’s sermon topic was by far the smallest plurality of votes of any of your selections - only five folks voted for it. But I want to thank those five because I am excited to think with you about this topic. Your first thought when you hear that we are going to think about whistle blowing may well be - what does that have to do with the Gospel of Jesus Christ and why is that an appropriate theme for a Sunday morning worship service? What I find absolutely intriguing about the subject is that it is remarkably complex and requires a thorough application of many parts of the Scripture to do it well and appropriately - so it argues for our being thoroughly equipped with a knowledge of God’s Word.

The guy who wrote the little article on whistle blowing for the book that has been the source of topics for this sermon series on Everyday Christianity defines whistle blowing as "an employee’s disclosing to the public illegal, immoral or unethical behavior of an employer or organization that is likely to result in harm to others.”

So as to make this time more applicable to more of us, I want to expand our thinking beyond the role of employee and employer to include anyone who is disclosing to another person or persons - often at risk to himself - damaging information about another person(s) in order to prevent a greater harm to others. I want to hold that up as a noble enterprise in contrast to the ignoble tattle tale of the school yard or the church gossip mill. I think that defining the difference between the two for ourselves will be key to our right understanding and application.

Foundational to getting our thinking straight in this challenging arena are several Biblical principles. And the first I would begin with is a proper regard for those in authority. Ephesians 6: 5-8 “Slaves, obey your earthly masters with respect and fear, and with sincerity of heart, just as you would obey Christ. Obey them not only to win their favor when their eye is on you, but like slaves of Christ, doing the will of God from your heart. Serve wholeheartedly, as if you were serving the Lord, not men, because you know that the Lord will reward everyone for whatever good he does, whether he is slave or free.” While that is directed to those in positions of employment, I think it can quite naturally be extended to parents or teachers or others with legitimate authority. And the point that is so important for us to get is that whether citizen or employee or fellow church member or fellow kidster on the playground, we have to always maintain a proper respect for, an attitude of honor towards others, particularly those in authority over us. We cannot go around speaking ill of them or taking actions that undercut their authority for personal motives of self-advancement.

That and other Scripture passages require of us a respect for authority that is not self-serving but serves both the common good and even more importantly the Lord Himself. Respecting authority requires following chain of commands. We don’t take an issue with the foreman to the boss without having first taken it to the foreman himself. We don’t go running to the superintendent of schools or the school board because we have a problem with a teacher without having first dealt with the teacher. We don’t involve the pastor or Mom or Dad in conflicts without first dealing with the person with whom their is brokenness. Now I am not naive and neither are you so we
can dare to be honest and say that such forthright activity on our part is likely to open ourselves to further pain. Welcome to the cross bearing world of the Christian life.

In Old Testament teachings affirmed by Jesus we are commanded: **Leviticus 19: 17-18** “Do not hate your brother in your heart. Rebuke your neighbor frankly so that you will not share in his guilt. Do not seek revenge or bear a grudge against one of your people, but love your neighbor as yourself.” Operating with clear motives that are as pure as possible, that are God honoring and not self-serving, that care for others as we would want to be cared for ourselves, that highly value truth above falsehood or deceit: those are all important principles in this matter of whistle blowing. Again, what is clear is that our speaking or acting against the person we deem to be at fault in a situation must be for purposes of the common good, for God’s honor, matters of justice not personal agendas of righting some wrong done to me.

I chose the example of Doeg for our unison Scripture reading this morning - rather than more positive models like Mordecai spilling the beans on the two officers of the King plotting to assassinate Xerxes or Jeremiah condemning corruption at great personal suffering and loss - because he is an interesting mixture of good and bad application of some of these principles. David is on the run because King Saul has come to regard him as a threat to his rule and is trying to kill him. He flees without food or weapons and comes to Ahimelech begging for help. Ahimelech seems suspicious but David lies and convinces him that all is OK, that he is on a special mission for the king. Ahimelech relents, feeds him from the show bread brought to remind the people of God’s constant provision for them and arms him with the sword that David had taken from Goliath after striking him with the stone.

Now I am abusing the story by focusing on the whistle-blowing aspect of it only but here it is. Doeg, an Edomite, a resident alien and head shepherd of Saul’s flock witnesses this whole interchange. He does not object to any of it - but then like Ahimelech it may be because he has been fooled by David’s lie. When he returns and hears Saul’s rants about David and how he is stealing the hearts of the Israelites, he reports what he has seen and heard to the king. He does not seem to exaggerate or embellish his account - just offers the facts as he has witnessed it. As such one can rightly argue that he has served the role of whistle blower properly. He has respected the proper authority (in this case Saul). He has not acted in a fashion that is self-serving in the sense that his motive for disclosing what he did does not seem to be personally motivated. We are not told that he had anything in for David. As far as we know he was only acting to protect the governing authorities from one who seemed to threaten that authority. Here’s where he blows it. When Saul in his anger orders him to kill Ahimelech and all the priests of Nob, he does so. More than that he strikes down the whole town of Nob, men, women and children, whether at the king’s command and with his approval or perhaps to win the king’s approval - we don’t know. We do know this: **I Samuel 22:17** “The king’s officials were not willing to raise a hand to strike the priests of the Lord.” The just authority went too far; the proper authority violated the rule of God. The righteousness of the would be whistle blower gets lost in his selling his soul to the evil actions of a self-serving king.

For Christians then, whether in government or in the workplace, in church or in the school yard, whistle-blowing kind of situations must always be grounded in the core truths of the Gospel. When I see one doing wrong, I must first acknowledge that I too
am one who does wrong, a sinner in need of a Savior. I must examine my own heart and discern whether my grief or offense at the wrong being done is motivated by a sense of personal violation or whether it is a genuine concern for the larger welfare of affected people. From that place of humility, I must confront the one doing wrong with the truth as I see it and invite, encourage the other’s repentance, acting in love and with the same respect and honor for the other person that I would desire for myself. If it is appropriate, I should invite the wrong doer to know Christ as the One and only One who can offer forgiveness. Or if the person is already a Christian I should gently remind him of the purity and holiness of the God we serve in Jesus Christ. Only when those humble and loving actions fail, am I at a place to involve a higher authority to intervene to establish the justice that God longs for all His people.

I say again it is a costly thing to be a whistle-blower and though laws were passed in the seventies and eighties to protect such folks in the work place from reprisals and belligerent attitudes and actions, no law can protect one from the venom and fury of wrong doers undone by the word of truth. But our Savior did not hold back from doing the right thing because it was costly when it was necessary for our salvation and we should not be those who hold back from doing the right thing because of the personal cost. More and more I think we do best to prepare ourselves by prayer and study of the Word to suffer and to see the church as the fellowship of the suffering. From there - rather than from a place where we assume we deserve Easy Street - standing for the truth regardless of the cost will be a response we are better equipped to make.