

6-2-24

Sermon- Learn From Your Mistakes

Scripture- James 3:1-12, CTW Ps 19:1-3, 9-14

Hymns- 17, 95, 96

Theme- James does not blame us for making mistakes, it is a natural part of how God made us. However, here James informs us that God is not happy when we do not learn from our mistakes. Have you been improving in this regard? Where do you turn when you need help dealing with these types of issues?

I. Introduction- Do you understand the power of your words?

We have all been hurt by other people's words.

Words are used to lift us up and to tear us down.

A. Watch your Tone! Inside the power of words is also the tone of a word. That is where it gets complicated, if the **tone** is taken wrong, it can change the whole meaning of the word and sentence and how it was intended.

While social media has a lot of advantages, one disadvantage is that we cannot see a person's face when they write on Facebook or send an email.

I want to take a few minutes today to see what God says about our words and how we can go deeper in our understanding of how important a part they play in our lives.

Jesus Himself gives us direction about the importance of words we use to each other and that our words usually come from the condition of our heart.

We will see that you cannot separate words and heart. They are very closely related and even if the words are right, the attitude may not be which makes our words of less value.

B. Matthew 12:33-37 reminds us “For the Mouth Speaks what the heart is full of.” 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. ³⁴ You brood of vipers, how can you who are evil say anything good? For the mouth speaks what the heart is full of. ³⁵ A good man brings good things out of the good stored up in him, and an evil man brings evil things out of the evil stored up in him. ³⁶ But I tell you that everyone will have to give account on the day of judgment for every empty word they have spoken. ³⁷ For by your words you will be acquitted, and by your words you will be condemned.”

Words are important to Jesus, and therefore they should be important to us.

Taking into context the text, Jesus is dealing with the Pharisees and interacting with religious people.

Jesus was not impressed with religious people. (people who talked a good game).

Religious people who have graded themselves based on their self-made virtue of not being as bad as someone else.

Jesus is not interested in merely altering behavior. He does not want people to simply say and do the right things.

II. Jesus wants to create new hearts, with good deeds coming from a heart change.

The Scribes and Pharisees spoke terrible words about Jesus. They called the Son of Man an “ally of the devil”.

A. Jesus shows two observations:

(1)- The state of our hearts can be seen through the words that we speak.

(2)- Each one of us will give an account to God of every idle (empty) word that we speak.

Considering the state of our heart, listen to this quote by Commentator Edgar Symmes:

"A man's character can be known from his words. That which is in the heart can come to the surface only through our lips; we can produce through our lips only what we have in our hearts. There is nothing so revealing as words. We do not need to talk to people long before we discover whether they have wholesome or dirty minds; we do not need to listen to them long before we discover whether they are kind or cruel; we do not need to listen for long to someone who is preaching or teaching or lecturing to find out whether that person's mind is clear or whether it is muddled. We are continually revealing who we are by what we say."

B. About our idle or empty words-

In the right Greek context for this passage, idle words do not produce anything productive. Idle words have no value.

Idle people do nothing of value, they waste their time.

Idle words have no value.

Idle words are words that we speak without thinking, and the only way that we can control our words is to be thinking before we say them.

Commentator (A. Plummer), says-

"The carefully spoken words may be calculated hypocrisy. When we are consciously on our guard, we will be careful what we say and how we say it; but when we are off guard, our words reveal our character. It is quite possible for a person's public utterances to be fine and noble, and the private conversation of that person to be coarse and obscene. In public, words are carefully chosen, in private, the guard is down, and any word leaves the gateway of that person's lips. It is so with anger; we will say in anger what

we really think and what we have often wanted to say, but which the cool control of prudence has kept us from saying.”

Many people are models of charm and courtesy in public, when they know they are being watched and they choose their words carefully. In their own homes they are irritable, sarcastic, quick tempered, critical, because the public will not see it.

C. These words are the most dangerous.

Anger makes us say words that we would have never said had we had control of our words.

You can never take back words that have been said.

You can say you are sorry, but they cannot be taken back. Hopefully, they can be forgiven.

III. Think again about the warnings James gives us concerning the tongue in James 3:1-12

He says that those who purposefully turn people away from the truth of God and lead them astray will answer for their idle and unproductive words.

He says that we can tame animals by putting a bit in their mouth.

We can steer a ship that has a large motor or strong winds by a small rudder.

The tongue is like a small match, it can cause a lot of damage.

With our tongue, we praise the Lord and curse our brothers and sisters.

With the same mouth, we praise and curse. He says that it should not be that way.

A. And now the main point of this passage...we need to get better with our speaking and God has provided a way for that to happen if we are willing.

(8) "But no human being can tame the tongue. It is a restless evil, full of deadly poison."

No man can, but God can!

Jesus is still able to change a heart.

Jesus is still able to get control of a mouth that is out of control!

He is always able and willing to teach us!

Illustration-

I read an article that said that the biggest land animal created by God was the elephant. African Elephants can weigh 14-15,000 pounds. Enormous animals! One of the biggest animals in the ocean is the whale. The tongue of a Humpback whale can be 14,000 pounds. As much as an elephant! Isn't that just bizarre! A God who can make a tongue that can weigh 14,000 pounds **can surely take a human tongue that weighs point 1 pounds and get control of it if we will let Him!**

B. A Greek Proverb Says: "We have two ears and one mouth that we may listen more and talk less."

We often talk more than we should and listen far less than needed.

To become a mature follower (A deeper follower) of Jesus, we need to learn to **watch what we say** and listen more.

We all make mistakes or slip up and say things we should not. We cannot eliminate it but we sure can do a better job of learning from those mistakes.

Jesus is capable of guiding our motivation, our thoughts, our choice of words and the effect our communication has on others.

Many people may think that it is impossible to control their tongues, but most people haven't even begun to try.

People who allow Jesus to control their tongues will be able to control themselves in every other way.

This is a God thing! We cannot do it by ourselves, but we must also be willing to let God do it and not fight Him.

C. Here are some modern-day pointers inspired by James:

...**Please Think before you:** tweet, post, snap, use Instagram or write on Facebook because people will judge you based on your words and there is no filter on these social sites.

...Ask yourself if this is something I would say to Jesus?

Illustration:

General Robert E. Lee was once asked what he thought of a fellow officer in the Confederate Army, an officer who had made some mean-spirited remarks about him. Lee thought for a moment, then rated him as being very satisfactory.

The person who asked these questions seemed troubled. "But General, I guess you don't know what he's been saying about you."

Oh yes, answered Lee. I know. But I was asked my opinion of him, not his of me."

Words are like dynamite, if used properly and in the right place they are beneficial. Used improperly and in the wrong place they can produce a lot of damage.

The **Word of God** can be tough on us, and it is meant to be.

If we are to go deeper in our faith and understanding of God's true desire for us, we need to be willing to listen...and we need to be willing to do whatever it is we can to change into the true church that God has in His heart.

IV. Conclusion: Just like us, God's heart can be seen in His words:

Proverbs 15:1 says: "A gentle answer turns away wrath, but a harsh word stirs up anger."

Proverbs 18:21 says: "The tongue has the power of life and death, and those who love it will eat its fruit."

A. You have the choice of bringing life by your words or death and destruction by your words.

Jesus says that we will be held accountable for the idle or empty words we say to each other, and that we need to always be learning from our mistakes in that regard...He knows that we will fall into it time and again.

God tells us in **His Word** that the tongue has incredible power. We can use our tongue to bring blessings and life or curses and death. The saying "sticks and stones can break my bones but words will never hurt me" is simply not true. Our tongues can be the most difficult thing to control and leave us with great regret if we use our words to hurt.

There is hope! The **Bible** tells us that with the help of the Holy Spirit we can have power and control over our tongue.

Speak life to others starting today!

Colossians 4:6 says: "Let your life be full of grace, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how to answer everyone."

B. Only a renewed heart can produce pure speech. If the source of our thoughts and actions is the love of God in our lives, then we will not be able to generate the kind of negative speech that James warns us against.

C. What Is the Ultimate Source of Renewal and Advice?

In times of trouble and the questions of life, we Christians are called to do two things...run to God in prayer AND consult His Word!

D. SO, What happens if we don't have a Bible? For 124 years since July 1, 1899, the Gideons have had a wonderful answer to that situation. With page after page of helps that are specifically geared to answering those pressing middle of the night questions, in my opinion, no house should be without one. Thank you for your ongoing support of this wonderful ministry! Amen! Let us Pray...