The Dangerous Power of Words July 16, 2023

*James 3:1-12 Guest Speaker: Christian Clement-Schlimm*

The stroke of the whip maketh marks in the flesh: but the stroke of the tongue breaketh the bones.
– Sirach 28:17

Intro: Loose lips sink ships

1. We all have a platform, be aware!
2. God is deeply concerned with people’s words
3. v. 1 *Not many of you should become teachers, my brothers, for you know that we who teach will be judged with greater strictness.*
4. Matthew 12:36 *I tell you, on the day of judgment people will give account for every careless word they speak*
5. False speech is a common but significant sin
6. v. 2 *For we all stumble in many ways…*
7. Matthew 12:34b For out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks.
8. Our words can and do affect others
* Matthew 18:6 *but whoever causes one of these little ones who believe in me to sin, it would be better for him to have a great millstone fastened around his neck and to be drowned in the depth of the sea.*
* Why is God so concerned with people’s words in general? Why do Christian teachers get specific attention?
* What are your platforms (i.e. who do you have the potential to influence)? How might you honour God with them?
1. Our words can bring great blessing, be intentional!
2. Righteous speech is a mark of Christian maturity
3. v. 2 *...and if anyone does not stumble in what he says, he is a perfect man, able also to bridle his whole body.*
4. Godly words steer and evidence a godly life
* vv. 3-4 *If we put bits into the mouths of horses so that they obey us, we guide their whole bodies as well. Look at the ships also: though they are so large and are driven by strong winds, they are guided by a very small rudder wherever the will of the pilot directs.*
1. v. 5 *So also the tongue is a small member, yet it boasts of great things…*
* Why would righteous or godly speech be considered a fundamental sign of Christian maturity?
* Have you ever seen a moment where a few godly words made a big difference in someone’s life? Describe that experience.
1. Our words can cause great destruction, be wise!
2. Careless words can have major ramifications
3. v. 5 …*How great a forest is set ablaze by such a small fire!*
4. Proverbs 15:1 *A soft answer turns away wrath, but a harsh word stirs up anger.*
5. Ungodly words can destroy lives
* vv. 6-8 *And the tongue is a fire, a world of unrighteousness. The tongue is set among our members, staining the whole body, setting on fire the entire course of life, and set on fire by hell. For every kind of beast and bird, of reptile and sea creature, can be tamed and has been tamed by mankind, but no human being can tame the tongue. It is a restless evil, full of deadly poison.*
* Why are “careless words” so dangerous? Have you ever seen or experienced relational issues because of careless words?
* What does the illustration of the tongue being a fire teach you about the destructive potential of words?
* How can we guard ourselves against ungodly speech and its effects? What are some practical strategies?
1. Our words reveal our heart, be consistent!
2. Our words can draw us into hypocrisy
* vv. 9-12 *With it we bless our Lord and Father, and with it we curse people who are made in the likeness of God. From the same mouth come blessing and cursing. My brothers, these things ought not to be so. Does a spring pour forth from the same opening both fresh and salt water? Can a fig tree, my brothers, bear olives, or a grapevine produce figs? Neither can a salt pond yield fresh water.*
* 1 John 4:20 *If anyone says, “I love God,” and hates his brother, he is a liar; for he who does not love his brother whom he has seen cannot love God whom he has not seen.*
1. Christ’s words are most powerful and true, live by them
* Romans 10:9 *…if you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved.*
* Revelation 21:5 *And he who was seated on the throne said, “Behold, I am making all things new.” Also he said, “Write this down, for these words are trustworthy and true.”*

**Q** Why is hypocrisy, specifically blessing God while cursing people, so detestable to God? What does that teach you about God?

**Q** Why does God instruct believers to make public professions of faith? If God sees the heart, why announce faith verbally?

Look ahead: Next week, we’ll study James 3:13-18

Notes