

Introduction

- Our summer series is called the Good Life and we are learning about how the gospel can impact our everyday life.

Colossians 3.16-17

Let the message about Christ, in all its richness, fill your lives...whatever you do or say, do it as a representative of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks through him to God the Father.

- Talking is obviously something that we do all the time and is very much a part of our everyday life.
- Although there are other ways to communicate, talking is the main way that we do this.
- Some of us talk a little, some talk a lot, some talk very loud and some quite softly.
- Regardless of how we talk, our speech is powerful and can impact others and ourselves in many ways.
- Today we are going to look at how speech is a part of our everyday and how the gospel plays a part of that.

Speech is a great responsibility. (James 3:1-5)

Dear brothers and sisters, not many of you should become teachers in the church, for we who teach will be judged more strictly. ² Indeed, we all make many mistakes. For if we could control our tongues, we would be perfect and could also control ourselves in every other way.

³ We can make a large horse go wherever we want by means of a small bit in its mouth. ⁴ And a small rudder makes a huge ship turn wherever the pilot chooses to go, even though the winds are strong. ⁵ In the same way, the tongue is a small thing that makes grand speeches.

- Although James is calling us to be careful with our words, he reminds us that the tongue is so powerful that there is no way that any human could tame it under their own power.
- What we say to others and what others say to you, have a lasting impact.
 - For example:
 - 'I have a dream that one day this nation will rise up, live out the true meaning of its creed: "We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal."'

- We have been given a great power and it is our responsibility to use it properly.

Speech has the power to destroy. (James 3:5b-9)

But a tiny spark can set a great forest on fire. ⁶ And among all the parts of the body, the tongue is a flame of fire. It is a whole world of wickedness, corrupting your entire body. It can set your whole life on fire, for it is set on fire by hell itself.

⁷ People can tame all kinds of animals, birds, reptiles, and fish, ⁸ but no one can tame the tongue. It is restless and evil, full of deadly poison.

- Small spark to create a large fire
 - Due to the power of the tongue, James warns that the enemy wants to use it to corrupt everything that it touches.
 - The fire of the tongue has its root from hell itself.
- 2 Timothy 2:16-17
 - "Avoid worthless, foolish talk that only leads to more godless behavior. This kind of talk spreads like cancer..."
- Gossip is one of the sparks that we create that can set a whole forest on fire. It is important for us to be very aware of how we talk about others, especially when they are not around. One small comment can create a domino affect that can end up hurting more than one person and bring division to a once healthy community.

Verse 9:

"Sometimes it praises our Lord and Father, and sometimes it curses those who have been made in the image of God."

- Words stick and when they are negative, they can ruin someone.
 - Put-downs
 - We can all most likely recall times in our lives in which someone put us down and it is still fresh in our minds.
 - Be careful how you talk about someone's appearance too! You can make them or break them.
 - "Joking" with truth (sarcasm)
 - Speaking while angry.
 - When others hear this kind of talk about them over and over, it really takes a toll.

Speech reveals our character. (James 3:10-12)

¹⁰ And so blessing and cursing come pouring out of the same mouth. Surely, my brothers and sisters, this is not right! ¹¹ Does a spring of water bubble out with both fresh water and bitter water? ¹² Does a fig tree produce olives, or a grapevine produce figs? No, and you can't draw fresh water from a salty spring.

- You can see that James struggles with the fact that something that can bring so much good can also bring so much bad.
- It is so easy for us to fall into this trap, especially when it comes to saying one thing and then saying something different to another person.
- In order for us to be messengers of the gospel, we need to be consistent in what we say and actually live out what we tell people we stand for.

Matthew 5:33-37

³³ “You have also heard that our ancestors were told, ‘You must not break your vows; you must carry out the vows you make to the Lord.’^[a] ³⁴ But I say, do not make any vows! Do not say, ‘By heaven!’ because heaven is God’s throne. ³⁵ And do not say, ‘By the earth!’ because the earth is his footstool. And do not say, ‘By Jerusalem!’ for Jerusalem is the city of the great King. ³⁶ Do not even say, ‘By my head!’ for you can’t turn one hair white or black. ³⁷ Just say a simple, ‘Yes, I will,’ or ‘No, I won’t.’ Anything beyond this is from the evil one.

- Jesus teaches here what James has also recognized; when we use our speech improperly, it gets twisted by the evil one and causes damage.
- What comes out of the mouth comes from the heart.
 - Matthew 12:34 – “For whatever is in your heart determines what you say.”
- Sons of light
 - 1 Thessalonians 5:5
 - “For you are all children of the light and of the day; we don’t belong to darkness and night.”
 - Be characterized by the light and your words will bring life.

Speech can bring life to those around us.

- Proverbs
 - 18:21
 - “The tongue can bring death or life; those who love to talk will reap the consequences.”
 - 15:4
 - “Gentle words are a tree of life; a deceitful tongue crushes the spirit.”
 - 16:24
 - “Kind words are like honey—sweet to the soul and healthy for the body.”
 - 12:25
 - “Worry weighs a person down; an encouraging word cheers a person up.”

- Redemption
 - As children of the light, we have the privilege to redeem what the enemy is trying to use for evil and use it for good.
 - We get to experience redemption because of what Jesus has done for us!
 - 1 Thessalonians 5:9-11
 - “⁹ For God chose to save us through our Lord Jesus Christ, not to pour out his anger on us. ¹⁰ Christ died for us so that, whether we are dead or alive when he returns, we can live with him forever. ¹¹ So encourage each other and build each other up, just as you are already doing.”
- Encouragement & Building up
 - Instead of putting down, we can lift each other up!
- Affirmation & Confirmation
 - We can use our words to affirm something in others lives and confirm what God is doing in their lives.
- Speak the Good News!
 - Romans 10:13-15

¹³ For “Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.”

¹⁴ But how can they call on him to save them unless they believe in him? And how can they believe in him if they have never heard about him? And how can they hear about him unless someone tells them? ¹⁵ And how will anyone go and tell them without being sent? That is why the Scriptures say, “How beautiful are the feet of messengers who bring good news!”

Discussion Questions

Are you aware of the responsibility you have with your speech? How have you handled this great responsibility in your life?

How has your speech affected others around you? How has the speech of others affected you?

In what ways do you need the Holy Spirit to bring transformation to your heart so that what comes out of your mouth will bring life to others?

Is it easy or hard for you to express yourself to others in speech? How can you encourage or build someone up with your words today?

Are there others in your life who need to hear the Good News? If so, what steps can you take to speak that Good News to them?

