

Media and Graphics Notes

Sermon Starter Video?	Yes
Sermon Notes?	Yes, there are scripture verses throughout the service
Other Notes	There will be a baptism at 9 a.m.

Key Questions

What is this sermon about?

This sermon is about the power of words.

Why is this sermon important?

It is important because words can be a blessing or a curse to others and ourselves.

What is the context of this sermon?

This is the third in the James worship series. This sermon is adapted from a sermon preached at the Village Church and found online at <http://www.thevillagechurch.net/resources/sermons/detail/blessings--curses/>

What are the next action steps?

Consider your primary identity as a child of God.

What is the good news (bottom line)?

The good news is that our heart can change when we anchor ourselves in the truth of our identity as a child of God.

What are other key takeaways? (140 characters or less)

- A good person produces good from the good treasury of the inner self, while an evil person produces evil from the evil treasury of the inner self. The inner self overflows with words that are spoken. – Luke 6:45, CEB.
- Death and life are in the power of the tongue; those who love it will eat its fruit. — Proverbs 18:21, CEB.
- Some chatter on like a stabbing sword, but a wise tongue heals. — Proverbs 12:18, CEB.
- Pay attention to what your words say about your heart. Your words are powerful. Use them wisely.



4th Sunday after Pentecost
James - Blessing / Curse
First United Methodist Church of El Dorado
Text Online at <http://j.mp/25bnKFj>

June 12, 2016
James 3:1-12
Preaching Target Word Count: 1,886
Audio Online at <http://bit.ly/1VTACTS>

- If you find your words and your heart angry or jealous or bitter—remember your primary identity as a child of God.
- Through the power of God at work in your life, you can speak blessing.

Metadata

Topic(s)

1. Change Lives
2. Grow

Sermon Books of the Bible

1. James
2. Luke
3. Proverbs

Tags

sermon, worship, church, Methodist, UnitedMethodist, UnitedMethodistChurch, FirstUnitedMethodistChurch, Eldorado, Kansas, GreatPlains, AnnualConference, GreatPlainsAnnualConference, words, power, blessing, curse

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James 3:1-12, CEB

My brothers and sisters, not many of you should become teachers, because we know that we teachers will be judged more strictly. We all make mistakes often, but those who don't make mistakes with their words have reached full maturity. Like a bridled horse, they can control themselves entirely. When we bridle horses and put bits in their mouths to lead them wherever we want, we can control their whole bodies.

Consider ships: They are so large that strong winds are needed to drive them. But pilots direct their ships wherever they want with a little rudder. In the same way, even though the tongue is a small part of the body, it boasts wildly.

Think about this: A small flame can set a whole forest on fire. The tongue is a small flame of fire, a world of evil at work in us. It contaminates our entire lives. Because of it, the circle of life is set on fire. The tongue itself is set on fire by the flames of hell.

People can tame and already have tamed every kind of animal, bird, reptile, and fish. No one can tame the tongue, though. It is a restless evil, full of deadly poison. With it we both bless the Lord and Father and curse human beings made in God's likeness. Blessing and cursing come from the same mouth. My brothers and sisters, it just shouldn't be this way!

Both fresh water and salt water don't come from the same spring, do they? My brothers and sisters, can a fig tree produce olives? Can a grapevine produce figs? Of course not, and fresh water doesn't flow from a saltwater spring either.

Response to Scripture

One: The Word of God for the People of God.

All: Thanks be to God!

Introduction

Sermon Starter Video

[Play sermon starter video.](#)

Average Person's Speech

"The average person...that's the average person; not the overly-talkative one or the super-shy one...spends one-fifth of their life talking. If all of our words were put into print, the result would be this. A single-day's words would fill a 50-page book. In a year's time, the average person's words would fill 132 books of 200 pages each. That's average."

"Some of you are like, "Simply not true about me. I'd have written four books in a decade," and others of you are like, "[No way], I'd fill a library. I'm on the scale over here. I'm definitely not over there." The point of this stat is this:

We are constantly talking.

We talk to ourselves.
We talk to others.
Yes, texts and tweets do count.
We are a communicating creature created by a God who communicates via words, and so we are constantly talking, constantly thinking, constantly sharing what we think.

Some of us are external processors, some of us are internal processors, but we all talk a lot. One-fifth of your life will be spent with your mouth open.

Now that's a lot of opportunity to bless and that's a lot of opportunity to curse.

I don't mean curse words. Are you ... with me?

That's not what we're talking about here today.

I know some of you are like, "Whew!"

It should not surprise us that the Bible and God's invitation into life would have some things to say about how we use a fifth of our lives, right? It shouldn't be surprising God has an idea, a design for how we use those words.

Key Scripture: James 1:19

Two weeks ago, we took a look at James 1:19:

"Know this, my dear brothers and sisters: everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak, and slow to grow angry."¹

Be quick, be speedy to listen.

Be slow, be in molasses when it comes to talking.

Transition

As we begin today, I want you to know the main idea of the scripture passage for today. Here it is:

Words are powerful. They bless and they curse.

Sermon Notes and Scripture Study

Take Notes - Bulletin

I invite you to take notes during the message today. You can find a place in your bulletin or if you have a mobile device you can take notes and save them in the Bible App. Just open the Bible App,

click on "More"

and then "Events"

You'll find us on the map.

God Speaking

I pray that you will hear God speaking to you sometime during the service today. Listen for God's word for you – something that helps you live as a disciple of Jesus Christ. Whenever you hear it, write it down.

¹ James 1:19, CEB.

Tool for Spiritual Growth

Then, take this bulletin home with you so that you can grow in your faith outside of worship by reflecting on what you heard today, praying for others connected with our community and reading scripture.

Prayer

Will you pray with me? O God, use these words to speak good news so that as individuals and as a congregation we will fear nothing but sin, desire nothing but you and live as part of your kingdom on earth as it is in heaven. Amen.

Words are Powerful

Throughout the Bible

Words are powerful. With them we bless, we build up; with them we curse, we burn to the ground. Let me show you this. Throughout the Bible, this is actually a very common conversation.

Key Scripture: Proverbs 18:21

In Proverbs 18:21, we read these words:

“Death and life are in the power of the tongue; those who love it will eat its fruit.”²

Words have the power of life and death.

Key Scripture: Proverbs 12:18

The Proverbs would also argue not only do they have the power of life and death, but they have the power to wound or to heal. Hear these words from Proverbs 12:18:

“Some chatter on like a stabbing sword, but a wise tongue heals.”³

Wounds with Words

Words can wound, and if we're honest, almost all of us could probably think back and remember when someone said something to us that wounded us.

Example: Coping Mechanisms

Most of the time, we find ourselves ill-equipped. What do we go out with to handle the assault from words? Often, pithy, weak poems.

“Sticks and stones may break your bones, but words will never hurt you.”

Really? We know that's just not true.
Did you use this growing up? I did.

² Proverbs 18:21, CEB.

³ Proverbs 12:18, CEB.

Then there is the other phrase that I remember using:

*"I'm rubber and you're glue.
Whatever you say to me bounces off of me and sticks to you."*

That's what we've got. Those are the coping mechanisms for hurtful words. Words are powerful. They wound in ways we really aren't even aware of. Most of the ways we lash out and act have to do with some sort of wound that probably came about via words. They can wound or they can heal.

Transition

Let's take a closer look at two of the illustrations which James provides.

Our Spiritual Life

James' Illustrations

Bridled Horse

Hear these words from James 3:3:

When we bridle horses and put bits in their mouths to lead them wherever we want, we can control their whole bodies.⁴

I have ridden a horse, maybe, 10 or 20 times in my life. It is awesome. They are amazing animals and it is a joy to be able to ride. However, I know very little about horses. I know where to put my feet, where to sit on the saddle and in theory what the reins are supposed to do.

Right...

Left...

Slow down...

Go ahead...

I have all this in my head. Ready to go, right? Sort of.

Horses are pretty smart. They know when I am in the saddle that they have a rookie. Yet, despite my lack of experience and because they have been well trained – with a bit in their mouth, I can control where this enormous animal goes.

Ship's Rudder

James continues with another example in James 3:4:

Consider ships: They are so large that strong winds are needed to drive them. But pilots direct their ships wherever they want with a little rudder.⁵

⁴ James 3:3, CEB.

⁵ James 3:4, CEB.

This illustration is very much the same. Both of these examples illustrate the power of speech. If it is controlled well, it is effective and wonderful, but if not controlled or controlled poorly, the disaster can be enormous.

This brings us to a connection between the words of James and the words of Jesus.

State of Our Soul

Words reveal the progress of our faith. They give insight into the state of our soul.

Key Scripture: Luke 6:45

Jesus says this, in Luke 6:45:

“A good person produces good from the good treasury of the inner self, while an evil person produces evil from the evil treasury of the inner self. The inner self overflows with words that are spoken.”⁶

So that one-fifth of our lives spent talking, the words that come out of our mouths, where do they come from? Why are they so powerful?

Words and Heart

They're not powerful simply because they're vibrations in the air we interpret as certain words; they're powerful because it's our heart saying to another soul, “This is what I think about you.” Our words reveal what's really going on in our hearts.

Words are Revealing

Now think about how good of a gift this is from God. You don't have to wonder if you have an angry heart. You don't have to wonder if you have a jealous heart. You don't have to wonder what's going on. Your words reveal it.

If you're always snapping, always exploding, you have an angry heart. You don't have to go, “I don't really have an angry heart.” Don't justify right now. “I just didn't get enough sleep. I was just stressed out.” Yeah, and all of that led to anger that exploded out of your mouth coming from your heart and landed on somebody else. If we're honest, some of our lives are marked by words that tear down, words that attack, words that hurt.

Now maybe yours isn't anger.

Maybe yours is jealousy.

Maybe yours is bitterness.

I don't know where your heart is, but your words are telling you.

⁶ Luke 6:45, CEB.

Conclusion

Good News

The good news is that our heart can change when we anchor ourselves in the truth of our identity as a child of God.

Call to Action

So pay attention to what your words say about your heart.
Your words are powerful.
Use them wisely.

If you find your words and your heart angry or jealous or bitter—remember your primary identity as a child of God.

Invitation

As we grow in an understanding that Christ's love and forgiveness rests on us and that who I am first and foremost is a child of God, adopted by God through the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, and then secondarily I am Nicole's husband, and then I am the father of my children, and then I am the preacher at First United Methodist Church, and then I am my friends' friend.

Those are my identities that are sub-identities of my identity in Christ, and if I can anchor myself in what God has said about me in Christ...that I am God's, that I am accepted, that I am loved, that God is for me, not against me, that all of my sins were absorbed by Christ on the cross...

Now my mouth begins to change.

Through the power of God at work in my life, you can speak blessing.

Closing Prayer

Will you pray with me?