

The Power of Words

SERMON - October 24, 2021

Scripture Readings: Matthew 12:30-37 & Ephesians 4:25-32

Golden Verse - *Let your speech always be gracious, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how you ought to answer everyone.* Colossians 4:6

This golden verse talks about the mystique of our human words. To talk, to create words and sentences, and to speak out our mind is a wonderful gift. As we speak, we express our thoughts and our whole beings. Our innermost beings are constantly seen in our speech, even when we lie, even when we remain quiet in those moments when we should stand up for somebody. Today, let us try to glimpse into this great secret, the world of our speech, in the light of the words of God.

We all talk every day. Most of us talk to a lot of people because of their personality or their job. The word of God warns us, as God's children, that those people to whom we talk should feel something about our own spirituality, about our own spiritual values, about our faith, our relationship with God, because our behaviour, and the way we speak might have a positive impact on them.

Paul says: "*Let your speech always be gracious, seasoned with salt.*" (Colossians 4:6a) To understand what "gracious, kind and salt-spiced speech" is, we might understand if we would compare a nice, enjoyable sentence to a very rude sentence which is filled with rude or swearing words.

As you know, we have competent people who care about our English language; they update and develop our vocabulary. They are enriching and purifying our English language. This is necessary because the technology is developing and we have to express ourselves using new words. But these people care only about some special words. We, as Christians, are responsible to teach our children, grandchildren and this whole world to talk nicely, using only positive words, expressing ourselves with kindness and love. We have to teach the world to be more careful about the content of our speech. We have to show that our speech, our topics, our sentences are not meaningless but meaningful, not empty but filled with wisdom, kindness and love, or as Paul says seasoned with salt!

In a conversation, the biggest problem might be not that someone's speech is empty, or meaningless. It is much worse if the content of his or her sentences is hurtful and harmful.

Once, a person with a restless heart went to talk to the minister who lived on a hillside. They talked outside in the flower garden. This person started the conversation with a very painful question. “Reverend, please tell me honestly and directly, why don’t people like me?”

The minister knew the person’s history, about this person’s unpleasant personality, the person’s nature, and how the person behaved. Also, he heard about this person’s sharp’s tongue.

The minister picked up a withered dandelion covered in seeds. “Blow on it”, he said to that person. The person blew on it, and the little light seeds flew apart in the air and then slowly fell to the ground. Now, please, collect these seeds. “I cannot,” the person replied. “I cannot even see where they fell.” “Yes,” the minister said, “who knows where they fell? That’s how you can’t pull back the words you scattered among people in the past. Your words, your comments and your criticism lie where they fall and will make their effect; they might grow out as weeds.” The person seemed to understand the message and became very quiet.

Then the minister picked up a stone and said: “Grab this stone and throw it away”. The person did that with a confused smile. They could hear the stone rumbling down the hillside, slamming into other stones and bouncing to the ground. “Bring it back now,” said the minister. “I cannot,” the person said. “How can I find that particular stone? How can I find that one stone among so many other stones?” “Well,” the minister said, “just like that, you can’t bring back someone’s hope that you have ruined with your words.”

“And now, please break the branch off the tree here,” the minister asked the person. The person did this obediently. “Now put it back on as it was,” said the minister. “It is impossible!” the person burst out. “Yes, it is impossible!” said the minister. “And it seems impossible to restore someone’s faith and trust you have broken with your disruptive words.

A few weeks later, the person came back to see the minister, saying: “I walked around and looked for the seeds I had blown out of that dandelion. I have found only a few. I tried to fix some mistakes I made and the damages I caused, but it was impossible. No matter what I said or how I apologized, people either did not listen to me or did not trust me.”

The apostle James wrote about the tongue, saying: *“The tongue also is a fire, a world of evil among the parts of the body. It corrupts the whole body, sets the*

whole course of one's life on fire, and is itself set on fire by hell. All kinds of animals, birds, reptiles and sea creatures are being tamed and have been tamed by mankind, but no human being can tame the tongue. It is a restless evil, full of deadly poison. With the tongue, we praise our Lord and Father, and with it we curse human beings, who have been made in God's likeness. Out of the same mouth come praise and cursing. My brothers and sisters, this should not be. Can both fresh water and salt water flow from the same spring? My brothers and sisters, can a fig tree bear olives, or a grapevine bear figs? Neither can a salt spring produce fresh water." (James 3:6-12)

Dear beloved, did you consider how much power is in one single word? A single word can heal or can cause wounds, can build or can demolish.

Even those words, which were NOT said, can cause pain and suffering. A missed THANK YOU, just because we took things for granted, even those unspoken words can hurt. The appreciative words, which we never shared but we were holding back, could destroy the joy in somebody's heart.

The apostle James may have had a sad experience when he writes that the tongue is fire, the totality of evil. A bad word stains the whole body, sets the course of our lives on fire, full of unstoppable evil, and can be a deadly poison.

What a mysterious power a single spoken word can have. Even with one word, we can destroy or restore a friendship.

- With one word, you can build bridges or upset a relationship.
- With ONE word, a gossip stream can be started or stopped.
- With a single word, a spoken or unspoken word, a deadly wound can be struck or a deadly wound can be bandaged on a soul.
- A single word can make a person's life hell.
- Only with one word, a person can be wounded for the rest of their life or can be comforted.
- One word can explode the air or can be as sunshine for our soul.
- Not only a spoken word can hurt, but also an unspoken word can hurt very, very much.
- A missed "Thank you", a restrained apology, a silent word of appreciation, praise, understanding.
- In a single word, a spoken or unspoken word can cover up or restore peace between two people.

- With a single word, a spoken or unspoken word, a deadly wound can be struck, or a deadly wound can be bandaged on a soul.
- In a single word, you can break up or make a friendship closer.
- It can deepen or bridge a gaping chasm.
- It can calm you down or upset a heart.
- You can comfort or doubt a person's soul.
- A gossip stream can be started or stopped.
- A single word can make a home hell.
- Just because of one word, a man can feel offended to the depths of his soul or comforted.
- One word and the heat of unclean tempers spread in the air.

I am often talking to people who have extremely low self-esteem and they cannot see their own value. During our conversations, they disclose that, in their childhood, either one of their parents or a bully child constantly said horrible things about how their body looked or mental status. "You are good for nothing. You look horrible - look at yourself. I am ashamed of how you look. I am ashamed of how dumb you are. ...". In their childhood, those words were burned in their minds and their hearts. As they grew up, they were not able to develop their healthy self-esteem, because they were looking at themselves through those degrading words.

"Let your speech always be kind, seasoned with salt!" Obviously, in these words, the apostle does not mean that at home, at the table, as visitors, or at work, we should always talk only about serious things, or even always only about God. He does not say that we should never say a good joke or a funny story. What he says is that we should never hurt each other with harmful words.

We should say things which would give strength, joy, and hope to the other person. Our sentences should be kind, pleasant, appealing, attractive, heartwarming, and encouraging. We should make an effort to always say something beautiful and encouraging, and always the truth.

This is a matter of spirituality. The Bible says: "*For out of the abundance of the heart, the mouth speaks.*" (Matthew 12:34b) Our speech reflects the true state of our hearts. For example, if somebody can be irritated as much that the person would burst out using bad swearing words, that would tell us that that person's heart is filled with anger, bitterness and bad words. Maybe the person is able to suppress

his temper for a while, but when the person is challenged, the real EGO will come out.

If we smash a bottle of honey, only honey will flow out of it, because it contains honey. When our Lord Jesus Christ was humiliated and He suffered, He prayed for his blasphemers. He was hurt, He was betrayed, but only prayers came out through His mouth, because His heart was pure and sinless. Our words are coming out from our hearts.

Sometimes, when we try to help people to deal with their anger, we are telling them to count first from one to ten. But our next advice should be: get a new heart from Jesus. In that case, the Holy Spirit would transform our hearts, our tongues and our whole lives.

Let us think about the following two questions, and as homework, let us think about these questions during the whole week:

- Which language do we speak: the language which builds or the language which destroys?
- Who is impacting our words: the devil or Jesus Christ?

Dear sisters and brothers, take the word of God on your lips and pass it on. Your whole environment, your family, the whole world longs for true speech that proclaims pure joy and peace. After the living Jesus Christ, who also appears in our speech and dominates our language. Amen