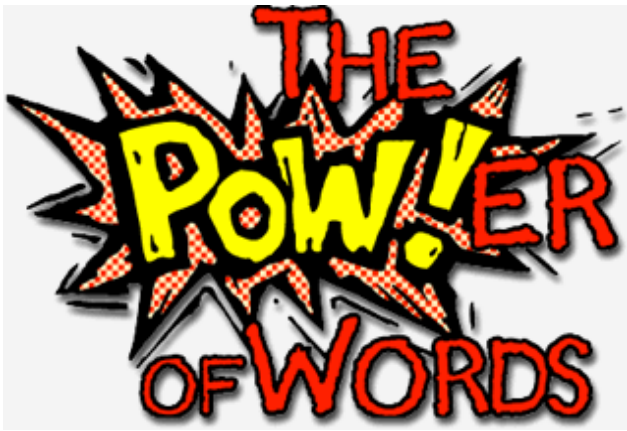




Sermon:

The Power of Words

*“Death and life are in the power of the tongue:
and they that love it shall eat the fruit thereof.”*

Proverbs 18:21

According to this verse every word we speak produces either life or death. The original Greek meaning for the word “power” is “yad”, and one of the meanings is “direction.” So death or life will occur in our life depending on the direction our tongue decides to take. Wow!

There is a story in the first chapter of Luke which not only demonstrates the importance of our speech life, but also of the great unmerited mercy and grace of God. It is the story of a certain priest named Zacharias and his wife, Elizabeth. They both were righteous before God and walked in the commandments of the Lord blameless. (vs. 6) Elizabeth was barren and they both resigned themselves to the fact that they would never have children because of their old ages.

Holding the office of a priest, Zacharias went into the temple of the Lord to burn incense. It was there he had a visitor. An angel of the Lord appears to him with quite a message. Verses 13 through 17 reveals this great promise. The angel told him that their prayer was heard and they would have a son and his name would be John; they would be joyful and glad and many would rejoice at his birth. He would be great in the Lord’s sight and would be filled with the Holy Spirit from his mother’s womb. He would prepare the hearts of the people to receive the Lord. John the Baptist would be born to prepare the way of the Lord!

What a promise! I could imagine Zacharias as this all happened so fast. He was scared when the angel appeared, and then to hear a message like this was probably very shocking to him. Verse 18 says: *“and Zacharias said unto the angel, “Whereby shall I know this? For I am an old man, and my wife well stricken in years.” The Message bible translates this as: “Do you expect me to believe this? I am an old man and my wife is an old woman!”*

Zacharias and Elizabeth had been praying for a child for years and when their prayer finally got answered, he didn’t believe it. This is a classic example of living by what we see rather than what the Word of God would say. The Word of the Lord said that they would have a child with awesome promises, but because of his natural”thinking, he just could not believe that word. And because of that, he was struck dumb. He proved he didn’t believe it by speaking it. This is a great lesson for us in that when something comes into our thoughts we need to examine that thought before we speak it. If the thought lines up with the Word of God, then speak it; if it doesn’t, then be quiet. (James 1:19)

I feel I need to make this clear: God does NOT deal with us like this today. Because of the cross, we are now under a new covenant of grace and mercy rather than judgment.

The book of Luke was still in the Old Testament dispensation so people were under the law and God used the law and brought punishment when the law was broken, but only to show the people that they could never keep the whole law anyway and that they needed a Savior who was to come. So God's reaction here was conducive to the fact that they still lived under the law and God dealt with them differently because of that. But see how God feels about our words?

Verse 20 is clear as to why his mouth was shut, but I believe there was another reason. He already could not believe the Word of the Lord. How do you think he would have handled the next nine months? Because he started in unbelief, Zacharias would have continued to speak doubt and unbelief over the entire situation.

I could just hear him: "How can we do this? We are just too old. Why couldn't God answer our prayer years ago when we were younger? How will Elizabeth handle this? She will have to be bedridden for 9 months. This will be too much for her. We are just too old to get up for a 2 am feeding. We can't afford to hire help. This will be hard, very hard." These are all words of unbelief.

I believe it was God shielding him from messing this whole thing up. Not only was he in unbelief, but God didn't want him spewing his unbelief onto others, Elizabeth, for one. It was the mercy of God who was protecting His own plan. This should reveal to us what God thinks about what we say. The Lord took great lengths to keep Zacharias from speaking unbelief which could have ruined His plan for the entire world! It was of extreme importance that John the Baptist be born. Malachi 4:6 says that if John did not fulfill his mission, then the earth would be cursed forever. There would be NO salvation for the world! We could say that if Zacharias continued speaking unbelief, then John may have never been born!

Thank God that He continually urges, encourages and exhorts us to speak faith rather than unbelief because He knows that whatever we say will either employ His angels to fix our problem (Psalm 103:20) or demonic powers to bring destruction to the very situation we want rid of! God will NOT override what we say. It's the way He set it up. He chose to give us a free will to make our own decisions as to what we do and what we say, and if we speak unbelief, He will not judge us for it because Jesus took the wrath of God onto Himself at the cross (1 John 2:2) but we will reap the consequences of what we say. Our words will come to pass. Any words we speak, whether death or life, will affect our life.

I love what happens to Zacharias once John is born. He decides to obey God and name his son John as the angel declared to him 9 months before.

At that moment (vs. 64) his mouth was opened and he spoke and praised God. Being filled with the Holy Ghost he spoke to the people telling of all the wonderful things John would accomplish as he prepared the people for the coming of the Lord. (vs. 68-79) What a difference 9 months can make! In closing let's look at Romans 4:17 which says: "...even God, who quickeneth the dead and calleth those things that which be not as though they were." This scripture is saying that God calls things that aren't as though they WERE. Shouldn't we be doing the same thing?

When I became born again I received every bit of God inside of me, including HIS own faith!

Galatians 2:20 says: *"I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life*

*which I now live in the flesh, I live by **THE FAITH** of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me.”*

So, if I have been given the faith of God, then I, too, should be able to speak those things that aren't as those they were!

Sad to say, most Christians speak what they have rather than what they want. An example would be if our child was failing in a class. Instead of speaking that he is failing, although that may be the fact, the TRUTH is that he is an "A" student. This is speaking those things that aren't as those they were. In time, that child will be an "A" student.

Let's start speaking solutions rather than problems. Let's take God at His word when He says: *"Death and life are in the power of the tongue: and they that love it shall eat the fruit thereof."* Proverbs 18:21