

# DEVOTIONALS: 26-31 May & 1 June 2024

## The Tongue, the Bridle, and the Blessing

*Readings: James 3:1-12 ~ The Message Version*

1-2 Don't be in any rush to become a teacher, my friends. Teaching is highly responsible work. Teachers are held to the strictest standards. And none of us is perfectly qualified. We get it wrong nearly every time we open our mouths. If you could find someone whose speech was perfectly true, you'd have a perfect person, in perfect control of life.

3-5 A bit in the mouth of a horse controls the whole horse. A small rudder on a huge ship in the hands of a skilled captain sets a course in the face of the strongest winds. A word out of your mouth may seem of no account, but it can accomplish nearly anything—or destroy it!

5-6 It only takes a spark, remember, to set off a forest fire. A careless or wrongly placed word out of your mouth can do that. By our speech we can ruin the world, turn harmony to chaos, throw mud on a reputation, send the whole world up in smoke and go up in smoke with it, smoke right from the pit of hell.

7-10 This is scary: You can tame a tiger, but you can't tame a tongue—it's never been done. The tongue runs wild, a wanton killer. With our tongues we bless God our Father; with the same tongues we curse the very men and women he made in his image. Curses and blessings out of the same mouth!

10-12 My friends, this can't go on. A spring doesn't gush fresh water one day and brackish the next, does it? Apple trees don't bear strawberries, do they? Raspberry bushes don't bear apples, do they? You're not going to dip into a polluted mud hole and get a cup of clear, cool water, are you? The Word of God, for the people of God. Thanks be to God.

*Welcome back as we continue our study of James 3:1-12.*

9) Resolved: To resist quarrelsome words as marks of a bad heart. - "What causes quarrels and what causes fights among you? Is it not this, that your passions are at war within you?" (James 4:1).

10) Resolved: To never speak evil of another. - "Do not speak evil against one another, brothers. The one who speaks against a brother or judges his brother, speaks evil against the law and judges the law. But if you judge the law, you are not a doer of the law but a judge" (James 4:11).

11) Resolved: To never boast in what I will accomplish.

"Come now, you who say, 'Today or tomorrow we will go into such and such a town and spend a year there and trade and make a profit' — yet you do not know what tomorrow will bring. What is your life? For you are a mist that appears for a little time and then vanishes" (James 4:13).

12) Resolved: To always speak as one who is subject to the providences of God. "Instead, you ought to say, 'If the Lord wills, we will live and do this or that'" (James 4:15).

13) Resolved: To never grumble, knowing that the Judge is at the door. "Do not grumble against one another, brothers, so that you may not be judged; behold, the Judge is standing at the door" (James 5:9).

14) Resolved: To never allow anything but total integrity in my speech. “But above all, my brothers, do not swear, either by heaven or by earth or by any other oath, but let your ‘yes’ be yes and your ‘no’ be no, so that you may not fall under condemnation” (James 5:12).

15) Resolved: To speak to God in prayer whenever I suffer. “Is anyone among you suffering? Let him pray” (James 5:13).

16) Resolved: To sing praises to God whenever I am cheerful. “Is anyone cheerful? Let him sing praise” (James 5:13).

17) Resolved: To ask for the prayers of others when I am sick. “Is anyone among you sick? Let him call for the elders of the church, and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord” (James 5:14).

18) Resolved: To confess it whenever I have failed. “Therefore, confess your sins to one another” (James 5:16).

19) Resolved: To pray for one another when I am together with others in need. “Pray for one another, that you may be healed” (James 5:16).

20) Resolved: To speak words of restoration when I see another wander. “My brothers, if anyone among you wanders from the truth and someone brings him back, let him know that whoever brings back a sinner from his wandering will save his soul from death and will cover a multitude of sins” (James 5:19–20).

Will we so resolve?

Finally, we turn to consider this passage in the context of the Gospel.

When we take one step back from James 3:1–12 and read it in the context of the entire letter, we discover that James’s searing analysis is surrounded by the most practical counsel to enable us to master the tongue and to speak well for God.

When we take another step back and view his words through the wide-angle lens of the biblical Gospel, we are able more clearly to understand and appreciate what James is “doing” when he speaks as he does.

In sum the gospel and the first epistle of St. John, St. Paul’s epistles, especially those to the Romans, Galatians, and Ephesians; and St. Peter’s first epistle, are the books that show Christ to you. They teach everything you need to know for your salvation, even if you were never to see or hear any other book or hear any other teaching.

James’s teaching cannot be rightly interpreted without realizing that it is rooted in the teaching of and energized by the grace of “faith in our Lord Jesus Christ, the Lord of glory” (James 2:1).

As temptation often comes in via the eyes, sin easily exits through the mouth. In that light we can discern a profoundly gospel-centered pattern in what James is seeking to accomplish as a pastor of the souls of his readers. His gospel method is in three steps.

Realize That the Depth of Your Sin, the Pollution of Your Heart, and Your Need of Saving Grace Are All Evidenced in Your Use of the Tongue. This is the method of grace from beginning to end. It is nowhere more starkly illustrated than in the experience of Isaiah. There is no more powerful passage in the Old Testament than Isaiah 6; but it is often read as if it were detached from Isaiah 1–5. By reading it in isolation we inevitably miss a very clear pattern into which it fits.

Isaiah has been ripping up the consciences of his sinful contemporaries. He does so in a series of six woe pronouncements (Isaiah 5:8, 11, 18, 20, 21, 22). God’s holy anger burns against them (5:25). Like a shepherd whistling for his dogs to come to tend the sheep, God will call on the nations to come as God’s servants, with arrows sharp as flint, with horses’ hoofs like flint, with roaring like a lion.

Against whom will Isaiah pronounce the ultimate woe?

The answer follows in chapter six. The prophet meets with the exalted God whose majestic presence seems to flood the temple. Isaiah sees creatures who are perfectly and perpetually holy cover their faces before the glory of the One who is eternally, infinitely, inherently, uncreated holy. Everything around Isaiah seems to be disintegrating. Everything within him seems to come apart. He is “lost,” or “ruined” (Isaiah 6:5).

This is Isaiah’s spiritual experience. He realizes that the last and climactic woe must be pronounced against — himself! And why? “Woe is me! For I am lost; for I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips; for my eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts!” (Isaiah 6:5).

In whimsical moments I think I can see Isaiah as he staggers into the house of his friend Benjamin later that day, ashen faced, shaken to the roots by his experience. He blurts out fragmentary details of his vision of the Holy One of Israel. He has discovered he is a “man of unclean lips.”

I think I can hear dear Benjamin reply sympathetically — worried that his friend of many years is becoming unstable: “Not you, Isaiah; you are the last person of whom that is true. You are our most prominent and most eloquent preacher.”

I think I hear Isaiah say in response, “You do not understand. I have seen the King. I have felt the pollution on my tongue. The light has exposed the darkness in its every crevice. Alas for me, it is in the very instrument God has called me to use, in the very area of my life in which others call me ‘gifted,’ that sin has most deeply entangled itself. I am a wretched man! Woe, woe, woe is me!”

We foolishly assume that our real struggles with sin are in the areas where we are “weak.” We do not well understand the depth of sin until we realize that it has made its home far more subtly where we are “strong,” and in our gifts rather than in our weaknesses and inadequacies. It is in the very giftedness God has given that sin has been at its most perverse and subtle!

But when we are brought to see this, stripped bare of our layers of self-deceit, and led to repentance, then God may make something of us.

Many seem to find speech easy. Recent generations have, after all, been educated to be able to speak, to contribute to discussion and debate, to express themselves by the spoken word rather than by writing. It rarely seems to strike us that it is precisely here, therefore, in our speech, that sin is most likely to abound.

Only when we have been brought to such a recognition do we realize how dangerous and destructive our tongues have been. Only then do we cry out to God in repentance and run to him with tears to seek forgiveness.

The Lord Jesus came into the world to bear the judgment of God against the sin of our tongues. When he stood before the high priest and the judgment seat of Pontius Pilate, he accepted a sentence of guilt. But that was my guilt. He bore in his body on the tree the sins of my lips and my tongue.

Do you wish you could control your tongue better? Do you want to follow the example of Jesus? Then you need to understand that he is Savior first, and then he is Example. You need to come, conscious of the sin of your lips, and say:

God, be merciful to me, a sinner. I thank you that Jesus came and was silent in order that he might bear the penalty of all my misuse of my tongue.

And when you know that he has taken God’s judgment and wrath against your every sinful word, you cannot but come to him and say: “O, for a thousand tongues to sing my great Redeemer’s praise.” He is able to answer that prayer, and its companion petition: “Be of sin the double cure, cleanse me from its guilt and power.”

All the guilt can be cleansed away! Christ can deliver you from the misuse of the tongue. And when you come to him conscious of that sin, you discover what a glorious Savior he is. Delivered, albeit not yet perfected and glorified, your tongue now shows forth his praises. Taken out of the pit and from the miry clay, on your lips is now a new song of praise to your

God. Then people not only hear a different vocabulary, but they hear you speak with a different accent. That is what leaves the lasting impression of the power of Christ and the transformation of grace in your life.

Do you speak like someone who “sounds” a little like Jesus because, born broken in your consciousness of your sinful tongue, you have found pardon and renewal in Christ, and now his Word dwells richly in you?

At the end of the day, that is what spiritual maturity looks like — or better, sounds like — because of the transformation of our use of the tongue.

May that be true of us more and more! To God be the glory!

### **YOU'RE NOT ALONE, LET US PRAY WITH YOU & FOR YOU**

- **Mrs. Sandy Wamser** has had a little health setback, but she has returned home. Let us pray: Creator God, You are the wind in my sails You guide me as I steer and find direction. You give me the strength to keep on going. You watch over me as I navigate stormy seas. You are the harbor where I stop for rest. You are my encourager when I lose hope. You are the lighthouse that keeps my path safe. You are with me always. Thank you. Amen. Please send cards and notes of love, encouragement and support for Ms. Sandy and Mr. Pat to: **Mr. Pat and Mrs. Sandy Wamser, 3742 Pleasant Valley Road, West Bend, WI 53095.**
- Sincerest and heartfelt condolences are extended to Mr. Dean and Mrs. Carol Pok, and the Pok Family, on the passing of their father and mother, **Mr. Jerry J. Pok and Mrs. Margret “Marge” Louise Pok** who God whispered their name on January 23, 2024, and February 2, 2024, and lovingly welcomed them to their eternal home. Cards and notes of sympathy and condolences can be mailed to: **Mr. Dean and Mrs. Carol Pok, 1915 Hwy 28 E., Kewaskum, WI 53040.**
- **Mrs. Elizabeth “Betty” Nelson**, well known and beloved in the community of West Bend, passed away on March 12, 2024. We continue to keep the Nelson Family in our thoughts and prayers.
- Our beloved Christian sister, **Mrs. Joy Lynn Kuhaupt**, 69, of Sussex, passed away March 7, 2024, after a brief illness at Froedtert of Milwaukee. A Celebration of Life Service will June 8, 2024, at Fifth Ave. United Methodist Church. Card and notes of condolences and support can be mailed to: **Mr. Robert Kuhaupt, Sussex Mills Apts., W240 N6345 Maple Ave., #116, Sussex, WI 53089.**
- Your continued prayers for healing and strength for **Mrs. Janice Liepert-Kempf** over the past years, has been needed and appreciated, as Ms. Janice suffered a major stroke, cancer, and cardiac surgery. **Mr. Allan Kempf** is suffering with the pain and stiffness of arthritis. Holy Spirit, thank You for being with Mr. Allan and Ms. Janice through all the ups and downs of their lives and for the many blessings God has given them for which they praise and thank God. You can send emails of prayers and support to: [alankempf33@gmail.com](mailto:alankempf33@gmail.com); or cards and notes to **Mr. Allan and Mrs. Janice Liepert-Kempf, 414B. South Pleasantview Road, Plymouth, WI 53073; phone number: 920.838.1830.**
- **Mrs. Nancy Whitson** extends her grateful appreciation to you for taking the time to send cards of love and support. Cards and notes of encouragement and support can be mailed to: **Mrs. Nancy Whitson, Aria of Brookfield, 18740 West Bluemound Road, Room 103, Brookfield, WI 53045.**
- **Bro. Bob Krell**, our beloved faithful brother is doing well and appreciative of your continued prayers and supported. Let us pray: I give you my worries and concerns and I ask for your guidance. You see it all, the outer circumstances, the inner turmoil. I know that you understand my life, that sometimes my heart weighs heavy with trouble. Right now I lay all these things before you. I breathe in, safe in the knowledge that I am held by grace. I breathe out, knowing that I am held secure in your arms. And I wait on you. For you are all truth, you are overflowing love, you are a beacon of hope and a fortress of faith. Lord, I choose to be attentive to your voice. May I be alert to your Spirit’s guiding as I continue this journey. Amen. Cards and notes of love and encouragement can be mailed to: **Mr. Bob and Mrs. Jean Krell, 804 Lenora Drive, West Bend, WI 53090.**
- We continue our prayer vigil for **Mr. Dennis Liepert** on his extensive journey of recovery. Lord, you know me inside and out. You know about my pain and distress; you understand the fears of my heart. At the cross you endured unabating agony. You have gone before me into the darkness and emerged in power and glory. At this time I lean

on You; I draw my strength from Your endless love and live in Your limitless grace trusting in You. Amen. Cards and notes of love and support can be mailed to: **Mr. Dennis and Mrs. Tammy Liepert, 7361 Tower Drive, West Bend, WI 53090.**

- **Mr. Michael Cahoon**, son of Mr. Jim and Mrs. Sandy Cahoon, has been diagnosed with pancreatic cancer and is still on a journey of healing. His latest imaging showed no growth in the cancer. To God be the glory. Lord, I reach out to you for your guidance. Please show me which way to turn. Calm my anxious thoughts, come speak into my mind. Strengthen me as I falter and feel weary. May I feel strength rising up within my heart. Bring clarity into my visions and dreams. I trust that you are with me, no matter where I go, or what I decide to do. You journey with me always. Amen. Cards and notes filled with prayers of encouragement and support can be sent to: **Mr. Michael Cahoon, C/O: Mr. Jim and Mrs. Sandy Cahoon, 1615 Beverly Lane, WI 53090.**
- We give thanks and praise that **Mr. Ben Barth**, husband of Ms. Heather Wolf, granddaughter of Mr. Roger and Mrs. Mary Rogge. recipient of a new heart and new lungs. Let us pray: Do not look forward to what may happen tomorrow; the same everlasting God who cares for you today will take care of you tomorrow and every day. Either God will shield you from suffering, or God will give you unfailing strength to bear it. Be at peace, then. Put aside all anxious thoughts and imaginations and say continually: "The Lord is my strength and my shield. My heart has trusted in God and I am helped. God is not only with me but in me, and I in God. Correspondence can be mailed to: **Mr. Ben and Mrs. Heather Barth, 223 South 11<sup>th</sup> Ave., West Bend, WI 53095.**
- We remain in prayer and support for **Mrs. Ann Cording**. Thank you, Lord, for being there for me and allowing me to cry out to you in my times of need. It is amazing to me that the Lord of the Universe would take time to listen to me and to care about what I say. God, things are happening around me right now that I do not understand. Some of these things make me feel weak, helpless, and afraid. Even in this, I know that you are Lord. I know the situation is in Your hands, and I trust You. I beseech you for strength and wisdom that I would be able to endure this situation and handle it in a way that would bring glory to Your name. In Jesus' name. Amen. Cards and notes of love and care can be mailed to: **Mrs. Ann Cording, 1416 S. Silverbrook Drive, West Bend WI 53095.**
- **Mr. Chuck Rogge** is still on a journey of healing. He is grateful for the cards and notes of support. Please continue to flood the mailbox with love and support to: **Mr. Chuck and Mrs. Sue Rogge, 5011 Hwy. P, West Bend, WI 53095.**

*We celebrate and give thanks as FAUMC enters its 176<sup>th</sup> year of service,  
Commitment, and Methodism in West Bend, Wisconsin.*

*"Honoring Our Past, Celebrating Our Present, Anticipating Our Future"*

Let's pray this prayer for God to help us control our tongues:

Lord, I know my tongue often gets ahead of my mind and heart. I am quick to speak, and I repent of the many thoughtless things I have spoken. I am sorry for words I have spoken in anger or in gossip. Please help me to see when I am about to speak without thinking and to check my heart. Help me be slow to speak. Help me Lord to be a person full of loving words, full of your Spirit, overflowing with love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, gentleness and self-control. In Jesus name we pray. Amen.

Your humble Pastor-servant leaders,

*Pastor Clarissa & Bro. Martin*