
Heart and Soul ... A Weekly Meditation

April 20, 2014

Speaking Wisely

*“Do you love life; do you relish the chance to enjoy good things?
Then you must keep your tongue from evil
and keep your lips from speaking lies!”
Psalm 34:12-13 (Common English Bible)*

It is a rhetorical question, of course. Who doesn't want to be thoroughly alive, enjoying all the good things that life has to offer, to be lifted above the plane of mere existence? To live a large life, a life of spacious activities and with a grand purpose captures our imaginations. This is a life of abounding energy and possesses a deep awareness of the things that bless – both personally and those around us.

The Psalms offer treasured insight for such a life, insight for embracing a spacious life of blessedness, of extracting the secret flavors and essences of things as we live into each day. Very specifically, we are instructed in the wisdom of many who have traveled before us; we are told to exercise wise government over our tongues. Relationships with one another rise to unimaginable heights as the tongue is disciplined and directed to build, to edify and exalt those who hear us. It is as though life receives its nutriment from careful and blessed speech.

Our speech is too often destructive. Poison-soaked speech first poisons the speaker. “Every word we speak recoils upon the speaker's heart, leaves its influence, either in grace or disfigurement,” writes that wonderful preacher, J. H. Jowett. Where the tongue is untrue the heart is afraid of exposure. Life is diminished. One may also argue that such speech is lazy speech. Where there is no exercise of restraint or government of the tongue; it is free to roam at will. Therefore, urges the Psalms, keep your tongue from evil and speaking lies. The tongue that is held in severe restriction, the tongue that only shapes words that are good and encouraging to others results in quiet and fruitful happiness.

Undisciplined tongues seem to flourish today. And the world is the poorer for it. Yet, our own lives may move to a higher plane simply by a personal revolt from the disorderly conduct of tongues. The best way to affect a departure from the guile and venom that flows freely around us is to exercise one's self in active good, of words spoken kindly, with pleasantness and grace. The fragrance of our speech will tickle the hearts of others. It may invite them to share in the same wisdom of the Psalms, an invitation to experience a blessed life, full, safe and abounding in good things.

Grant me the wisdom and strength to govern my tongue, O Lord. Help me to use my speech only to encourage, build and edify all who hear me, that my life and theirs will be blessed. Amen.

Doug Hood

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