

Traditional Home service Sunday 12th Sep

OPENING PRAYER

God, who in generous mercy sent the Holy Spirit upon your Church in the burning fire of your love:
grant that your people may be fervent in the fellowship of the gospel that, always abiding in you, they may be found steadfast in faith and active in service; through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord, who is alive and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever.
Amen

PRAYER OF PENITENCE

Let us return to the Lord our God and say to him:

Father, we have sinned against heaven and against you.
We are not worthy to be called your children.
We turn to you again.
Have mercy on us,
bring us back to yourself
as those who once were dead
but now have life through Christ our Lord
Amen.

PRAISE

Let everything be said and done in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God through Jesus Christ. Sing psalms, hymns and sacred songs:

Let us sing to God with thankful hearts.
Open our lips, Lord:
and we shall praise your name.

HYMN 1 (*Be Thou My Vision*)

READINGS - Proverbs 1.20-33
James 3.1-12
Mark 8.27-38

TALK

CREED

I believe in God, the Father almighty, creator of heaven and earth. I believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord, who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died, and was buried; he descended to the dead. On the third day he rose again; he ascended into heaven, he is seated at the right hand of the Father, and he will come to judge the living and the dead. I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy catholic Church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting. Amen.

PRAYERS OF INTERCESSION

Spend some time praying for our nation, our community and our families.

THE LORD'S PRAYER

Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as in heaven. Give us today our daily bread. Forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us. Lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil. For the kingdom, the power, and the glory are yours, now and for ever. Amen.

HYMN 2 (*Take My Life, and Let It Be Consecrated*)

CONCLUSION

The God of all grace, who called you to his eternal glory in Christ Jesus, establish, strengthen and settle you in the faith; and the blessing of God Almighty, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit be among you and remain with you always.
Amen.

HYMNS TO USE

Be thou my vision, O Lord of my heart
Naught be all else to me, save that
thou art
Thou my best thought, by day or by
night
Waking or sleeping, thy presence my
light

Be thou my wisdom, and thou my true
word
I ever with thee and thou with me,
Lord
Thou my great Father, and I thy true
son
Thou in me dwelling and I with thee
one

Riches I heed not, nor vain, empty
praise
Thou mine inheritance, now and
always
Thou and thou only first in my heart
High King of heaven, my treasure thou
art

High King of heaven, my victory won
May I reach heaven's joys, O bright
heaven's sun
Heart of my own heart, whatever befall
Still be my vision, O ruler of all
Heart of my own heart, whatever befall
Still be my vision, O ruler of all

1 Take my life and let it be
consecrated, Lord, to thee.
Take my moments and my days;
let them flow in endless praise,
let them flow in endless praise.

2 Take my hands and let them move
at the impulse of thy love.
Take my feet and let them be
swift and beautiful for thee,
swift and beautiful for thee.

3 Take my voice and let me sing
always, only, for my King.
Take my lips and let them be
filled with messages from thee,
filled with messages from thee.

4 Take my silver and my gold;
not a mite would I withhold.
Take my intellect and use
every power as thou shalt choose,
every power as thou shalt choose.

5 Take my will and make it thine;
it shall be no longer mine.
Take my heart it is thine own;
it shall be thy royal throne,
it shall be thy royal throne.

6 Take my love; my Lord, I pour
at thy feet its treasure store.
Take myself, and I will be
ever, only, all for thee,
ever, only, all for thee.

Sermon Notes - Peter Smethurst
Mind what you say – or “loose lips sink ships”.

James 3:1-12

When I was a young Christian many of the preachers here at St Mary's would start their talks by quoting Psalm 19:14 **“Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be acceptable in Your sight oh Lord my rock and my Redeemer.”**

I haven't heard anyone started talk using those words for some time now – it's no longer fashionable. It is, however, a prayer that is essential according to today's passage from James 3: 1 – 12.

There's an awful lot said in the Bible about how we use our words, what we say and why we say it. This passage from James is one of the more concentrated teachings.

When reading the Bible we need to remember that it was written without chapters and verses and on the whole without any punctuation at all. So in this passage of his letter James has just got through talking about how faith and good works need to go together and has just concluded by saying: **For as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also.** (James 2:26) and then goes on to talk about how our relatively small tongues have a great impact on our lives. He compares the human tongue to the bit in a horse's mouth, the rudder on a ship and a spark that causes a fire.

In each of these examples James exaggerates the size and the power of what is controlled by something quite small. He says we can make a large horse go wherever we want and that a small rudder makes a huge ship turned wherever the pilot chooses even though the winds are strong. He also says that it is a tiny spark that can set a great forest on fire. He then goes on to say that the tongue itself is a flame of fire and a whole world of wickedness that can corrupt your entire body and set your whole life fire. He says that no man can tame the tongue. It is restless and evil full of deadly poison. And he doesn't stop there... James points out that with our tongue we sometimes praise God and sometimes curse those who are made in God's image. Blessings and curses come pouring out of the same mouth. He says **this is not right!**

When I first read this passage from James' letter I have, to be honest, felt a bit hopeless at the thought that my tongue is set on fire by hell and that I cannot control it. That is certainly what some modern translations say but working on the principle that we should use Scripture to interpret Scripture it seems to me that the NIV and the Amplified Version are right in translating James 3:8 as saying: **but no human being can tame the tongue. It is a restless evil, full of deadly poison.** I feel that the emphasis here should be on “human being”. Jesus said: **“With man this is impossible, but not with God; all things are possible with God.”** (Mark 10:27)

Otherwise why would James have written earlier in this letter **If you claim to be religious but don't control your tongue, you are fooling yourself, and your religion is worthless.** (James 1:26) The implication is that the tongue can be controlled!

James himself gave us the answer to this dilemma early on in his letter when he said: **My dear brothers and sisters, take note of this: Everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to become angry, because human anger does not produce the righteousness that God desires.**

Therefore, get rid of all moral filth and the evil that is so prevalent and humbly accept the word planted in you, which can save you. (James 1:19 – 21)

Once again it is the Word of God planted in us that can save us – but we have our part to play by accepting that God's Word knows best and by using the Spirit of power, love and self-discipline (2 Timothy 1:7) that He has given to help us to be quick to listen, slow to speak, slow to become angry and to get rid of moral filth.

Over 30 years ago I heard an anecdote from Kenneth Copeland from when he was a pilot and had his own small commercial airline. It seems that he had employed a young man to work on the aeroplanes who like to use the word “shit” a lot. At that time it was definitely considered to be a swearword and although he probably didn't mean to be offensive it had become part of his vocabulary.

One day another employee pulled him aside to warn him that the boss was a born again Christian and lay preacher who didn't take kindly to swearing. Not long after this whilst Kenneth Copeland was in the workshop the

young man dropped one of his tools and exclaimed "oh shit!". The other men in the workshop stopped talking and he looked round and saw Kenneth Copeland standing there. The young man blushed and apologised profusely to Ken who just smiled and said; "in the Bible it says that 'out of the fullness of the heart the mouth speaks' – and now we know what you're full of."

Using Scripture to interpret Scripture I was also able to get some peace over the first verse of chapter 3 which says: **Dear brothers and sisters not many of you should become teachers in the church, for we who teach will be judged more strictly.**

I am delighted to say that this does not refer to God judging me on my performance. In the second verse of today's reading James says: **We all fail in many areas, but especially with our words.** (James 3:2) And I am definitely one of the ALL.

Knowing that Jesus was judged in my place on the cross when He took all my sins and gave me all of His righteousness and that there is now no condemnation for those who have accepted His finished work (see Romans 8) I have no fear of being judged by God because of how well or how badly I teach.

The judgement that Christians face is from the world, the flesh and the devil – and sadly the Church. "How can you watch Science Fiction movies and call yourself a Christian!" "I have seen you get angry on lots of occasions – how can you stand up in front of people and preach! What a hypocrite!"

If the devil can get other people to say these things, he's happy but if he can't then he will whisper it in your ear in the hope that he can get you to say it to yourself.

At such times you need to remind yourself of who you really are – that you are the righteousness of God in Christ Jesus and that there is no condemnation for you. (2 Corinthians 5:21 and Romans 8:1)

The bottom line is that we need to be very careful about what we say to others and to ourselves.

Proverbs 18:21 says: **Death and life are in the power of the tongue, And those who love it will eat its fruit.**

I like the Passion Translation of this verse: **Your words are so powerful that they will kill or give life, and the talkative person will reap the consequences.** This is certainly something worth meditating on!

Jesus said that we all must give an account on judgement day for every idle word that we speak. (Matthew 12:36)

The remedy for idle words is, as James said, to **humbly accept the Word planted in you, which can save you.**

That Word tells us to keep our eyes upon Jesus, who loves us so much that He took our judgement, our punishment for sin when He went to the cross in our place. God is both holy and righteous and cannot judge us for the sins which were judged in the body of his Son on the cross.

Humanly speaking we have a tendency to say all the wrong things but once the Holy Spirit comes to live in us He can control the tongue, if we will give Him permission.

St Paul told the Corinthians: **Therefore I want you to know that no one who is speaking by the Spirit of God says, "Jesus be cursed," and no one can say, "Jesus is Lord," except by the Holy Spirit.** (1 Corinthians 12:3)

Paul further emphasised the importance of speaking out in faith when he said:

If you declare with your mouth, "Jesus is Lord," and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved.

For it is with your heart that you believe and are justified, and it is with your mouth that you profess your faith and are saved.

(Romans 10:9 & 10)

Amen