

Message Series Title: **'James: A Working Faith'**

Message Title: **'How Tamed is Your Tongue?'**

Scripture Source: **James 3:1-18**

Date: Sunday, October 19, 2014

Speaker: John Garner

A Troublesome Tongue

It can cause all sorts of grief. You know it, as do I. We have been a source of it and victimized by it. What is it? An unruly tongue. It has ambushed you in the form of a hand written letter (remember those?), blindsided you in a caustic email, a searing phone call or a harsh 'face to face' encounter. Whether you saw it coming or not, words rocked your world. Left you reeling and grasping for something to hold on to. And, not only have you and I been on the receiving end of an unruly tongue, we have at times been on the giving end. We have been unnerved (hopefully) by how quickly and at times, how easily we have let our tongue have its hurtful way in the lives of others. Illustrate:

How to Tame Your Tongue

1. **Be Discerning:** Vs. 1: The responsibility of being a teacher is one to discern accurately. A 'stricter judgment' awaits because of the potential for influence. And that's a sobering consideration.
2. **Be Honest:** Vs. 2: None of us are exempt from verbal/written 'slip ups' with our words. God affirms great value in maturity of speech. A tamed tongue sets the stage for a healthier life in all realms.
3. **Be Aware:** Vss. 3-5: James uses compelling and instructive images to convey a thought provoking and challenging statement regarding the awful potential of an unruly or untamed tongue. Images that we can learn from...if we will 'listen expectantly.'
 - Bits and bridle for horses, rudder for a ship, small spark generating a forest fire, Please note: a small, often unnoticed or underestimated item can produce disproportionate results of harm, pain, and devastation when not controlled or used properly. Look at the images and understand the influence/effect that can be exerted. Re: fire: "The word translated 'forest' could refer to the brush that covered so many Palestinian hills, and which, in that dry Mediterranean climate, could so easily and disastrously burst into flame." (D.Moo)
4. **Be Startled:** Vss.6-8: James speaks with unnerving candor about the latent evil and destructiveness of the untamed tongue. That includes my tongue and yours. He holds nothing back in stressing his point. "The tongue also is a fire...a world of evil...it corrupts the whole person..." There is nothing 'positive' to be said about the untamed tongue. James is pleading with you and me: "listen to me...take my words seriously, so much is at stake." Proverbs 11: 9: "With his mouth the godless destroys his neighbour..." Proverbs 12:6: "The words of the wicked lie in wait for blood..." Proverbs 12:18: "Reckless words pierce like a sword..." Proverbs 13:3:" ...but he who speaks rashly will come to ruin." Proverbs 16:27:"A scoundrel plots evil, and his speech is like a scorching fire." The effects of the untamed tongue are sobering. Illustrate: school teacher Remember the words of Jesus, Matthew 15:18-20 Read In Genesis 1:26 God intended that humans would 'rule', or tame all sorts of created things.

Yet, left to ourselves the ability to ‘tame the tongue’ eludes us. It is a “restless evil, full of deadly poison.” Read Psalm 140:3

5. Be Humbled: Vss. 9-12: Certain things ought not to be. Humbly accept that fact, that directive from God. Again, easy to understand illustrations from daily life. If I claim to be a Christian certain words and actions don’t ‘fit.’ It really is that simple, tough to live out but not complicated to figure out! At the heart of his statement is that people matter to God and are made in his image. Don’t mess with people through words that injure, wound, and devastate. Words, in whatever way communicated: verbal, text, email etc.
6. Be Maturing: Vss. 13-18: be mindful of the fact that your words are an indicator of where you at with God, others, and yourself. Read these words. Are your ‘words and deeds’ indicative of self-centeredness or Jesus-centeredness? This is not rocket science friends. Cultivate your personal relationship with God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Ask for God’s help and direction in taming your tongue and living a life of love and service to others. Wisdom is not just about accumulating knowledge; it is about how we live in the flow of life, with difficulties and opportunities set before us, every day. As we mature with a wise use of our words and deeds, God is honoured and people’s lives are enriched. Vs. 18.

Personal Reflection and Response:

1. How tamed is my tongue, really? When it comes to words, however communicated, am I more tamed or unruly?

Where would you place your mark on the continuum?

2. Where does your tongue misbehave and with who, most often? Be specific. Courage and humility required!

-
3. What would a ‘tamed tongue’ look like in your daily life? What would change? Again, be very specific. For example, how about the way you would communicate?

4. Is it time to make amends with someone who has been on the receiving end of some trash talk from you? Will you come clean and ask for forgiveness, in specifics? Who needs to hear from you for your ‘toxic tongue’? Especially patterns of communicating. Who will you connect with today, face to face or over the phone? This is not a time for texting or email folks. Do the courageous thing and talk in real time with your actual voice! Does your spouse need to hear from you...or a child, or a parent, or a friend, someone at work or church? Do you need to come clean with God and call your untamed and sometimes toxic tongue what it is...sin? There is forgiveness for our wayward tongues! 1 John 1:9

Remember 2 Peter 1: 3-4 Through the power of God’s Spirit, trusting His power and obeying his words we can tame the tongue. No more excuses or delays. Let’s work with God and mature as those whose words and deeds breathe life in to others!

“...the tongue of the wise brings healing.” Proverbs 12:18 Let that be your tongue, my tongue, our collective tongue as a church!