

Sermon Notes

WORSHIP SERVICE - 11.6.2022

WEAPONIZING WORDS

I. INTRODUCTION

- Proverbs has a lot to say to us regarding speech, words, our communication, the tongue, our mouths and lips, and how we use those to bring either death or life to others.
- Other than wisdom, this is the second most addressed topic in Proverbs.
- Words matter. How we use words matters greatly.
- Today our focus is going to be on the improper use of words, called foolish speech
- The message is titled “Weaponizing Words.”
- When we weaponize something we are adapting it for use as a weapon of war to harm others.
- Proverbs is going to show us speech, communication, and words that have been weaponized against someone else.

James 3:1-12

Not many of you should become teachers, my brothers, for you know that we who teach will be judged with greater strictness. 2 For we all stumble in many ways. And if anyone does not stumble in what he says, he is a perfect man, able also to bridle his whole body. 3 If we put bits into the mouths of horses so that they obey us, we guide their whole bodies as well. 4 Look at the ships also: though they are so large and are driven by strong winds, they are guided by a very small rudder wherever the will of the pilot directs. 5 So also the tongue is a small member, yet it boasts of great things.

How great a forest is set ablaze by such a small fire! 6 And the tongue is a fire, a world of unrighteousness. The tongue is set among our members, staining the whole body, setting on fire the entire course of life, and set on fire by hell. 7 For every kind of beast and bird, of reptile and sea creature, can be tamed and has been tamed by mankind, 8 but no human being can tame the tongue. It is a restless evil, full of deadly poison. 9 With it we bless our Lord and Father, and with it we curse people who are made in the likeness of God. 10 From the same mouth come blessing and cursing. My brothers, these things ought not to be so. 11 Does a spring pour forth from the same opening both fresh and salt water? 12 Can a fig tree, my brothers, bear olives, or a grapevine produce figs? Neither can a salt pond yield fresh water.

II. THE POWER OF WORDS

- James first addresses the teachers of the church because their speech can either be edifying to the body of believers or destructive.
- Teachers of God's Word are held to a much higher standard and will face a greater judgment for what and how they teach God's people.
- James states that the person who can bridle his whole body, that is control his whole body, would be considered a perfect man.
- A bit or bridle is the headgear that is used to control a horse. That little piece can control a powerful stallion.
- The rudder of a ship is comparatively small relative to the whole ship, yet that tiny little part can steer a large vessel.
- And then we have the tongue, a very small member of our body that causes a world of trouble.
- What incredible damage can be done with words.
- Our inability to control our tongues has destroyed many relationships.
- How many of us wish we could take back careless words that we have spoken and regretted?
- Solomon understood the harmful power of words and he warned us about them repeatedly—we would do well to heed those wisdom words.

1. THE HEART-MOUTH CONNECTION

- What we have found in Proverbs is that our words and how we use them are a reflection of what is in our heart.
- Look at these connections between the heart and our words.
- Prov 12:23 A prudent man conceals knowledge, but the heart of fools proclaims folly.
- Prov 14:33 Wisdom rests in the heart of a man of understanding, but it makes itself known even in the midst of fools.
- Prov 16:23 The heart of the wise makes his speech judicious and adds persuasiveness to his lips.
- Solomon and the sages of Proverbs determine who is righteous and who is wicked not just by their actions but also in the quality of their words.
- Prov 15:28 The heart of the righteous ponders how to answer, but the mouth of the wicked pours out evil things.
- Prov 26:24-26 Whoever hates disguises himself with his lips and harbors deceit in his heart; 25 when he speaks graciously, believe him not, for there are seven abominations in his heart 26 though his hatred be covered with deception, his wickedness will be exposed in the assembly.
- What's in your heart will manifest in your communication.

2. THE CONSEQUENCES OF OUR WORDS

- Proverbs teaches us that how we use our words to impact others will have a direct impact on us.
- Prov 13:3 Whoever guards his mouth preserves his life; he who opens wide his lips comes to ruin.
- A correlation is made between what a person says and the outcome of his life.
- Prov 18:20 From the fruit of a man's mouth his stomach is satisfied; he is satisfied by the yield of his lips.
- The imagery here is that people feast on their own words. Our words influence our behavior and our words will ultimately determine our fate.
- Prov 18:21 Death and life are in the power of the tongue, and those who love it will eat its fruits.
- Death and life is a merism, it means the whole of life, everything between and including life and death.
- How one uses language to achieve their purpose will determine if those words produce good or bad.
- Our speech has consequences.

3. WE WILL BE JUDGED FOR OUR SPEECH

- Jesus himself taught us the heart/mouth connection and how we will be judged for our speech.
- Matt 12:33-37 “Either make the tree good and its fruit good, or make the tree bad and its fruit bad, for the tree is known by its fruit. 34 You brood of vipers! How can you speak good, when you are evil? For out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks. 35 The good person out of his good treasure brings forth good, and the evil person out of his evil treasure brings forth evil. 36 I tell you, on the day of judgment people will give account for every careless word they speak, 37 for by your words you will be justified, and by your words you will be condemned.”
- Words are powerful because the source of our communication is rooted in the nature of God!
- Our God is a communicating God!
- We image God in our ability to communicate with verbal language.
- How important is it for us then, to use our speech in a way that glorifies God and gives life to ourselves and others.

III. FOOLISH SPEECH

- Foolish speech weaponizes words to harm others or to make ourselves look better in the eyes of others.
- Foolish speech doesn't build up relationships, it tears them apart.
- Let's look at a few of the categories of foolish speech that we must avoid.

1. PERVERSE / CROOKED SPEECH

- In Solomon's lesson to his son in ch2, he encourages his son to treasure wisdom, to have it come into his heart because it will deliver him from men of perverted speech (Prov 2:12).
- Prov 4:24, “Put away from you crooked speech, and put devious talk far from you.
- Perverse or crooked speech is speech that distorts truth and reality.
- The definition of truth is that which conforms to reality.
- When we are declaring something to be true that is not true, that is perverse or crooked speech.
- It would include things that will call evil good and good evil.
- Prov 24:24 Whoever says to the wicked, “You are in the right,” will be cursed by peoples, abhorred by nations,
- To call something that is a sin anything other than what it is—sin—is perverse.
- We are people of the truth and our speech must declare what is true.
- In this category would include any attempts at us justifying or excusing our sin.
- Prov 30:20 This is the way of an adulteress: she eats and wipes her mouth and says, “I have done no wrong.”
- With our words we can rationalize and minimize and excuse our sin.
- We want others to think of us as being good and want to prove ourselves right to others and avoid repentance.
- Do you use perverse and crooked speech to distort the truth or excuse away your sin?

2. LIES

- The lie is a misrepresentation of the truth with the intent of deceiving the hearer.

- A lie is a deception. It can be an exaggeration, embellishing the truth, a half-truth, an omission of the truth, intentional misrepresentation, or perjury.
- A lie is a construction of a false reality to make ourselves look better, to get something we want, to avoid punishment or something difficult, to keep from being found out, or to hurt someone else.
- Lies are attempts at manipulating a desired outcome.
- Prov 14:5 A faithful witness does not lie, but a false witness breathes out lies. (See also Prov 14:25)
- The 9th commandment, “You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor (Ex 20:16).”
- God hates the lying tongue and the false witness that pours out lies (Prov 6:17,19).
- Prov 12:22a Lying lips are an abomination to the Lord,
- Prov 25:18 A man who bears false witness against his neighbor is like a war club, or a sword, or a sharp arrow.
- Do you make it a habit of lying to make yourself look better or avoid something difficult?

3. ARGUMENTS

- Many weaponize words in order to pick fights. They love to argue.
- Proverbs calls them quarrelsome.
- Prov 26:21 As charcoal to hot embers and wood to fire, so is a quarrelsome man for kindling strife.
- The foolish person uses words to incite others to argue.
- Prov 12:18 There is one whose rash words are like sword thrusts, but the tongue of the wise brings healing.
- Rash words are harsh words, words spoken in a tone that quickly turns a conversation combative.
- Arguments are disruptive to relationships.
- Solomon speaks about a quarrelsome woman:
- Prov 21:9 It is better to live in a corner of the housetop than in a house shared with a quarrelsome wife.
- Prov 21:19 It is better to live in a desert land than with a quarrelsome and fretful woman.
- He says a quarrelsome woman is like the constant dripping on a rainy day (Prov 27:15).
- These are harsh statements but they are a true—no one wants to be around a contentious person.
- Paul warns believers to avoid quarreling in the church because it is so disruptive to relationships and unity in the church (2 Tim. 2:14; Titus 3:9).
- Solomon encourages us not to get involved in other people’s quarrels.
- Prov 26:17 Whoever meddles in a quarrel not his own is like one who takes a passing dog by the ears.
- We should strive for peace. Don’t go around picking fights.
- There is a time for a fight—the wise person knows when that is.
- Are you a quarrelsome person who uses words foolishly in order to pick a fight?

4. INSULTS / SLANDER

- Foolish speech can take the form of malicious statements made about a person’s character, behavior, or appearance.
- The fool hurls words of insult and slander to hurt, belittle, or demean others.
- Prov 11:12 Whoever belittles his neighbor lacks sense, but a man of understanding remains silent.

- Prov 20:19 Whoever goes about slandering reveals secrets; therefore do not associate with a simple babblers.
- The slanderer likes to defame a person's reputation or mock them.
- They do it out of jealousy or to get even with someone or simply because they don't like the person.
- Be careful of using sarcasm in a way that is a thinly veiled insult.
- Prov 26:18-19 Like a madman who throws firebrands, arrows, and death is the man who deceives his neighbor and says, "I am only joking!"
- Do you use cutting and biting language to insult others or belittle them?

5. GOSSIP / RUMORS

- Gossip is revealing a secret, something said to you in confidence.
- Prov 11:13 Whoever goes about slandering reveals secrets, but he who is trustworthy in spirit keeps a thing covered.
- The gossip loves to say, "*Don't tell anyone else but...*"
- Paul rebukes the idle widows who were gossips and busybodies (1 Tim 5:12-13).
- The result of gossip is the same as other foolish speech, it destroys relationships.
- Prov 16:18 A dishonest man spreads strife, and a whisperer separates close friends.
- But also, don't be the person who likes to be on the receiving end of gossip.
- Prov 18:8 The words of a whisperer are like delicious morsels; they go down into the inner parts of the body.
- If we enjoy hearing gossip and rumors we are just as guilty as the one who uses foolish speech to gossip and spread rumors.
- Do you like to spread privileged information told to you in confidence?
- Can you be trusted with something told to you in confidence?

6. FLATTERY / BRAGGING

- Flattery is excessive complementing of others with the hidden purpose of getting something, ingratiating yourself, or harming someone.
- Prov 29:5 A man who flatters his neighbor spreads a net for his feet.
- The adulteress that we have looked at before is the perfect example of someone who uses smooth and flattering talk to seduce the gullible (Prov 6:24; 7:21).
- Prov 26:23 Like the glaze covering an earthen vessel are fervent lips with an evil heart.
- A person who likes to flatter others is saying things that may not reflect reality, it is like glaze that covers the rough surface of a clay pot.
- Flirtatious talk is the foolish speech of flattery.
- Bragging is self-exaltation and self-praise.
- It is attempting to present a better picture of yourself than is warranted.
- Prov 27:2 Let another praise you, and not your own mouth; a stranger, and not your own lips.
- It's not proper to promote yourself or embellish your accomplishments or make every conversation about you.
- Why do we do this? Out of insecurity, seeking the approval of others, and pride.
- Do you like to excessively compliment others with some hidden purpose?
- Are you constantly telling others about what you've done in order to make yourself look better in other people's eyes?

- Crooked speech, lies, arguments, insults, slander, gossip, rumors, flattery and bragging—All of this weaponization of words is foolish speech.
- It is the way of folly.
- Foolish speech harms others and ultimately harms those who speak them.
- Prov 12:13 An evil man is ensnared by the transgression of his lips, but the righteous escapes from trouble.

CONCLUSION

- So what is our hope if we are trapped in patterns of foolish speech?
- James 1:26 If anyone thinks he is religious and does not bridle his tongue but deceives his heart, this person's religion is worthless.
- What an incredible condemnation that puts on all of us because we have all failed to control our tongues.
- Ultimately we need the righteousness of Christ to escape from the trouble that our mouth has gotten us into.
- Jesus never sinned with his mouth.
- He never uttered a foolish word.
- He never harmed anyone sinfully with his speech.
- There was no lie ever spoken from his lips (1 Peter 2:22).
- His tongue was always under his control.
- He fully lived out Proverbs perfectly as the faithful and obedient, wise son.
- And yet he took upon himself the judgment for all of our foolish speech, so that we could have his righteousness and have forgiveness for how we have sinned with our mouth.
- To the degree that you believe and trust Jesus, believe the promises of the gospel, you will no longer need to use crooked speech, lie, be contentious, insult or slander others, gossip, or exalt yourself.
- You will not need to justify yourself because in Christ you have already been justified.
- You will not need to seek the approval of others because you already have the approval of Jesus Christ.
- In Christ, our speech is redeemed because our hearts have been made new.
- And by God's grace and the Spirit's enablement and sanctifying work, we can control our tongues, and use our speech to glorify God and edify others.
- There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus (Rom 8:31).