

# The Tongue

James 3, Luke 6

- We approach two passages of scripture today regarding the tongue
- It is revealed to be unique among God's creation
- Having power far beyond its size
- Able to set great things in motion
- We find it can be used for good or evil
- That it can deceive
- But that it eventually reveals our hearts
- And sometimes that is not a pretty sight
- Today in James and Luke - "The Tongue"
- When we cover the category of the tongue from scripture, we could be talking about a few things
- Of course it is the content of what we say
- It could be the way in which we say it - with less emphasis on content
- How often we say something - again, with slightly less emphasis on content
- And the timing of our speech - when we choose to say something, positive or negative
- We could be dealing with the truthfulness of our speech
- Or speech that is harsh or abrasive or foul
- Perhaps something we say is true, but does not need to be said - it is out of place or time
- All of these potential options should be considered as we begin...

James 3:1-2

- 1 My brethren, be not many masters, knowing that we shall receive the greater condemnation.
- 2 For in many things we offend all. If any man offend not in word, the same is a perfect man, and able also to bridle the whole body.

- The passage begins dealing with those who lead and teach
- Because they have greater opportunity to speak
- Their words are often carry a greater weight
- And leaders (teachers) speak with those who trust them
- This is why this passage essentially says...

"My brothers and sisters, not many of you should be teachers. I say this because, as you know, we who teach will be judged more strictly than others."

- Some consideration should be given to the control one has of their tongue
- Especially when the opportunity to teach is provided
- This is because the tongue is an indicator of our self-control (even our spirituality)
- Unfortunately we know that none of us measure up, no man is perfect
- If any of us were able to control our tongues fully - not offending with our mouths
- We would be perfect
- And we see why this is the case in a few verses
- The limited control we do have is an excellent indicator of our heart-condition
- (The second passage of the day makes this clear)
- And we can use our words (often) to measure what is happening inside
- What is the mouth capable of doing?

James 3:3-4

3 Behold, we put bits in the horses' mouths, that they may obey us; and we turn about their whole body.

4 Behold also the ships, which though they be so great, and are driven of fierce winds, yet are they turned about with a very small helm, whithersoever the governor listeth.

- Small things determine direction, steering big things
- The relatively tiny tongue of man can steer him in one direction or the other
- And as with any horse or any ship, they can be directed rightly or wrongly
- In the right direction - or the wrong direction
- The tongue is the helm
- It is the rudder that determines where the ship of life may go
- And once it has been turned, things happen - whether we want them to happen or not
- We know this to be the case, for how many world events have been triggered by words?
- How many leaders have set movements and actions in motions simply by speaking?
- How many families have been altered for good or ill by words?
- And so we must be cautious...

James 3:5

5 Even so the tongue is a little member, and boasteth great things. Behold, how great a matter a little fire kindleth!

- Even though the tongue is small, it can do great damage
- Words can set real-life calamity in motion
- They can start a chain reaction
- They can bring about outcomes we never intended (or certainly didn't anticipate)
- The tongue can boast
- We can use it to make ourselves and our actions seem noble
- Or seem bigger (greater) than they are
  
- These facts should be considered before every mouth is opened - every day
- In every conversation, in every situation
  
- There is danger in speaking
- Certainly in speaking without thinking
- Absolutely in speaking that which is ungodly
  
- Because...

James 3:6

6 And the tongue is a fire, a world of iniquity: so is the tongue among our members, that it defileth the whole body, and setteth on fire the course of nature; and it is set on fire of hell.

- There is so much potential for damage in the tongue
- We can make people think less of other people
- We can undermine authority
- We can spread rumors (things that are untrue)
- We can discourage people
- We can make them question the goodness of God
- We can cause doubt, when we ought to reassure
- We can accuse others of wrongdoing without the facts
- And all manner of other destructive things
- (The list could be paragraphs, even pages long)
- Everything on the list - hellish
- Characteristic, not of God's character, but of the enemy
  
- We're beginning to understand why this is a key issue in the Christian life
- As this passage goes on...

### James 3:7-8

7 For every kind of beasts, and of birds, and of serpents, and of things in the sea, is tamed, and hath been tamed of mankind:

8 But the tongue can no man tame; it is an unruly evil, full of deadly poison.

- Unlike wild animals of all sorts
- The tongue cannot be tamed
- We can get in the pen with wild lions or tigers or bears
- We train them to do things we want them to do
- This is not the case with the tongue
- There is no means for any natural taming on the tongue
- It is unruly
  
- The good news is the Spirit of God can give us power to control it
- Not to tame it, but to control it
- When, not we ourselves, but the Spirit is in charge
- We can use the tongue properly
  
- Too often, something else is the case...

### James 3:9-10

9 Therewith bless we God, even the Father; and therewith curse we men, which are made after the similitude of God.

10 Out of the same mouth proceedeth blessing and cursing. My brethren, these things ought not so to be.

- There is hypocrisy in an uncontrolled tongue
- We can use it to do mutually exclusive things
- Praising God and cursing men are opposites, they cannot coexist
- Yet the mouth can do both
- Revealing the wickedness inside us
  
- This ought never to be the case
- Because...

### James 3:11-12

11 Doth a fountain send forth at the same place sweet water and bitter?

12 Can the fig tree, my brethren, bear olive berries? either a vine, figs? so can no fountain both yield salt water and fresh.

- The tongue is unique in the natural world
  - It too often springs forth with bitter water and sweet water
  - Revealing there is a grave problem with the water source
  - It reveals something false in us that must be confronted and altered
  - And only God is powerful enough to do the altering
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- Let's look at our passage in Luke...

Luke 6:41

41 And why beholdest thou the mote that is in thy brother's eye, but perceivest not the beam that is in thine own eye?

- We must beware the correction of others
  - For our problems are often far greater than their own
  - And our vision (as a result) can be fatally obscured
  - We can be prevented from seeing with any clarity
- 
- This passage helps us...

Luke 6:42

42 Either how canst thou say to thy brother, Brother, let me pull out the mote that is in thine eye, when thou thyself beholdest not the beam that is in thine own eye? Thou hypocrite, cast out first the beam out of thine own eye, and then shalt thou see clearly to pull out the mote that is in thy brother's eye.

- There can be great hypocrisy in correcting others
  - (Assuming we have unresolved sin of our own)
  - Therefore we help not our brother, but hinder him
  - And damage ourselves
- 
- Back to a familiar idea from our passage in James...

Luke 6:43

43 For a good tree bringeth not forth corrupt fruit; neither doth a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit.

- The natural world works in a certain way

- It cannot be altered
- In fact...

Luke 6:44

44 For every tree is known by his own fruit. For of thorns men do not gather figs, nor of a bramble bush gather they grapes.

- There is knowledge in the fruit
- And men are not unlike trees
- Our fruit reveals what kind of tree we really are
- And...

Luke 6:45

45 A good man out of the good treasure of his heart bringeth forth that which is good; and an evil man out of the evil treasure of his heart bringeth forth that which is evil: for of the abundance of the heart his mouth speaketh.

- So, where do these good or evil words come from?
- Despite our insistence about words we "didn't mean"
- We say words for reasons
- And when they are evil words, they come forth of evil
- Good words, of good
- Realizing this, the critical question arrives...

Luke 6:46

46 And why call ye me, Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say?

- Why does the mouth speak one thing, the actions revealing another?
- Because the mouth can deceive
- But it can only deceive so long
- Our words will eventually betray the reality
- How seriously then, are we taking our words?

*Christopher Harper, Take Note 2025*