

TRANSCRIPTION | Sunday, June 9, 2024 | Words Can Never Hurt Me

We've been in a message series entitled Live Not by Lies. And what we've been evaluating is the reality that Jesus told us we have an enemy. That enemy is known as the devil. And Jesus says that he is the father of lies.

Jesus further states that the devil, working out of his own resources, tries to deceive all of mankind. Now the Bible in the New Testament goes as far as to tell us that the longer time stands, the more effective the enemy will become at his deception. So it's important for us to make sure that we are not living a lie.

The only way that we can address that is that we have to talk about the truth to go to the Word of God. And so we've addressed several lies, confronted several lies with the truth of God's Word. Already in this series this morning, I'd like to talk about another. Now, we've all heard this saying, sticks and stones may break my bones, but this can never hurt me. That's a lie.

That's a lie I want to talk to you about this morning. Words can never hurt me. In the Bible, the book of Ephesians, Paul was writing to a church there at Ephesus, and in so doing he addresses the subject of what should and what should not come out of our mouth. Look at it with me. Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths, but only what is helpful for the building up of others according to their needs, that it may benefit those who listen and do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, with whom you were sealed for the day of redemption.

Get rid of bitterness, rage, anger, brawling, slander, and every form of evil behavior or conversation. Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other just as in Christ. God forgave you. Now was a theologian named Eugene Peterson, and he evaluated this same passage of text, and he offered commentary on it and even a further translation, the way that it's stated in Ephesians four.

Watch the way you talked. Let nothing foul or dirty come out of your mouth. Say only what helps each word should be a gift. Do not grieve God. Don't break his heart. His Holy Spirit moving and breathing in you is the most intimate part of your life, making you fit for himself. Don't take such a gift for granted.

Instead, make a clean break with all cutting, backbiting, and profane talk. Be gentle with one another, sensitive. Forgive one another as quickly and as thoroughly as God in Christ forgave you. Here's the summary of what Paul seems to be saying. Words can hurt people. You can learn a lot about somebody's character by having a conversation with them. Words reveal character.

It was Jesus Christ that confirmed that reality. In Matthew 12 he said, for whatever is in your heart determines what you say. One pastor added that it's really an unfortunate thing that most

of us tend to be tolerant of our own shortcomings, but we tend to be very critical of the faults of other people. And Jesus warned about letting that kind of speech come into your conversations.

In Matthew chapter seven, he said, why do you look at the speck of sawdust in your brother's art and pay no attention to the plank that's in your own, how can you say to your brother, let me take the speck out of your eye when there is a plank in your own words can hurt people. And we're being told through the context of Scripture that our heart will be revealed through what comes out of our mouth.

And Jesus is warning us to make sure that we approach our speech cautiously and then you start thinking about words. Words can be very potent and powerful. A singular word can sometimes contain so much for, for instance, a word that is both sweet and bitter is memory, a word that is a great teacher? Is experience a dangerous word?

A hard word is no. A difficult word is forgiveness. A word that opens heaven? Is repentance. Words can be potent. Words can be powerful. In fact, when there was nothing in all of creation, God began to use words to speak everything that we know into existence. With words God spoke the sun and the moon and the stars and earth, and all the living creatures and the fish of the sea into existence.

And then he made us in his image. So as humans we are made in the image of a God who was a creator with words. Even that in and of itself speaks, seems to speak further to the potency of words. if you had a chance to be at parenting night, a few months ago, which we hosted on behalf of the church, one of my good friends was here.

He and his wife have eight kids. Eight kids, I feel like we're struggling to raise two and anybody that has eight. I want to hear what they have to say. I want to hear the expertise that they have achieved throughout that process. One of the things that they practice as a family is valuing words. And so, for instance, among eight siblings you can imagine sometimes there's a little spat or there's a little fight, there's a disagreement.

And so it might be that this sibling speaks to the other and says, you're stupid, you're dumb, you're an idiot. At which point, if they're caught, the parents bring them in, make them face one another. And the person that the child that has said these harsh things is then required to speak at least seven things positively over their brother or sister, validating the Scripture that a thief caught in the act of stealing must give back seven times what he took.

And so now they must say seven things that they believe God wants to use their sibling to do, or seven things that they like, or seven things that they can affirm or they consider positive. I think you would do a lot of adults some good just to stand nose to nose and give back some stuff that's been stolen through words and conversation.

Because here's the reality. We have to understand that words can hurt or words can heal. The Bible says in Proverbs, kind words heal and help cutting words wound and maim. So maybe

another way that we could say it is that words can hurt or words can help. Words can heal or words can kill. Scripture further back. Set up Proverbs 18.

The tongue can bring death or life. Those who love to talk will reap the consequences. One of the reasons I think that happens is that when you really love to talk, sometimes you stop thinking before you speak to someone. So this into my life many years ago of Eric think before you speak. Think before you speak.

Ask yourself, is it thoughtful? Is it helpful? Is it inspirational? Is it necessary? Is it kind? Think before you speak. And what you begin to discover is that words are like a rudder. The book of James says that. It says that your tongue will be like a rudder. I want you to think about in conversations how that someone speaks and they begin to take a conversation, a specific direction.

But then you speak and you can use your words like a rudder to turn that conversation in a different direction. Words are like a rudder. I was thinking about how I was watching this video of an old naval battle, and there's this great big battleship, and it came out. It had a phenomenal captain and had this incredible crew. It was outfitted with all the arsenal that you can imagine, and it looked like this mighty battleship.

But yet as it went out into the sea to the battle, its rudder began to malfunction. And as they were in the battle, it was not able to turn itself. And so it began to drift into the line of fire. And before you knew it, it was sunk. So even though it had the captain, even though it had the crew, even though it had the arsenal because the rudder was malfunctioning, it was sunk.

How many conversations sink? Because our rudder malfunctions? So how is it that the conversations that you are having are being driven? Because the answer to that may be more important than you even realize, because the Word of God also tells us that a trouble maker plants seeds of strife. If you want to know if you're talking to a trouble maker, just evaluate the seeds that they're sowing when they talk.

But the rest of that verse says this gossip separates the best of friends. Your words are either healing your relationships or they are hurting your relationships. And so if we could just like parenthetically, insert something here and talk about gossip for a second, like how many people have been hurt by gossip, think about how many people, even in church settings, have been hurt by gossip.

If you were to talk about a gossip for a second, you know they're talking about everybody else. Let's talk about them so that the person who gossips like they don't usually shout out the unkind, they're going to say the same thing they're going to say. They whisper and their whispers can hurt and their whispers can cause heartache. A gossip loves to take the rudder of words and start a conversation with stuff like, well, have you heard me?

Well, they tell me. Well, now do you think it could be true when I don't you tell anyone? But. Now this is off the record. But. Or they'll come at you with that false sympathy of like, well, isn't it just too bad how they're struggling. Oh, they're struggling now you're in it. I'm not going to get any help on a Sunday morning.

Well, is it true that they often see gossip that starts from the heart of someone who's vindictive, jealous. They're looking for revenge. They're holding some kind of misplaced grudge. And the worst thing about it is that when you listen with interest or delight to someone who is offering words of gossip, you become complicit in the hurt that someone else is about to experience.

And I think by God's grace, some of us need to allow God to give us control through the help of His Holy Spirit over our tongue. James, the book of James talks a lot about the tongue and the power of words, and the importance of managing that rudder and controlling it properly. But if you were to summarize everything that James says on the subject, you probably could go to chapter three, verse one of his book and he says, dear brothers, don't be too eager to tell others their faults before we all make many mistakes.

But if anyone can gain control of his tongue, it proves that he has perfect control over himself in every other way. I once had a mentoring voice, share with me some things that we could do to avoid hurtful words and to apply healing words. First thing was this avoid too many words. Well, that's a revelation, isn't it?

I bet you wish. You know, some are. You know, some people you wish would get that revelation. You avoid too many words. You know, the Bible warns about hasty or thoughtless words. It's like Jesus offers this instruction in Matthew 12 he said, I tell you this, you must give account on Judgment day for every idle word that you speak, the words you speak will either acquit you or they will condemn you.

One way of looking at that word idle is to say that words might be barren. In other words, you speak something, but they never really come to fruition. And sometimes we don't even realize that an idle word can hurt someone, especially a child. I think about that old movie, liar Liar, and now Jim Carrey is a business man and he's a father, and he just tells people what they want to hear, and he makes all kinds of promises just to try to move on to the next thing.

It happens with his kid. He tells his kid he'll be at this event. He doesn't show up. He tells his kid you'll be at that event. He doesn't show up. And finally, it's the kid's birthday and the little boy, he looks around and his dad's not present. And finally, he just wishes as he's blowing out the birthday candles, please make my dad tell the truth for a whole day.

Sometimes I don't even think that we realize that we are living a lie when we are just telling people what they want to hear, and we are speaking idle words and they never bear any effective fruit. So I think there's something to be said for avoiding too many words. In fact, the Book of Proverbs adds this subject, spouting off before listening to the facts is both shameful and foolish.

Again, it's very quiet this morning. I'm just assuming that you guys are not going to spout off with your amens until you are sure we've laid out the facts, spouting off to the facts is both shameful of us. Why do we do stuff like that? I don't think we're comfortable with pauses in conversation. I don't think we're comfortable with dead spaces.

I think sometimes just to deal with the awkwardness, the next thing you know, we just spout off. We're not good at listening. A former secretary of state for the US said in regards to the power of listening, one of the best ways to persuade others is with your ears. By listening to them, the author of *Listening The Forgotten Skill*, he points out that studies show that only 25% of the time, our people actually listening, the other 75% of the time, people are just formulating what they're about to spout off with.

So that author offers these helpful suggestions. It said, if you want to get better at listening, work at it. Well, that's a revelation. Hold your rebuttal. Ask questions for clarification to gain further understanding. You know really what all that for me does. This points me back to the book of James. And here's what James said about it. My dear brothers and sisters, take note of this.

Everyone should be quick to listen and slow to speak. And not only is that going to help you to avoid speaking too many words, but it's also going to help you to do number two avoid hurtful words. Avoid hurtful words like too often in conversations, even more so with people that we're really close to, or we've got this intimate relationship with.

We just become unguarded and we become unfiltered. And it's almost like sometimes the conversation becomes a competition. It becomes combative. There's verbal assaults, there's vicious zingers. These virtual scorekeeper and and sometimes it just seems like it's just fun and banter. But I've had a chance to unfortunately, see a number of marriages end after about 20 years. And sometimes sitting down with some of those people, the thing that comes out is, well, she never had a kind word to say to me.

Well, the only thing he ever did was point out what I didn't do right and what I did wrong. And it's it's like, well, it always seemed playful. I mean, you guys were just bantering. It isn't like that big of a deal, but it was hurting, you know, over the course of time, wounds were opened up and pain began to transpire and it became like a never ending intentional barrage.

And this continuous stream of unfiltered, hurtful words. Jesus made this statement in Matthew five. He said, but I say to you, you are subject to judgment. If you call someone an idiot, you are in danger of being brought before the court. And if you curse someone, you are in danger of the fires of hell. Be slow to speak, be slow to anger.

Maybe it would do us some good to ask the Holy Spirit's help in avoiding too many words, and also avoiding hurtful words. But if those are things that we're supposed to avoid, then what are we supposed to apply? Someone help me to one time see that we need to apply the law of kindness. You may not even realize that the Bible speaks about the law of kindness in Proverbs chapter 31.

It is one of the most positive portraits of a human being in the entire Bible. It talks about what is known as the virtuous woman. It talks about how hard she works. It talks about how trustworthy she is, but then it affirms her communication skills. And in doing so, verse 26, it says, she opens her mouth in wisdom, and on her tongue is the law of kindness.

In other words, her tongue is ruled by the law of kindness. In Joel chapter two, it tells us that one of the attributes of God is kindness. In Galatians chapter five, it tells us that one of the fruit of the Holy Spirit is kindness. In Second Peter we learned that to be like Jesus, we must add love to brotherly kindness.

In other words, one of the first things that God gives you when you become a follower of Jesus is a foundation of kindness upon which he builds all other things. Some would say that the law of kindness is like the Golden rule, that we should say to others what we would have them say unto us, there's no more godly communicator in all of Scripture than Jesus.

And when you evaluate Jesus most famous sermon, it's in Matthew five, chapter six. In chapter seven, when Jesus starts out in chapter five, he points out that when it comes to our speech, we should be merciful peacemakers. In chapter seven, he points out that we should never speak as hypocritical accusers. Further, in the New Testament, Paul and summarizing some of these things, he writes to the church at Philip.

Then he says, and now, dear brothers and sisters, one final thing fix your thoughts. Just look over somebody and tell them, fix your thoughts. Some of us need our thoughts fixed, he points out. What's got to happen is you got to think about what is true, what is honorable, what is right, what is pure, what is lovely, and what is admirable.

Think about these things that are excellent and worthy of praise. Paul's pointed out that when you're in a conversation and you got the rudder of your words, you got a decision to make what direction that conversation is going to go. And he is saying he would do you good to think before you speak and to lean in to what is honorable and what is pure, what would be admirable, what seems to be lovely?

What is it that you could point out as excellent and point out as praiseworthy? Instead of always bringing everything down to the smallest size, criticize. Maybe we could think before we speak. Think. Is it truthful? Okay, that's great. Now is it helpful? Fantastic. Is it inspirational? That's really good. But is it necessary? All right. Is it kind? If we could fix our thoughts, I believe it would.

I believe it would help resolve the overflow of our heart. And our conversations as well. There's a moment where Jesus Christ is in a conversation with a group of religious people. They they prayed a lot, but it was because they want to be seen by other people. They were very generous, but it's because they want to be seen by a lot of other people.

They didn't have really any relationship with Jesus whatsoever, and Jesus calls them out on it. In Matthew 12 he says, you brood of snakes. How could you, as evil men, even think that you could speak about what is good or what is right? Don't you realize that whatever's in your heart determines what's what you say? What Jesus was telling him is that you're going through all these forms.

You're holding to all these rules and all these regiments, and you've got your checklist, but you're not ruled by the law of kindness in your heart. And so I just got to thinking, like, as we start this new week, like, what if we went into tomorrow? What if we went into Monday and we decided that we were going to go forth with a plan to heal with our words, like, what have you said?

I'm going to enter this new week and I'm going to be an ambassador of Christ, and I'm going to use my words to heal rather than kill, to help rather than hurt. Because I believe that we're all interacting with a lot of people that have been deeply wounded and hurt. I think some of you are on job sites and in places of employment with people that have been so verbally abused by their spouse that they're at a point they no longer think that they can even chew gum and walk right at the same time.

Some of you that are younger, you're hanging out with people in athletic settings or in a school place or school setting where there's there's kids that their parents have so talked to them in a downgrading way and hurt them and made them believe that they're just a mess up and an accident, that they don't even have a hope for the future.

And what if you went forth and said, all right, I am going to go into my community, into my workplace, into my sphere of influence, with a plan to heal. The Bible has a lot to say about the healing virtue of words. Just in the book of Proverbs alone, the Bible teaches us that kind words transform worry to joy.

Proverbs 12, worries can rob you of happiness, but kind words will cheer you up. The Bible teaches us that gentle words will break through anger. Proverbs 51 A gentle answer turns away wrath, but a harsh word stirs up anger. It tells us that pleasant words encourage learning. Proverbs 16. Pleasant words promote instruction. It tells us that honest words make us feel loved.

Proverbs 24. An honest answer is like a kiss on the lips. The Bible tells us that wise words heal broken hearts. Proverbs 1218 thoughtless words can wound as deeply as any sword, but wisely spoken words can heal. It's interesting to me, then in Hebrews chapter four, when God was describing His word, his written word, he said that it is like a sword of the spirit.

And yet I think that there are a lot of us that claim to be utilizing the sword of the spirit, and all we've really done is unsheathed. The sword of sarcasm is so intriguing to me that Jesus is in this moment where he's in the Garden of Gethsemane and he's about to be arrested, and Simon Peter is present. And when the soldiers come to attack Jesus, Simon Peter takes out his sword

and he cuts off the soldier's ear, at which point Jesus then goes over, picks up the ear, and heals this man.

I wonder how often Jesus is trailing behind us as so-called Christian Christians, trying to fix what we just tore up, trying to heal what we just cut to something? I think we have to realize we're a church. We're in the middle of a series about live, not by lies, and we start getting stirred up with the truth, and we want to make sure that we're proclaiming and preaching the truth.

But at the same time, God is not authorizing us to self-righteously just go about smashing everybody in our side. One of the things we're going to make sure that we do is we're going to love people enough to tell them the truth. But Ephesians four tells us that you must speak truth in love. I want you to think of it like this that the Bible, when it's breaking some of this down for us, it brings us to the understanding that.

God has a view of words, and obviously he views them to have creative force, as he exemplifies in Genesis one. But in the book of Matthew, as we've already looked at, God tells us that his view of our words will determine how we're judged. But in the context of that, he goes as far as to say that our words will be looked at and viewed like fruit.

Well, water. What is the fruit of your words? Is it life giving or is it rotten? When you think of that, it's like truth goes down into your heart and gets rooted, and then you open your mouth and kindness and love and the fruit is made available to the people who need to receive it. Truth in love. Are your words weaponized like a stick or a stone or a sword?

Or is there something life giving? Because Proverbs also says that the soothing tongue is a tree of life. You know how many people need to experience that fruit? People you're interacting with every day. And yet, at the same time, I believe there's probably about three types of people in here, maybe more or maybe less. But I think we got at least three.

I think there's those of you that from the time maybe when you were a child, then you have been cut on and sliced and beat up with words and you are wounded and you are hurt, and it's something that you've packed with you for a long time. It's affected your faith. It's affected your perspective. It's affected a lot of your relationships.

You cut and you cut deep on the other side. There's others of you that you got pretty thick skin and you're really good with words. And you can string sentences together and you can articulate things, and sometimes you don't even realize how bad you're cutting other people because words come so easy to you. And yet, if you could really look back, there's a trail of blood following some of the things that you've said and some of the things that you've communicated and some of the things you've just lashed out with.

And then I think there's a third type of person, and I think it's the kind of person that's a blend of the first two, that the reason you hurt people is because you were hurt by people, and you feel

entitled to cut in the slice. In fact, sometimes you feel like you got to strike first blood in a conversation because it's all you've ever known.

And if you don't cut them first, they might cut you. And you're just living life from this wounded place that's now turned you into the very thing you hate. And yet at the same time, for any one of those three or more. So there is the opportunity to see God bind up the broken heart. If you'll lay the sword of sarcasm on the altar this morning and I get it, it's easy to feel justified in some of these things.

But God's calling you to something more. In the last 2 or 3 services I've been in, I've kind of felt this is a word at the end. I feel it pretty strong in this room, too. I think it applies to somebody. I think there's some of you, if you are this good at hurting people. Can you imagine what would happen if you allowed God to use you to heal people?

God wants to turn you in to the tree of Life. I'm going to ask them to come to the music, and as they do so, I want to share one final thing with you. Maybe the most important thing I say all day. Do you know that God so values your heart and your words? That when you get saved and you experienced salvation?

The first two things that God ask of you are for your heart and your words. The book of Romans tells us this, that all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God. It goes on to say that because of that, the wages of sin are death. Then it tells us that while we were yet still sinners, Jesus died for us within the next passage, decrees and declares that in order to experience salvation and be saved from our sin, we must believe in our heart and confess with our mouth that Jesus Christ is Lord.

The first thing Jesus wants from you in the process of your salvation is your heart and your words. Have you ever really given him that? I'm not talking about showing up at church. I'm not talking about checking a list on Sunday morning, or just sitting in a seat listening to some singing and a preacher because somebody told you to.

I'm talking about you having a head on collision with the grace that heaven has to offer.

To stop treating your eternity in a playful way and say, I need to get right with God. And the only way that can happen is I got to give him a heart. And I got a decree with my mouth. Jesus Christ, you're my Lord and Savior. I want you to pray with me this morning. Heavenly father, there are undoubtedly people under the sound of my voice that don't have a relationship with you. And yet, God, Your Holy Spirit, draws us, gifting us with repentance as you convict us of our sin, Lord, convincing us that there's a righteousness that you would make available to us through the prayer of salvation, that you would put us in right standing with heaven so that we can't do on our own something we can't fix by ourself, but something that God you would give us the opportunity to believe. For by faith.

So right now, God, we see your cross. We see the blood shed on Calvary. The nails that you took as heaven's wrath was poured out against sin. Jesus, thank you for dying so we wouldn't have to. We ask you now to forgive us of our sins, to take all of the stuff that would be on our record books and wash them away under the cleansing power of your blood for all of eternity.

And Lord, we believe in our heart that you're willing to do that. And now, God, we thank you for stirring within us the courage and the faith to be willing to confess to anybody and everybody that Jesus, you are our Lord. We no longer live according to our own ambition. We no longer live according to our own agenda.

Jesus Christ, we're going to follow you for the rest of our life. Make us a disciple. Teach us God, the ways of your will and your word.

And may we never stray from following the narrow path of your righteousness. Now God, at the same time this morning, I pray for people that walked in this room and they knew they were saved. They knew they had a relationship with you. But they're bleeding. They're cut their heart for some God. It's been this ongoing thing. They've even tried to convince themselves that words can't hurt me.

And deep down, they were hurt so bad, so deep. Lord. Heal them. Stitch them up. God, others of us. We are being convicted by your Holy Spirit today to repent for the way we've used words at times. God, they were just nonchalant and they were idle and we were just tossing them out, sometimes even unintentionally lying. Other times, God, we have pierced with precision, hurt and maimed people that we cared about. Hurt people. And God, we just ask you today to convince us by your transformative power to have the mind of Christ, and that instead of having words that will hurt, have words that will help, instead of having words that will kill, to have words that will heal Jesus, we give ourselves over to you and we pray. Use us from this moment forward in Jesus name. This church said, amen.