

Sermon Title: The Power of Life and Death are in the tongue

Focal Scripture: James 3:1-12

Old Testament: Proverbs 18:1-21

New Testament: Matthew 15:1-20

New Testament: Ephesians 4:17-32

**Intro:** If someone say to you with God bless you, you look nice, you did a good job or am praying for you. you would feel encouraged and uplifted. Conversely if someone criticizes you, speaks to with unkind words or spreads rumors about you. You would feel hurt. If someone were to approach you “spill the tea” ( which is a term for latest gossip or news) or saw some “ juicy gossip” and asked if you wanted to see the latest new on Facebook, Instagram or Snap chat, you might be enticed to read, listen and spread what you have seen or heard. As a child, when someone said something mean to me or hurt my feelings, my teacher would tell me to say “Sticks and stones may break my bones but, words will never hurt me”, but we all know that words do hurt. The question is how are we going to let words affect us. However, the in the word of God, we see that spoken word has power. When God created the universe, he spoke it into being. We are the only created beings that use words to communicate and God’s word has a lot to say about the way we use our words.

### **Power words-Death**

**Proverbs 18:21 states** “The tongue has the power of life and death, and those who love it will eat its fruit. We can speak life to others by speaking kindness, love, and encouragement or we can speak death to others by speaking discouragement, gossip, flattery, hypocrisy and slander. **Proverbs 16:27** states that “A scoundrel plots evil, and his speak is like a scorching fire and **vs. 28** says “A perverse person stirs up conflict, and a gossip separates close friends.” We have the ability to destroy people relationships and lives by what we say. The words scoundrel and perverse describe a person that lacks moral character. This type of person creates conflict and strife or in modern terms, this person or persons create “drama”. For example, many of the fights at the school in which I teach, begin when one student says something about another student social media. In resent news stories, we hear of children committing suicide because of cyber bullying. Recently the news reported a young lady was killed because of words that her friend “said” on social media. “**Matthew 12: 36-37** says that we will give an account on the day of

judgement for every careless word we have spoken. For by our words we will be acquitted and by our words we will be condemned”. Careless words or kind words reveal what is in our hearts. If our hearts are not focused on God, it will be revealed in our speech however, if our heart is focused on God, our speech will reveal that as well. **James 3:2-3** says “We all stumble in many ways. Anyone who is never at fault in what he says is perfect and able to keep their whole body in check. When we put bits into the mouths of horses to make them obey us, we can turn the whole animal.” James compares the tongue to a ship’s rudder, a small part of a ship that controls the entire ship, and like the rudder, our tongue controls our entire body. He also states in **vs. 6** “The tongue also is a fire, a world of evil among the parts of the body. restless evil full of deadly poison and fire which can corrupt our whole body. **Vs. 9 states** “with our tongues we praise our Lord and Father, and with it we curse people who are made in the image of God. An example of this: We could be driving down the road listening to and singing praise songs one minute and the next, cuss and fuss at the person that cuts us off. These two patterns of speech, praising and cursing contradict one another and reflect what is in our hearts. We have to remember **Proverbs 18:21** “The power of life and death are in the tongue...”

An example of negative speech is Hypocrisy. In **Matthew 15 Jesus addresses the hypocrisy** of the pharisees as they were only concerned about the disciples breaking traditions. **1-** “Then some pharisees and teachers of the law came to Jesus from Jerusalem and asked “Why do your disciples break the tradition of the elders? The don’t wash their hands before they eat! Jesus replied, “And why do you break the command of God for the sake of your tradition? For God said, honor your father and mother and anyone who curses his father or mother must be put to death. But you say that if a man says to his father or mother, whatever help you might otherwise have received from me is a gift devoted to God, he is not to honor his father with it. Thus, you nullify the word of God for the sake of your tradition. You hypocrites! Isaiah was right when he prophesied about you **8-9** “these people (pharisees) honor me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me. They worship me in vain; their teachings are merely human rules. Jesus addresses the hypocrisy of the pharisees as they gave the appearance of worshiping and honoring God with their traditions and words only. Jesus then called the crowd to him and stated in **vs. 10** “**what goes into** a man’s mouth does not make him unclean but what **comes out** of his mouth, that is what makes him unclean. The pharisees were only concerned with their man-made traditions. They were not concerned with following God’s

word, but the words of man that gave them the appearance of Godliness. An example of this today is when we sing hymns during the church service and we do not mean the words we sing. We just sing because we like the melody of the hymn. Flattery is the other example. In the New Living Translation **Proverbs 26:24-26** states “People may cover their hatred with pleasant words, but they’re deceiving you. They pretend to be kind, but don’t believe them. Their hearts are full of many evils. While their hatred may be concealed by trickery, their wrongdoing will be exposed in public.” Flattery is false or exaggerated praise. An example of this could be when my students want a good grade they will say “you look nice today Mrs. Owusu, I love you so much”. The student’s motive is not to compliment but, to get something in return. **Matthew 12:34b- 35** Jesus asks” How can you speak good thing when you are evil? For out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks. A good man brings good things out of the good stored up in him, and an evil man brings evil things out of the evil stored up in him.” And **Matthew 15:18-20a** “But the things that come out of a person’s mouth defile them. For out of the heart come evil thoughts—murder, adultery, sexual immorality, theft, false testimony, slander. These are what defile a person...” There are many more examples of negative speech. Again, what is in our hearts which is the center of our emotion, or motives and the way we think about each other comes out of our mouths in the words we say. Our words are a true reflection of how close we are walking with God.

### **Power of Words-Life**

When we speak positive words, we speak life. Positive words do not specifically mean “words of affirmation” but rather words that are guided by the Holy Spirit. When we accept Jesus Christ as our Lord and Savior, we did so by confessing with our mouths. **Romans 10:9-10** “If you confess 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 confess and are saved.” In these verses we see that our salvation is based on our heart’s belief in Jesus’ death and resurrection and our confession by mouth. **Proverbs 16:23-24** says “A wise man’s **heart** guides his mouth, and his lips promote instruction. Pleasant words are a honeycomb, **sweet** to the soul and **healing** to the bones.” The New Living Translation of Proverbs **10:20a** says “the words of the godly are like sterling silver...” and in **verse 21a** “the words of the godly encourage many...” When we have a close walk with God, our words are

valuable, healing, sweet and encouraging. Remember **Matthew 12:34b** Jesus states “out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks”.

## **Power of Words- How can we speak Life**

### **How can we speak words that are valuable, healing, sweet and encouraging?**

By applying God’s word through our daily walk with Him. God has made it very clear in His word that what we say out of our mouths comes from our heart which is our inner thoughts and feelings so, if we allow God to guide us and our hearts are filled with His word, our words will be encouraging, sweet, valuable and healing. The New Living Translation of **Psalm 119:11** “I have stored up your word in my heart, that I might not sin against you.” In **Proverbs 4:24** Solomon said “Keep your mouth free of perversity; keep corrupt talk far from your lips.” The New Living Translation of **Proverbs 21:23** says” Watch your tongue and keep your mouth shut, and you will stay out of trouble.” The verses in Proverbs instruct us to and to not speak evil and we can only do this when we walk close with God.

In **Psalm 19:4** David said “May the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be pleasing in your sight, O Lord, My Rock and my Redeemer.” David also asks in **Psalm 141:3** “Set a guard over my mouth, Lord; keep watch over the door of my lips.” In **Psalm 19:4** David asks God to approve his thoughts and the words he speaks and in Psalm 141:3 he asked God keep him from speaking or saying anything that is not pleasing. Like David we should ask God to approve our words and thoughts so they are pleasing to Him Remember **James 3:8** “...but no human being can tame the tongue. It is a restless evil, full of deadly poison.” so we should do as David did and ask God to guard our mouths. NLT **Proverbs 10:32a** states “**the lips of the godly speak helpful words,...**” When we are walking with God, our words will be helpful. We are commanded to speak only what is helpful and uplifting in **Ephesians 4:29** “**Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths, but only what is helpful for building others up according to their needs, that it may benefit those who listen.** We can only do this by walking with God. **Ephesians 5:1 -4** says “**be imitators of God, therefore, as dearly loved children and live a life of love, just as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us as a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God. But among you there must not even be a hint of sexual immorality, or of any kind of impurity, or of greed, because these are improper for God’s holy people. Nor should there be obscenity, foolish talk or coarse joking which are out of place but rather thanksgiving.** We are told to

imitate God. Just like children follow the example of their parents through imitation, we can only imitate God when we spend time with Him and in His word. Paul says in verse 4 that thanksgiving should come from our mouths not obscenity, foolish talk or coarse joking because thanksgiving comes from our spending time with God and in His word.

### **Conclusion**

So, the question is who do we want to control our speech, the God who gives life or Satan who gives death? Remember James **3:1-12** says the tongue cannot be controlled by us, it corrupts the whole person, sets the whole course of his life on fire and is itself set on fire by hell.” **But when we walk closely to God, he will guide what we say!**

**Amen**