

Sunday 3-April-22

Be careful what we say

Proverbs 10:14

The wise store up knowledge,
but the mouth of a fool invites ruin.

Proverbs 11:13

A gossip betrays a confidence,
but a trustworthy person keeps a secret.

Proverbs 12:23

The prudent keep their knowledge to themselves,
but a fool's heart blurts out folly.

Matthew 12:22-37

Jesus and Beelzebul

²² Then they brought him a demon-possessed man who was blind and mute, and Jesus healed him, so that he could both talk and see. ²³ All the people were astonished and said, "Could this be the Son of David?"

²⁴ But when the Pharisees heard this, they said, "It is only by Beelzebul, the prince of demons, that this fellow drives out demons."

²⁵ Jesus knew their thoughts and said to them, "Every kingdom divided against itself will be ruined, and every city or household divided against itself will not stand. ²⁶ If Satan drives out Satan, he is divided against himself. How then can his kingdom stand? ²⁷ And if I drive out demons by Beelzebul, by whom do your people drive them out? So then, they will be your judges. ²⁸ But if it is by the Spirit of God that I drive out demons, then the kingdom of God has come upon you.

²⁹ "Or again, how can anyone enter a strong man's house and carry off his possessions unless he first ties up the strong man? Then he can plunder his house.

³⁰ "Whoever is not with me is against me, and whoever does not gather with me scatters. ³¹ And so I tell you, every kind of sin and slander can be forgiven, but blasphemy against the Spirit will not be forgiven. ³² Anyone who speaks a word against the Son of Man will be forgiven, but anyone who speaks against the Holy Spirit will not be forgiven, either in this age or in the age to come.

³³ "Make a tree good and its fruit will be good, or make a tree bad and its fruit will be bad, for a tree is recognized by its fruit. ³⁴ You brood of vipers, how can you who are evil say anything good? For the mouth speaks what the heart is full of. ³⁵ 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. ³⁶ But I tell you that everyone will have to give account on the day of judgment for every empty word they have spoken. ³⁷ For by your words you will be acquitted, and by your words you will be condemned."

Sermon: Be careful what we say

We're **continuing** our **look** at **Matthew's Gospel** – and we'll be **continuing** from **Matthew 12** – starting at **verse 22**. We'll briefly look at our **OT readings from Proverbs** – first though.

Let me ask God's for His guidance and understanding

Let's pray...

Intro/Words Matter

Stick and stones will break my bones

But names will never hurt me!

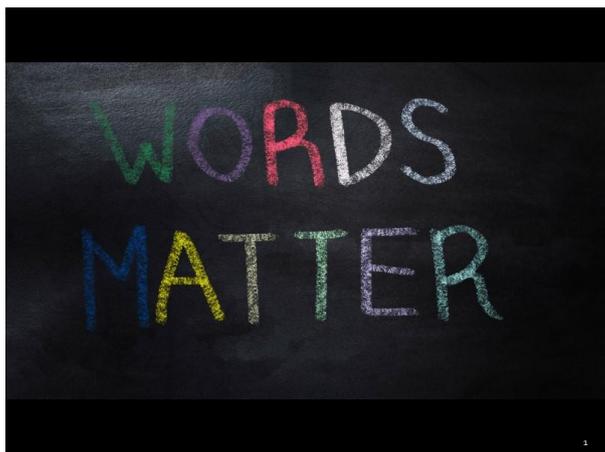
You may have grown up with that saying

It was a brave attempt to help school children shake of verbal bullying in the school playground

The trouble is for most of us – it doesn't work

Words do matter and words do hurt us – don't they?

[PowerPoint 1-Words Matter]



If you watched the news this week – you would have seen and heard – what happened at the **Oscars** when **comedian Chris Rock** said some words which insulted **Will Smith's wife, Jada**, and made reference to her **shaved head** – and she suffers from **alopecia**

(hair loss). The **words hurt** both Will and his wife – and caused quite **different reactions...**

And in recent weeks – there have been reports about **bullying words** that the late **senator Kimberley Kitching suffered.**

Since I've been in ministry – **surprisingly I've had more verbal abuse than any other period of my life.** Name calling – people questioning my faith – I've been called a fool – I've been gossiped about - I've had lies told about me – I've received abusive emails and text messages - and so on...

I'm not saying that **for sympathy** – but simply to **highlight** the reality– that the **words people say really matter** – and **words can hurt deeply.**

With the prolific use of **social media** now – some people are **keyboard warriors** – sitting in the safety of their home hiding behind their computer screen – typing in **shameful and hurtful words** – because they **don't have to face the person** their talking about – they **can say whatever they want.**

Imagine a teenager – being **bullied through social media** – and then trying to go to sleep – with those **hurtful words ringing in their ears** – some even thinking of suicide
Words matter!

Our Old Testament [OT] reading from **Proverbs 10:14** warns against foolish words: and points out when we say something foolish – **it can ruin us** [for example back in 2005 – the state liberal leader **John Brogden** insulted premier **Bob Carr's Malaysian born wife** calling her a **mail-order bride** and saying that she should **get back on the boat** – **John Brogden was slaughtered in the media** - and **he attempted suicide.**]

Our OT reading from **Proverbs 11:13** also **warns against** the **damage** of gossip [for example I had a phone call a couple of years ago – asking **why I was leaving church and**

retiring and also saying they had heard a **certain person in our church had died** – this was not only gossip but it wasn't even true!

And our third OT reading from **Proverbs 12:23** warns us to be wise about what **information we share about our lives** – and not just blurt things out [for example - if we **unwisely share stuff about ourself** to the **wrong person** – they may use it against us – or tell people stuff about us that we don't want others to know]

Which all **begs the question**: What are our words like?

Are they **foolish** or **wise**?

Are they **gossip**?

Are we **sharing information about our lives** with the wrong people?

Are our words sometimes **unkind** or **untruthful** or **angry**?

That brings us to our New Testament [NT] Bible passage from **Matthew 12:22-37** – we see **some very hurtful wicked words said to Jesus** – and we see how Jesus deals with these words - with His own wise words

Wicked Words (Matthew 12:22-24)

[PowerPoint 2-Wicked Words]



We pick up the story in verse 22 – where **Jesus heals a blind and mute man** who is **possessed by demons** (evil spirits)

The **people watching** were **astonished** and rightly see **Jesus as God’s Promised Messiah** – by referring to Him as **“Son of David”**

They say this because **He** has the **power to not only heal sickness like muteness and blindness immediately but also**, He has **power and authority over evil spirits.**

Unfortunately – the Pharisees – who are also there – v24 – have a **different opinion** to the people watching – the **Pharisees say the most wicked and despicable thing about Jesus** – they say that **Jesus can only drive out demons because He has the power of Beelzebul** – which is a **term** used to describe **Satan**

They are basically saying that **Jesus** – the **Son of God** – the **perfect sinless man** – is getting His power – not from the God - but from Satan!

It’s an outrageous, wicked, false and hurtful statement by the Pharisees.

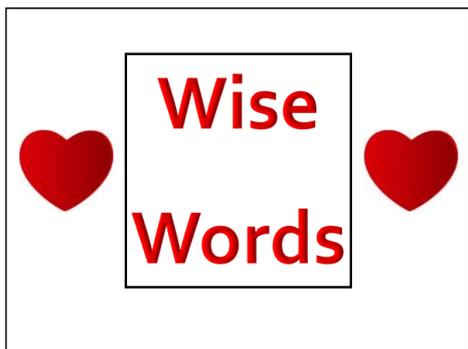
Application: If someone was to accuse us of working for Satan – we’d probably react – wouldn’t we?

Application: It might also be worth asking ourselves honestly – **what words have we used lately** – that might have been **unkind, hurtful and damaging?** Have we said sorry to the person on the receiving end? **Have we confessed** these words to **God** and **repented** of them?

Wise Words (Matt 12:25-30)

Jesus responds to these wicked words from the Pharisees – **with wise words!**

[PowerPoint 3-Wise Words]



That's in verses 25-30.

See v25 - Jesus **knows the thoughts behind the Pharisees' wicked words**

Jesus **knows** that behind their words – **they are jealous of His fame and popularity** – they are **worried about their own position and status in Israel** – and so **they want to discredit Him** – by saying Jesus is not from God – but from Satan.

Jesus' **first wise words** is to say that their **accusation doesn't make sense** – if He was uses Satan's power – why would He drive out Satan's demons – **wouldn't that mean Satan's kingdom was divided?**

As Charles Spurgeon says *“Whatever fault the demons have, they are not at strife with each other; that fault is reserved for Christians”*

The **second wise words** Jesus uses is to say– if He drives out demons by the power of Satan – by whose name and power **do the Jewish exorcists drive out demons?** The **Pharisees** are not going to say that **Jewish exorcists get their power from Satan** – are **they?** Jesus says – **No! I drive out demons with God's power because I represent God's Kingdom!**

And the **third wise words** Jesus **uses** is an **analogy** of a **strong man's house**. He says if a person wants to rob a strong man's house – then the **strong man must be disarmed and tied up first** – before any **robbery can take place**. His point is – that the **strong man in the house is Satan** – and **Jesus has the power to disarm Satan and tie him up** – because His power from God is greater than the power of Satan.

Then **Jesus finishes** His **wise words** in **v30** – by saying **“Whoever is not with me is against me, and whoever does not gather with me scatters.”**

His point is - that there **only two types of people** – those who are with Him - and those who are against Him. There's **no middle or neutral ground**.

Jesus – **does not give the option to sit on the fence.** If you're with Him – you're with Him – otherwise by sitting on the fence – **you're against Him.**

He describes those who are with Him as “gatherers” – they have the job of **gathering more followers of Jesus**; whereas those who are against Him – He describes as “scatterers” – that is they **scatter people so they don't follow Jesus** or they prevent people from following Jesus – and that's what the Pharisees are doing to the people of Israel – they are **an obstacle – stopping people from following Jesus** – by saying such wicked words about Him.

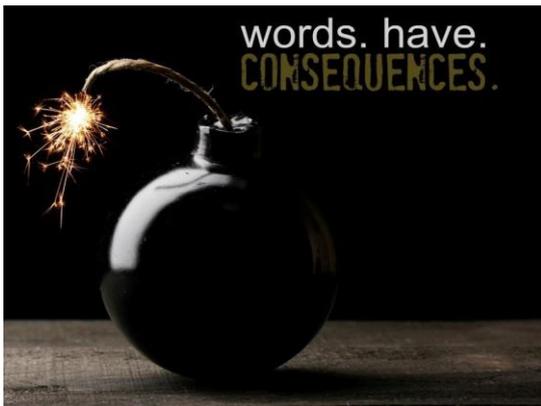
Application: Are our words “gathering” people to follow Jesus or are our words “scattering” people and keeping them away from Jesus?

Jesus finishes His conversation with the Pharisees with some serious **consequences for their words**

That's in verses 31 to 37

Consequences of Words (Matt 12:31-37)

[PowerPoint 4-Consequences]



See v31 - Jesus says any sin can be forgiven – people can always come and repent and say sorry.

But there is **one sin** that **can't be forgiven**

And that's when people **blaspheme the Holy Spirit.**

What's does **blaspheme** mean?

It means **saying terrible and irreverent things about God's Holy Spirit?**

Jesus is saying – people might say – things about Jesus Himself – **like I don't believe He is God's Son** – but they can still come back from that – and be **forgiven** – if they repent. But when a person says – that **Jesus is performing miracles by the power of Satan** – rather than the power of the Holy Spirit of God – then they are crossing a line from **which there is no return** – because they are **saying** that **Jesus** – who is the source of all love – the source of all truth – perfect in every way and sinless – is **actually from Satan** rather than from God – they've gone too far – because they are **equating the power of the Holy Spirit as being the power of Satan** – they are **saying the good Jesus will do on the cross in dying for the sin of the world is actually evil** - that's severe blasphemy - and they are **beyond saving and forgiving** – Jesus says!

The Pharisees are in danger of crossing that line – and putting themselves out of the scope of God's forgiveness (Don Carson)

As Isaiah 5:20 - [Woe to those who call evil good and good evil, who put darkness for light and light for darkness, who put bitter for sweet and sweet for bitter!](#)

Jesus then goes on to describe what the Pharisees problem is

See v33 – they are **like a bad tree** – and **bad trees always produce bad fruit**. That's what the **Pharisees' wicked words** are – **bad fruit** – because they are coming from **their bad tree root system**.

Jesus then calls them a brood of vipers – see v34. We shouldn't see this as **Jesus retaliating with** his own **name calling**. His reason for calling the Pharisees vipers is because just as **vipers are poisonous** – the **Pharisees words are poisonous**. And just like

vipers might snap at people's heels – the Pharisees are constantly following Jesus in His ministry – **snapping at His heels with poisonous words – to undermine Jesus.**

The reason for this – Jesus says – v35 – is because of what's **inside the Pharisees' hearts** – their **hearts** are **evil** and **against Jesus** –and so they produce evil and wicked words.

The consequence for anyone with **evil hearts and wicked words** – Jesus concludes in verses 36 and 37 – is that they **will have to give account of their words on the day of judgement**

All of us –in fact - will **have to face judgment for every word** – every idle, careless, wicked, hurtful word we speak!

We should note – that Jesus explains the consequences – not because **He wants to destroy people** – but so that they understand the consequences – and so they can **avoid being condemned** and so they can **avoid missing out on Heaven** – **if they turn away from evil.**

Jesus' rebukes are always to help people to be restored and reconciled to God – before it's too late!

Application: Again, it's perhaps **worth examining our hearts this morning** – is their **jealousy or grudges or bitterness or anger** – in our hearts – that can spill over into our words?

Our Response

So how will we respond to this story of Jesus and the Pharisees?

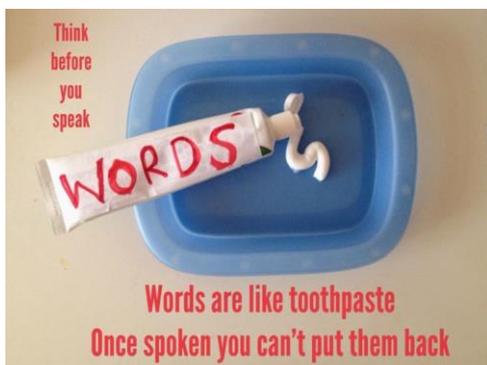
[PowerPoint 5-Nails]



Remember - **Words matter** – the **hurtful, unkind, bad words** we use are like nails in a fence – we can remove the nails from the fence – but the nail holes in the fence remain. And it's the same with our words – even if we say sorry for the hurtful words we've said – the wounds still remain in the people we've hurt – just like the holes in the fence

[PowerPoint 6-Toothpaste Tube]

Remember - **Words matter** – if we **squeeze** all the **toothpaste** out of the **tube** – we **can't get it back in the tube** – in the same way the **words** that come **out** of our mouth – **can't be put back in our mouths** – they **can't be unsaid** – it's too late!



We can learn from Jesus here – how to **handle wicked words** said to us – and how we should use our words

[PowerPoint 7a-Think]



First - in our response - we need to **think** - before we say something – what we say can have lasting damage – our children and grandchildren – our fellow Christians and non-

Christian friends are all watching what we say. Young people will copy what we say...what are we modelling to them?

As James 3:3-6 points out our words matter – James says: ³ When we put bits into the mouths of horses to make them obey us, we can turn the whole animal. ⁴ Or take ships as an example. Although they are so large and are driven by strong winds, they are steered by a very small rudder wherever the pilot wants to go. ⁵ Likewise, the tongue is a small part of the body, but it makes great boasts. Consider what a great forest is set on fire by a small spark. ⁶ The tongue also is a fire, a world of evil among the parts of the body. It corrupts the whole body, sets the whole course of one's life on fire, and is itself set on fire by hell.

We must think about the words we use - before we **speak to others** – and - we must think – before we **reply to the words people have said to us**.

[PowerPoint 8b-truth in love]

Second – in our response - like Jesus – we must speak the **truth in love** – as Ephesians 4:15 says: ¹⁵ ... speaking the truth in love, we will grow to become in every respect the mature body of him who is the head, that is, Christ.

[PowerPoint 8c-helpful]

And third – we must speak only what is **helpful** – as Ephesians 4:29 says:

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.

So, let's all be careful what we say – as we live out our lives in and for Jesus.

Let's pray

Father God,

Thank you that Jesus is the source of all love and truth

Thank you that Jesus has the power of the Holy Spirit

Thank you that Jesus shows His love for us – through His sacrificial death on the Cross

Thank you that Jesus shows us how to live a life that pleases God

Help us to be careful what we say – help us to think before we speak – help us to speak the truth in love – and help us to speak only what is helpful for building others up.

In Jesus name, we pray. Amen.

Benediction (Matthew 12:36-37)

Let's finish with the words of our Lord Jesus from Matthew 12:36-37

³⁶ But I tell you that everyone will have to give account on the day of judgment for every empty word they have spoken. ³⁷ For by your words you will be acquitted, and by your words you will be condemned." AMEN.