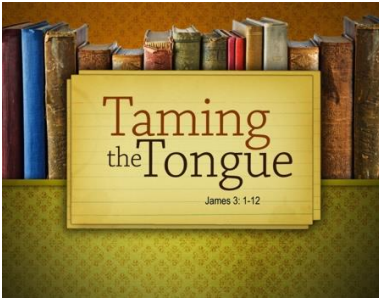


As we unite in worship today, we extend a warm welcome to each one present.

May we together experience the presence of God

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We Gather to Prepare Our Hearts to Meet Our Lord



Prelude

Welcome - Announcements

Opening Meditation

“Sticks and stones may break my bones, but words will never hurt me.” Where did that bit of wisdom come from? Certainly not from James. He holds a counter position. “The tongue is a fire,” writes James, and “no one can tame the tongue – a restless evil, full of deadly poison.” And so dangerous is this appendage that everyone should think seriously before becoming a person of authority, before choosing to teach and to lead and to speak to other people. You almost get the idea that it would be better to just not say anything at all.

In our normal catalog of sins, gossip is somewhere far down the list. We are much more concerned about other kinds of misbehavior. James would have us reconsider our hierarchy and raise our awareness of the power of words to bring harm to the body of Christ.

The truth is that the changes that need to take place in our society must be addressed. The changes that need to take place in the human heart need to be addressed. If we are to be salt and light in our world, then we must begin to bring a new way of speaking into the world. We must encourage others to change their tongues to focus more on blessing and less on curses.

It is easy to dismiss today’s text as dealing with a non-essential. Surely, we might think, there are more important issues to deal with than how we talk. But James makes a convincing argument that the words we use reflect our relationship with and belief in Jesus as the Lord of all our life. This begs the question, “Who are we really following and where are we heading?” “Can a fig tree bring forth olives or a grapevine figs?” The fruit we produce with our words reveals our hearts.

A Call to Worship

We come here today not because we are clever but because God welcomes the slow learners.

**We come here not because we are wise,
but because God loves us in spite of our folly.**

We come knowing that the greatest persons will be found among those who humbly serve like Jesus did, and that the brightest ideas and the deepest truth will come from those who see themselves as little children in Christ's school.

**O Lord, open up our mind and our hearts
and enable our lives to declare your praise.**

Opening Prayer

BRIDLE OUR TONGUES!

A Prayer for James 3:1-12

Lord, I humbly come to you this day to tell you thank you. You have shown us so much compassion despite our tongues. We have hurt our neighbors, our friends, and our families. Bridle our tongues, God, that we might speak love and not hate. Bridle our tongues, God, that we might uplift and not tear down. Bridle our tongues, God, that we might continue to win more citizens for the kingdom. It's in the name of the one who saved us, Jesus Christ, that we pray. Amen.

Praise Hymn UMH #600. " Wonderful Words of Life"

Author: Philip P. Bliss (1874)

Publication Date: 1989

**1. Sing them over again to me,
wonderful words of life;
let me more of their beauty see,
wonderful words of life;
words of life and beauty
teach me faith and duty.**

**wonderful words of life;
sinner, list to the loving call,
wonderful words of life;
all so freely given,
wooing us to heaven.
(Refrain)**

**Refrain:
Beautiful words, wonderful words,
wonderful words of life.
Beautiful words, wonderful words,
wonderful words of life.**

**3. Sweetly echo the gospel call,
wonderful words of life;
offer pardon and peace to all,
wonderful words of life;
Jesus, only Savior,
sanctify forever.
(Refrain)**

2. Christ, the blessed one, gives to all

We Hear God's Word

New Testament Reading..... James 3:1-12 (NRSV)

Taming the Tongue

Not many of you should become teachers, my brothers and sisters, for you know that we who teach will face stricter judgment. 2 For all of us make many mistakes. Anyone who

makes no mistakes in speaking is mature,[a] able to keep the whole body in check with a bridle. 3 If we put bits into the mouths of horses to make them obey us, we guide their whole bodies. 4 Or look at ships: though they are so large and are driven by strong winds, yet 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 exploits.

How great a forest is set ablaze by a such a small fire! 6 And the tongue is a fire. The tongue is placed among our members as a world of iniquity; it stains the whole body, sets on fire the cycle of life, and is itself set on fire by hell.[b] 7 For every species of beast and bird, of reptile and sea creature, can be tamed and has been tamed by the human species, 8 but no one can tame the tongue—a restless[c] evil, full of deadly poison. 9 With it we bless the Lord[d] and Father, and with it we curse people, made in the likeness of God. 10 From the same mouth comes a blessing and a curse. My brothers and sisters, this ought not to be so. 11 Does a spring pour forth from the same opening both fresh and brackish water? 12 Can a fig tree, my brothers and sisters, yield olives or a grapevine figs? No more can salt water yield fresh.

The word of God for the People of God, **Thanks Be to God**

Children’s Message

Faith Hymn FWS #2171 “Make Me a Channel of Your Peace”

Adapter: Sebastian Temple

Publication Date: 2001

Copyright: © 1967 OCP Publications. Dedicated to Mrs. Francis Tracy.

**Make me a channel of your peace.
Where there is hatred let me bring your love.
Where there is injury, your pardon, Lord
And where there’s doubt, true faith in you.**

**Make me a channel of your peace
Where there's despair in life, let me bring hope
Where there is darkness, only light
And where there's sadness, ever joy.**

**Oh, Master grant that I may never seek
So much to be consoled as to console
To be understood as to understand
To be loved as to love with all my soul.**

**Make me a channel of your peace
It is in pardoning that we are pardoned
In giving to all men that we receive
And in dying that we're born to eternal life.**

Meditation

Joys/Concerns

A GENERAL PRAYER FOR THE DAY

Glorious God, your law, and your grace is poured upon us and we delight in it. We join with all the company of heaven and earth to offer praise. Speaking your Name is like honey in our mouths.

You have provided everything we need, even the means of salvation through your Son Jesus Christ. But your ways are not our ways. When you show us your plans and they do

not meet with our preconceived notions of how they should be, we reject them, and you. We are very good at speaking out of both sides of our mouths when it suits us. O Lord have mercy upon us. Rescue us from our hidden faults; keep us from sin that we might be able to stand before you once more.

We have been commissioned to be teachers and witnesses to your great majesty. Let your Holy Spirit give guidance to the words we speak and the works we do in your Name that in all things we might do honor to you and bring others into your fold.

The way of life is one of bearing the cross of Christ, and for this we give thanks. We lift up before you the people who bear other kinds of crosses. Lift the burdens of those who stumble under the weight of physical distress; aid the ones who struggle with confusion and emptiness. Lead them in the way to eternal life.

May the words of our mouths and the meditation of our hearts be acceptable in your sight, O God our Rock and our Redeemer.

Knowing that all things are possible with you, we ask all these things in Jesus' name. Our Father...

Offertory/Doxology/Prayer

Loving God, Jesus taught us "where your treasure is, there your heart will be also." We offer our gifts to you knowing they are part of our treasure, and we do so with the hope that our hearts, our actions, and the words of our tongues will likewise follow. We acknowledge that the tongues that praise you are often the ones that hurt you, when we use them to diminish or discount one of your precious children. Guide our hearts, minds, and tongues to the words that bring you joy. In Christ's name, we pray. Amen. (James 3:1-12)

Departing Hymn #130

"God Will Take Care of You"

Author: Civilla D. Martin (1904)

Copyright: Public Domain

1 Be not dismayed whate'er betide,
God will take care of you;
Beneath his wings of love abide,
God will take care of you.
Refrain:

God will take care of you,
through ev'ry day, o'er all the way;
He will take care of you,
God will take care of you.

2 Through days of toil when heart doth
fail,
God will take care of you;
When dangers fierce your path assail,
God will take care of you. [Refrain]

3 No matter what may be the test,
God will take care of you;
Lean, weary one, upon his breast,
God will take care of you. [Refrain]

Benediction

The time has come to become soldiers of the cross. Let us go out into the world proclaiming the Name of Jesus. We know his Name, and the time has come for others to know it as well. Let us testify of his goodness, be witnesses to his mercy, and exemplify the change he has made in our lives. Go, and carry the Name of Jesus with you.