



Talk is Expensive

James 3:1-12 // March 3, 2019 // Willowdale Kennett Square

Sermon Summary: We've all heard the saying, "Sticks and stones may break my bones but words will never hurt me". We also know that couldn't further from the truth. Words are powerful. Talk isn't cheap; talk is expensive. James focus in these passages is all about the tongue and the damage that it can do. The scriptures are clear in several different places of the power of words and James drives this home for us.

While James starts off talking specifically about teachers, his focus is on taming the tongue for all who believe in Jesus. No matter who you are, the tongue is small but **powerful**. As powerful as a small bit that controls a huge horse or a small rudder that guides a huge ship. Not only powerful, the tongue is also **destructive**. James uses the image of a forest fire started from a small spark. Gossip, lies, hurting words, etc. spread easily like a destructive fire. James remind us that the tongue is **uncontrollable** and that is also is **revealing**, showing what is truly in our hearts.

Despite all the negativity that can flow from the tongue, Proverbs 18:21 reminds us that along with the tongue holding the power of death, it also holds the power of life. Jesus tells us that out of the heart, the mouth speaks. For our tongues to be transformed, we have to surrender our hearts to Jesus and let him transform us from the inside out.

Discussion Guide:

1. Take time to read through James 3:1-12. Why do you think the warning to teachers is so strong in verse 1? List out some of the ways that teaching is such a dangerous and powerful profession.
2. We see in James 3:3-5a that just like a small bit in a horse's mouth and a small rudder on a ship, the tongue, though small, makes great boasts. It is very powerful. Give some examples, both positive and negative, of when you've seen the power of the tongue on full display. Can you think of anything said to you, either positive or negative, that has influenced the trajectory of your life?
3. Another image that James gives us for the tongue is that of a fire. He says that it corrupts the whole body and is set on fire by hell. His language is clearly strong here. As those who believe in Jesus, how can our words be set on fire by hell? When this happens, what does it do to our witness with those around us (family, friends, neighbors, co-workers, etc.)?
4. Focus in on verses 9-12. James warns us that it should not be so when we praise God and then, with the same tongue, curse other humans who have been made in the image of God. Does this describe you at all? What are some reasons that we worship God on Sundays and then deny him with our actions and words in other circumstances? Do you ever feel like you have to wear a proverbial mask while at church to look the part? Why do we do this?
5. Jesus reminds us that out of the mouth the heart speaks (see Luke 6:43-45). Another way to say this is that the product is always consistent with the source. Why is it so important to surrender and submit our hearts to Jesus daily when it comes to taming our tongue? What happens when we try and take care of this on our own?