

Why Our Words Matter

Call to Worship: Psalm 119:97-104

1st Scripture: Matthew 12:22-32

2nd Scripture: Matthew 12:33-37

Introduction

Last time, we saw how the Lord had exposed the great evil committed by the religious leaders, who had accused Him of casting out demons by Satan. By attributing the power that He used to perform those miracles, to the work of satan, rather than the Holy Spirit who was using them to authenticate the ministry and teaching of the Lord, they had blasphemed against the Holy Spirit. And in doing so, they had committed a sin that brought them beyond the sphere of God's grace. They had committed an unpardonable sin.

This morning, we will find our Lord continuing to address what they had done, which will lead Him to provide a broader principle, showing how our words really do matter, as they reveal what is truly in our hearts. It might be tempting to say, "What's the big deal? What the Pharisees had merely done was spoke some words. Are words really that important? Aren't our actions much more serious?" Here, our Lord shows that God is very concerned about our speech, and in fact, perhaps unbeknownst to the world at large, our words actually tell the story of the true condition of our hearts.

I. The Tree is Known by its Fruit

"Either make the tree good and its fruit good, or else make the tree bad and its fruit bad; for a tree is known by its fruit. Brood of vipers! How can you, being evil, speak good things? For out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks" (vs. 33-34).

The Pharisees portrayed themselves before all, as righteous and good. They were the alleged holy ones among the Jews. However, what they were seeking to cover over, by their outward acts of piety, were their ill motives, their pride, and the greed that owned their hearts. As Jesus had said elsewhere, they were "white-washed tombs," which looked beautiful and decorative on the outside, but were filled with dead men's bones. And He also described them

using the analogy of a dirty cup, which on the outside looked shiny and clean, but was filthy on the inside. And so, Jesus saw right through the self-righteous facade, which the religious leaders had set up on the outside, and into their dark, wicked hearts. And here, He highlights that which ultimately served to betray what they were hiding on the inside, namely, their “words.” The mouth has a tendency to reveal what is in the heart. Generally, words don’t just pour out of the mouth of their own accord. They are the product of that which has been generated in the heart, concerning any given matter. And so, when the Pharisees had accused Jesus of casting out demons by satan, this willful blasphemy of the Holy Spirit (who, in fact, performed those works through Jesus) was especially wicked, because they were speaking out of the corrupt foundation of their very hearts. The words were not mere empty breaths, pushing out sound. They were indicators of the treasured up evil which existed in the hearts of the religious leaders who hated, and were envious of Jesus, not wanting Him to draw the multitudes to Himself.

This is why Jesus points out the inconsistency, and the hypocrisy of all that the Pharisees were doing, in seeking to show themselves as righteous before the people. “Either make the tree good and its fruit good, or else make the tree bad and its fruit bad; for a tree is known by its fruit.” The analogy given here by our Lord’s mini-parable is very clear. If a tree is properly rooted in a location, where it can receive the water and nutrients that it needs, it will produce good, ripe fruit. The tree will be good. However, if it is planted in a location that is dry, arid and lacking in nutritional quality, it will produce bad fruit. The tree will be bad. Because a tree has its roots underground, you cannot necessarily tell if it is a bad tree or a good tree, until you see the fruit. Once the fruit comes up, the quality of the tree can be determined. If the fruit remains undeveloped or comes up rotten or lacking in some sense, then you know that the tree is bad. And likewise, if the tree brings forth nice, ripe, tasty fruit, then you know that the tree is good. We judge the quality of the tree, not by the roots (because we cannot see them), but by the fruit that comes up. And in the same way, we cannot see the hearts of individuals. We cannot see what is going on in the soul of an individual. But, what comes out of them; the pattern of their speech, will reveal the quality of their inner man and heart. Words are very telling, and again, they often betray whatever we might be trying to hide within us, or they affirm what is good within us. This is the point that Jesus is making here. And so, in essence, He is saying to the

Pharisees, “Look, stop playing games. Stop acting self-righteous, and as if you are holy. Your blasphemous words betray you. Just be what you are, and stop trying to deceive others and yourselves. Either make the tree good and then the fruit will be good, or let the tree be bad and the fruit bad. Don’t pretend that the tree is good, when the fruit is clearly rotten!”

With this, He follows up with a sobering, universal principle, which we all ought to take to heart. “Brood of vipers! How can you, being evil, speak good things? For out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks.” Snakes, being cunning and crafty, best suit those who deceptively try to present themselves as other than what they really are. And so, he calls the group of religious leaders a brood of vipers. And then, He pinpoints the the main problem with them. They are incapable of sincerely speaking good things, because they are evil on the inside. They can’t do good because their hearts are evil, and we all live out of our hearts. “For out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks.” What is it that spills out of the mouth, in the form of breathed out words? Formulated expressions that are taken from the thoughts, desires and motives of the heart. Again, the mouth gives vent to the heart. Verse 35: “A good man out of the good treasure of his heart brings forth good things, and an evil man out of the evil treasure brings forth evil things.” Here, the Lord uses the term “treasure,” signifying that what is in the heart is stored up there intentionally. And so, a good man, having a heart that is in tune with God through Christ, will bring forth good things out of the treasure of his heart. And an evil man, having a heart in tune with the world, will bring forth evil things out of the treasure of his heart.

It is for this reason; it is because our words are actually indicators of the condition of our hearts, that the Lord moves on to give the sobering warning that follows in verses 36-37: “But I say to you that for every idle word men may speak, they will give account of it in the day of judgment. For by your words you will be justified, and by your words you will be condemned.” Notice here, especially, the universal application of what our Lord has stated here. This is not just about the Pharisees and religious leaders, is it? “But I say to you that every idle word *men* may speak, they will give account of it in the Day of Judgment.”

What a frightening reality! You see, people tend to be so “action” focused, don’t they? And don’t get me wrong, our actions are more than enough to condemn us. But, here the Lord speaks of every idle (or careless) word spoken! Our words really do matter! Can you imagine,

as it were, standing before God, and a large transcript of every word you have ever spoken, being unraveled before your eyes, and used as a basis for God's judgment of you? Words, which we tend to think are harmless and unimportant! God says that every *careless* word spoken will be brought to judgment, let alone the well-thought out ones. How many will stand before God, ready to say, "Well, I am glad that I am not Hitler! Or, I am glad that I never stole anything or used drugs! Or, I am glad that I was faithful to my spouse, and avoided all forms of sexual immorality"... only to be struck by the fact that God has also kept a record of our words! And this is the case, because our words, rather than being mere breathed out sounds, are actually windows that expose what is truly in our hearts! All of those words spoken in private; all of those words spoken that no one else is aware of... God has them all documented and they will be used to justify and condemn all of mankind! [Note: "Oh, I didn't mean to say that..."]

This is the warning which the Lord gave to the Pharisees (and the religious leaders), who were very crafty at hiding what they really were from the general population. Indeed, they got over on their people. They got over on the world, at large. People thought very highly of them, and they loved that. But, there were a pair of ears that followed them around everywhere they went; into every private chamber and room, of which, they were unaware. God knew their hypocrisy, and they never got over on Him, for even a second. Indeed, He sees the mind, the inner desires and the very motivations of the heart, for that matter, even before any expression of words come out.

II. Concluding Thoughts

1) Oh friends, if you are not a Christian this morning; if you have not been joined to Christ by faith, doesn't this frighten you? Doesn't it terrify you to know that you will be judged by a holy and righteous God, who ever scans the very recesses of your inner thoughts and heart, and who has heard, and knows every word you have ever spoken? Will you die and stand before God, having to give an account for even every careless word you have ever spoken? Will you die, and stand before your eternal God, who will judge you, not only based on your outward actions, and not even only based on your words, but also, on the basis of the motives of your heart? Some people look very good on the outside. Some people, from the outward standpoint,

are very moral, and look like angels to the rest of the world. Like the Apostle Paul, they are blameless with regard to outward observation. But, apart from Christ, they will stand before God and give an account for all that has existed on the inside, as well. Now, most of us would fail miserably based upon our evident actions. But, even those who have led morally decent lives will collapse under the weight of their words and inner motives, when they stand before our holy God. Did not even the prophet Isaiah pronounce woes upon himself, when he, the good prophet even, had beheld the glory of God in the temple, in Isaiah 6? He was undone. And God took a coal from the altar of burnt offering to purge his tongue, so that, he could indeed continue to serve as God's mouthpiece. The presence of God has a way of enabling us to see just how wicked we really are, highlighting even the gravity of those sins which we tend to think are little and minimal in God's sight.

Friends, don't die apart from Christ! See here the severity of His holiness and the magnitude of your sins in His presence. For, all of your sins can be completely atoned for now; they can be completely washed away, if you would but humble yourself before the Lord. Repent and take Christ as your own personal Lord and Savior. Call upon the Lord today, before it is too late. Don't spare another moment! Jesus alone can cleanse you of all of your sins; inner and outer, and He can give you a new heart; He can uproot and replant the tree, in the fertile soil of His righteousness, so that, you will now bear good fruit for His glory!

2) And brethren, thanks be unto God that our words will never condemn us! Do you ever reflect even on the things that you have said in your lifetime, let alone what you have done? Do you comprehend even a fraction of the wave of grace that has come to you in Christ, even to atone for your words? There are things that we have said, which we don't even remember, that would condemn us forever. But, we remember plenty of things that we have said, also, don't we? If our words reveal what is in our hearts, what do we find even in the present, at times? Oh brethren, give thanks to God that our salvation is whole and complete in Christ! Give thanks to God that we are ultimately judged on the basis of Christ's beautiful words and perfect heart, and not our own. For, even in the present, there is more than enough to damn us forever, in our words.

But, that said, let that also motivate us to consider how important our words really are, in the present. When the apostle Paul tells the Ephesians not to let any corrupt word proceed out of their mouths, but only that which is good and necessary for edification, do we not see the call to measure our words carefully? Do we not see the call to pray and to think through our responses and what we say and post on social media? Can you imagine how many FB and Twitter posts will come back to add weight to the condemnation of so many, on the day of judgment? Let your words be measured and tempered with grace. Strive to ensure that what you are saying is edifying, even when bringing forth opposing views or correction. Be a builder and not a destroyer, with your words. Think before you speak. God hears. God knows. And you are ultimately putting your heart out there, by whatever you are saying. What does your heart look like, brethren, when you gauge the words you have spoken even over this past week?

We might say, “Well, that seems like a lot of work... having to think more carefully before speaking.” Yes, it is. But, that is what God calls us to do. And by our words, perhaps more than anything else, we can tarnish our testimony to Christ and His Gospel. Your words matter, brethren. And they tell quite a story. Let your narrative be God-glorifying and Christ centered!

Amen!!!

Benediction: Jude 1:24-25