

7-16-23

Sermon: Be On Guard

Scripture: James 1:19-27, CTW reading 359

Hymns: 357, 358, 360

Theme: What is one of the most common complaints among spouses in today's marriages? I read a People magazine article and the number one complaint is communication. Women say men don't understand or listen and men say that women don't understand us...Today we see what James says...

I. Introduction: James Calls Us to Look at How We Communicate.

After giving us a pep talk about how we need to hang in there throughout our Christian life and keep our focus on the real heart of God for us:

A. James tells us that we need to pay close attention to how we communicate with each other.

Why? Because God's heart for us is that we be in close relationship with Him and with each other and that cannot happen unless we weigh our words carefully.

How many people here have ever said words that they wish they could take back? How often have we dropped the guard on our tongues and just said something out of anger or hurt and wished we could take it back?

I think often times we talk too much and listen too little. Inside we feel that our ideas are right and nobody else's idea is even worth considering. I have often caught myself doing just that.

James tells us that we are not to do this. We cannot just spontaneously spew forth our ideas and believe them to be the only right way.

II. We as believers need to curb (manage), our tongues.

Ephesians 4:31-32 says ³¹ Get rid of all bitterness, rage and anger, brawling and slander, along with every form of malice. ³² Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you.

So we now see that communication problems are not something new. We have been having problems talking with each other since the beginning.

It is a common reaction of the world to erupt in anger when our simple little egos get bruised. When we feel hurt and think that we are not being heard, we tend to react with anger in a worldly fashion. We need to replace our reactions with the right kind of actions.

A. The first thing we need to do is just shut up. We need to move the thoughts of the world out of our minds and listen to what others are saying. Paul tells us "be kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another."

Proverbs tells us in **Proverbs 10:18-19** ¹⁸ Whoever conceals hatred with lying lips and spreads slander is a fool. ¹⁹ Sin is not ended by multiplying words, but the prudent hold their tongues.

Often, when we have arguments, we have a hateful feeling in our hearts. Whether it is because we are right and they don't want to listen or because we just don't want to admit we are wrong, we still suffer those hateful feelings. We end up slandering another person and we end up the fool.

Sometimes it is because we hold to our pride too tightly. The only way to overcome these feelings is to admit when we are wrong.

Ask God for forgiveness and grant that same forgiveness to the person or persons that wronged us.

In verses 20 and 21, James says ²⁰ human anger does not produce the righteousness that God desires. ²¹ Therefore, get rid of all moral filth and the evil that is so prevalent and humbly accept the word planted in you, which can save you.

Our anger and resentment and feelings of hurt all flow from the same well spring. We find that when we have these feelings, we have passed judgment on somebody else. We have embraced the ways of the world which are us. After all, we are all creatures of sin by birth.

We are all sinners in need of God's holy and redeeming grace. Jesus taught us in **Luke 6:37** ³⁷ "Do not judge, and you will not be judged. Do not condemn, and you will not be condemned. Forgive, and you will be forgiven.

B. Next James says, if the Word has been planted in you by the Holy Spirit, do what it says: ²² Do not merely listen to the word, and so deceive yourselves. Do what it says. ²³ Anyone who listens to the word but does not do what it says is like someone who looks at his face in a mirror ²⁴ and, after looking at himself, goes away and immediately forgets what he looks like. ²⁵ But whoever looks intently into the perfect law that gives freedom, and continues in it—not forgetting what they have heard, but doing it—they will be blessed in what they do..”

Do what the Word says. **We have to act on the teaching of our Lord and Savior.** He came not only to grant us forgiveness but to make disciples for him.

We are not to be content to just sit here and hear the word of God. We are not to just store it up in our minds like useless pieces of information for some trivia game.

Do not lie to yourself and say 'I am going to church, and I believe that ought to be enough.'

It isn't. If you believe that, then Satan has already won your soul. He has succeeded in making a useless Christian out of you. He has effectively sealed your lips to the truth.

How many people here looked in the mirror this morning. Men, we are just as guilty of looking in the mirror as the women are! The joke around my house is that I spend more time in the mirror than my wife.

I know what my face looks like. You know what your face looks like. You know how to make facial expressions that convey messages of hope and gladness.

We all have looks of love and kindness. That is how well we are to know and use the word of God.

1 Peter 1:13-16 ¹³ Therefore, with minds that are alert and fully sober, set your hope on the grace to be brought to you when Jesus Christ is revealed at his coming. ¹⁴ As obedient children, do not conform to the evil desires you had when you lived in ignorance. ¹⁵ But just as he who called you is holy, so be holy in all you do; ¹⁶ for it is written: "Be holy, because I am holy."

There is a whole sermon in that statement right there but I only want to stress that it is the words that come out of our mouth that convey our feelings and govern our actions.

We are to be as holy as our example is. Jesus Christ is holy in every manner in which he conducted himself. That is how we are to be.

III. So What Does This Thing Called "Religion" have to do with it?

James continues in verse 26, "Those who consider themselves religious and yet do not keep a tight rein on their tongues deceive themselves, and their religion is worthless. ²⁷ Religion that God our Father accepts as pure and faultless is this: to look after orphans and widows in their distress and to keep oneself from being polluted by the world."

A. In other words, Fathers and mothers teach your sons and daughters the value of true belief, controlling their tongues and listening. Do not lie to yourself and think that you are already doing a good example of this.

If we do, it is easier for us to become complacent and fall ever so slowly back down a slippery slope. It all starts with one little slip. I have even fallen victim to backsliding and I am a Pastor.

Always remember that it is not that far from the mouth to the heart. It is our example and the words that we say that have the most effect on our ministry.

Psalms 34:11-14 ¹¹ Come, my children, listen to me;

I will teach you the fear of the LORD.

¹² Whoever of you loves life

and desires to see many good days,

¹³ keep your tongue from evil

and your lips from telling lies.

¹⁴ Turn from evil and do good;

seek peace and pursue it

Take a minute to think about it...how are we at keeping our tongues guarded? I have to admit that I am not so great...I have an opinion and I think that everyone needs to hear it. Maybe some of you have the same problem...

James' message here is that for the good of God's kingdom, we MUST take a mental moment before we speak. Listen to what someone else is saying and find a way to respond with love and compassion. Not provocation!

Matthew 15:10-11 ¹⁰ Jesus called the crowd to him and said, "Listen and understand. ¹¹ What goes into someone's mouth does not defile them, but what comes out of their mouth that is what defiles them." Jesus taught us it is what we say that can make us unclean.

Our tongues are like swords when we use them wrongly. They hurt and cut to the bone. How many have lost friends because of words they said. I have, and those are things that I will never get back.

B. All this goes to the main point...watch your attitude.

I used to have the attitude of if you don't like it, deal with it. Then I read the word of God and took it to heart. I saw with the eyes of my heart and to this day, I realize more and more that it is the words I speak which govern how I act and determine the actual respect I have for others.

For me, I found out that it is not a once and done thing...I need to constantly monitor my behavior and some days it does not go well.

So, just how should our behavior be?

Matthew 25:34-40 ³⁴ "Then the King will say to those on his right, 'Come, you who are blessed by my Father; take your inheritance, the kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world. ³⁵ For I was hungry, and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in, ³⁶ I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me.'

³⁷ "Then the righteous will answer him, 'Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you something to drink? ³⁸ When did we see you a stranger and invite you in, or needing clothes and clothe you? ³⁹ When did we see you sick or in prison and go to visit you?'⁴⁰ "The King will reply, 'Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me'"

As always, the Bible has an answer for our endless questions. James is just reminding us that we need to actually DO the things it tells us to!

Amen? let us pray...