
BE CAREFUL OF WHAT YOU SAYSermon for the 12th Sunday after Pentecost, 2018

Ephesians 4:29-32

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all. Amen.

The text for our sermon today is taken from Ephesians 4:29-32: - ²⁹ **Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths but only what is helpful for building others up where they need it, that it may impart grace to those who listen!** ³⁰ **Do not grieve God's Holy Spirit, by whom you were sealed for the day when you will be set free!** ³¹ **Get rid of all bitterness, rage, anger, brawling and slander, along with every way of hurting one another!** ³² **Be kind to one another and tender-hearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ has forgiven you!**

Lord God, heavenly Father, sanctify us through Your truth, Your Word is truth. Amen.

Dear friends in Christ,

We are truly blessed to be children of the one true God, and how marvellous He is! By His almighty Word the universe and everything in it was created. In six days, God created the heavens and the earth, before resting on the seventh.

When God created the world, and especially when He created all the different kinds of animals that walk the earth, and birds that fly, He gave each one a distinctive sound of some kind. If we close our eyes, and hear the roar of a lion, we know that it is a lion that is making that particular noise. The same goes for dogs, cats, birds of the air and so forth.

But to man God gave the marvellous power of articulate speech. He gave to man the power to clothe his thoughts in spoken language. Some 'scientific people' will argue that as man evolved over billions of years, so did his language. They will argue that man originally made some sort of sound like an animal, before finally evolving into a being that has developed speech.

This is ridiculous thinking, for the Bible teaches differently. It teaches us that man was created by God and was immediately given the ability to speak. God Himself spoke with Adam and Eve, and after He created man, He led the animals

to Adam so that he could name them.¹ It would make no sense if all that Adam could have done was to bark like a dog or moo like a cow when these animals were brought to him! And of course, we know that from creation up till the time of the tower of Babel, all people spoke the same language before God intervened and introduced the different languages,² again, languages which did not evolve over a period of time but were immediate.

To speak is a wonderful gift of God. More than this, it is a divine gift, and if we would only recognise this more readily, we would not be willing to abuse this gift. In our text for today, the Apostle Paul gives instruction concerning our speech and conversation. It tells us to be careful of what you say.

Paul says, “**Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths.**” What is meant by unwholesome talk?

When we have thoughts that we want to share with others, we use our speech to convey these thoughts. In speaking, Paul says that we should **not let any unwholesome talk come out of (our) mouths**. Unfortunately, controlling the tongue is not an easy task. James acknowledges that when he writes, “*No man can tame the tongue. It is a restless evil, full of deadly poison,*” (James 3:8), yet we should never use lewd, unchaste words in our conversation. This means too that we should not find ourselves telling or even listening to smutty stories or dirty jokes, or songs that contain filthy content. Yet it seems as though today, more and more people take delight in hearing and repeating lewd stories or using rough language in everyday speech. It probably doesn’t help either when this sort of speech is heard on television or the radio or is found in the words of printed media.

This moral poison, wherever it is found, and spread by many tongues, can easily permeate through the mind and the heart, ruining the thoughts of youth, and leading many hearts astray. Many people even think that such lewd conversation is harmless, but God our Father knows to what terrible results unwholesome talk leads, and therefore He forbids it. As God’s *dearly loved children*³, may we never let such impure words fall from our lips, and when we hear them from others, instead of joining in and being one with the crowd, enjoying the laughter, we

¹ Genesis 2:19

² Genesis 11

³ Ephesians 5:1

ought to stand up and show our scorn for such words. If someone with bad breath was to speak to you, you would more than likely turn your face away; when you hear someone's mouth uttering putrid conversation, surely, that's enough reason to turn away.

Paul also speaks of other evil communications. He urges us to **get rid of all bitterness, rage, anger, brawling, and slander, along with every way of hurting one another.**

How often do we see that people who associate with each other are embroiled in an argument of some sort? Sometimes things get a little heated, tempers are lost, and then out comes the abusive language.

If there are arguments among fellow children of God, then these arguments must be settled quickly. Indeed, Paul says, "*Do not let the sun go down while you are still angry,*" (Eph. 4:26). We must not let things get out of hand. There is explanation, and then forgiveness. All anger is quickly cleared away.

But often arguments are not always put aside quickly. Often **bitterness** fills the heart, and the argument develops into **slander**, and before you know it, because of what is said, wounds are opened that can hardly ever be healed. This can cause great harm indeed. We must always weigh our words carefully and guard our tongue; because what we say can easily turn friends into enemies, set relatives against relatives, and even plunge churches into strife.

However, there is a greater harm done by unwholesome talk, and that is that it grieves the Holy Spirit.

Do not grieve God's Holy Spirit, Paul says. The Holy Spirit has done His sanctifying work of calling, gathering, and enlightening people. He has made them His own and set His seal of ownership on them by dwelling in them. "*You were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God*" Paul tells us in 1 Corinthians 6:11. The Holy Spirit's goal is to keep us safely in the Christian fold **for the day when you will be set free**, that is, until Judgement Day. When we engage in **unwholesome talk**, not only do we jeopardise our own faith, but we also put the faith of others at risk. Therefore, we should guard against evil words lest the Holy Spirit be grieved and leave our hearts.

On the other hand, good speech is very pleasing to God, and we must speak words that are good and kind, patient and helpful. Everything that we utter must

have a good purpose. Often, there are times that we have opportunities to say something that will be a help to others. The Eighth Commandment requires us *to defend our neighbour, to speak well of him, and to put the best construction on everything*. If someone is being slandered and we know that it is not true, we have an opportunity to do good with our words. Proverbs 31:8-9 reminds us that we should *speak up for those who cannot speak for themselves, for the rights of all who are destitute. Speak up and judge fairly, defend the rights of the poor and needy*. Even if an accusation is true, we can speak well of our neighbour - we should not all of a sudden start to abuse or slander him. And when a neighbour's action can be interpreted in two different ways, we might be able to show that our neighbour did not mean any evil. Furthermore, we have ample opportunity to admonish our neighbour and to teach him the will of God and to encourage him to do right. All our words should be spoken with the purpose of accomplishing some good.

In order that we may speak kind words, we must have a kind heart, and that is what Paul means when he says to **be kind to one another and tender-hearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ has forgiven you.**

As Christians we must love one another, we must not be cold and harsh toward each other, and we must willingly forgive one another. It happens over and over again that one Christian offends another; after all, we still have that old Adam in us warring against our soul. But when we do become involved in an argument, complete reconciliation must follow in every case. This must be the case, after all, God forgives us all our trespasses every day.

We ask for forgiveness of our sins, and God covers all our sins with the blood of Christ. Isn't this enough reason for us to have the same kindness in our heart to forgive one another? Think of such people as Joseph in the Old Testament who forgave his brothers⁴, and Stephen in the New Testament who forgave those stoning him to death⁵. Think of Jesus Himself, always ready to forgive, even though He was often treated with contempt. Think of the words of Jesus where He told us to forgive seventy times seven times before launching into the parable of the wicked servant, telling of the servant who was forgiven such a large debt by

⁴ Genesis 42ff

⁵ Acts 7:54-60

the king, yet would not forget a small debt owed to him by a fellow servant.⁶ Again, remember the Fifth Petition in the Lord's Prayer, *forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us*. We must at all times and in all places, let kindness and love fill our hearts. If we do this, then naturally kind and loving words will come from our lips.

Dear friends, we must accept the admonition of our text, and avoid unwholesome talk, words and actions that causes much harm and grieves the Holy Spirit. We must speak good words at all times with the purpose of doing good. As evil words do much harm among men, so kind words do much good. They heal broken friendships; they end bitter arguments; they bring estranged members of families together, and they heal broken hearts and cement broken ties.

But best of all, Christian words of love and kindness are pleasing to God. Many times, the Holy Scriptures declares that God was pleased with the words of His faithful servants: such men as Samuel, David, and Solomon. We can be sure that the words spoken in accordance with God's will do please God. Therefore, we must choose our words rightly out of love for our Father in heaven. Amen.

The peace of God which passes all understanding, keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. Amen.

PRAYER FOR THE TWELFTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

Lord God, we rejoice that we are Your children because of Your constant love and mercy. We are what we are purely by Your grace. You have made us Your own, and fulfilled all Your rich promises to us. You give power and strength to Your people. Therefore hear our prayers as we come to You, not in our own name or goodness, but in the name and by the merits of Jesus Christ.

We praise You for the glorious Gospel of Your grace. We rejoice to know that You have kept Your word by sending Your Son Jesus Christ when the right time came, to give His flesh, and to rise again on the third day so that through Him we may never taste death.

We thank You for the apostles' sure witness to Christ's resurrection in Your holy Word, on which our faith can stand firm. Fill us with love and faith in our risen Lord, so that we may live in a joy that words cannot fully express, and that we may confidently wait for eternal fellowship with You in the life to come.

⁶ Matthew 18:23-35

Give us Your Spirit's power to remain strong in our faith, in spite of all the doubt and ridicule of our age. Keep us each day in repentance for sin, in humble reliance on Your mercy, and in the peace of Your forgiveness. Give us such love for You that we may devote our whole lives to serving You in cheerful obedience.

Pour Your Holy Spirit's power on the Church, that it may take Your Gospel to others, and proclaim Jesus Christ to them as their only hope of forgiveness, life, and salvation. Defend Your Church from its enemies and from all false teaching, that it may know no other Gospel than the one You gave it once and for all.

We pray for our country. Give us leaders in all walks of life who respect Your commandments, promote what is good, and oppose what is evil, so that our citizens may live in harmony, peace, and uprightness, and show concern for the good of all. Frustrate the efforts of those who wish to promote murder through abortion.

We pray for our homes. Give all parents a burning desire to teach their children to know, love, and respect You in Jesus Christ. Enable all families to live together in peace, love, and true wisdom.

Hear the prayers of the suffering, the bereaved, the needy, the homeless, the wounded, the worried, and the despairing. Lead them in mercy out of all that distresses them. Deliver us from every evil of body and soul, and at our last hour mercifully take us from the troubles of this life to Yourself in heaven. If it is Your gracious will, look out over our country and see the effects this terrible drought is having, and send drought breaking rain to revive the land.

Give us these things, O Father, and whatever else is necessary for us, in the name of Jesus, who, together with You and the Holy Spirit, lives and reigns, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

The 12th Sunday after Pentecost

1 Kings 19:1-8

¹ Ahab told Jezebel everything that Elijah had done and especially that he had killed all the prophets with the sword. ² Then Jezebel sent a messenger to Elijah saying, "May the gods deal severely with me and even worse than that if by this time

tomorrow I do not make your life like the life of one of them!"

³ When he was aware of this, Elijah set out and fled for his life. He came to Beer-Sheba, which belongs to Judah and left his servant there. ⁴ Elijah himself went into the wilderness a day's journey. He came and sat down under a broom tree and

asked that he might die. He said: “It is enough now, LORD. Take away my life! For I am no better than my fathers.”

⁵ He lay down under the broom tree and fell asleep. Then suddenly an angel was there, touching him. He told him: “Get up and eat!”

⁶ When Elijah looked, there, near his head, was a bread-cake on hot stones and a jar of water. So, he ate and drank and lay down again. ⁷ The angel of the LORD came back a second time and touched him. He said: “Get up and eat! Otherwise your journey will be too much for you.”

⁸ Elijah got up and ate and drank. Then, on the energy from that food, he travelled for forty days and forty nights, as far as Horeb, the mountain of God.

Ephesians 4:17-5:2

¹⁷ So, I tell you and call on you in the Lord, not to live any longer like the Gentiles. Their minds are set on worthless things. ¹⁸ Their understanding is darkened. Their natural state of ignorance, caused by their closed minds, has made them strangers to the life that God gives.

¹⁹ Having become callous, they have given themselves over to a life of lust, to practise every kind of vice with a constant desire for

more. ²⁰ However, that is not what you learned when you came to know Christ, ²¹ if indeed you have heard Him and have been taught by Him as the truth is in Jesus. ²² You were taught to strip off your old self, which follows your former ways of living and ruins you, as it follows the desires that deceive you. ²³ Instead, you were taught to be continually renewed in the spirit of your minds, ²⁴ and to put on the new self, which is created to be like God, truly righteous and holy. ²⁵ Therefore, each of you must put off falsehood and speak the truth to his neighbour! For we are members of one another. ²⁶ Be angry without sinning! Do not let the sun go down while you are still angry, ²⁷ and do not give the Devil a foothold! ²⁸ He who has been stealing must not steal any longer! Instead, he must work hard, doing something good with his own hands, that he may have something to share with anyone in need! ²⁹ Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths but only what is helpful for building others up where they need it, that it may impart grace to those who listen! ³⁰ Do not grieve God’s Holy Spirit, by whom you were sealed for the day when you will be set free! ³¹ Get rid of all bitterness, rage, anger, brawling and slander, along with every way of

hurting one another!³² Be kind to one another and tender-hearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ has forgiven you!

^{5:1} Therefore, imitate God, as His dearly loved children,² and live in love, just as Christ also loved us and gave Himself up for us as a “fragrant offering and sacrifice” to God!

John 6:35-51

³⁵ Jesus told them, “I am the Bread of life. The person who comes to Me will certainly not be hungry and the person who believes in Me will certainly never be thirsty.³⁶ However, I have told you both that you have seen Me and that you do not believe.³⁷ Everything that the Father gives to Me will come to Me, and I shall certainly not cast out the person who comes to Me,³⁸ because I have come down from heaven, not that I may do My will but the will of Him who has sent Me.³⁹ This is also the will of the One who has sent Me, that I should not lose anything of what He has given to Me but that raise it on the last day.⁴⁰ For this is the will of My Father, that everyone who sees the Son and believes in Him should have eternal life, and that I should raise him on the last day.”

⁴¹ The Jews therefore grumbled because He said, “I am the Bread

that has come down from heaven.”⁴² They asked, “Is this not Jesus, Joseph’s son, whose father and mother we know? How can He now say, ‘I have come down from heaven’?”

⁴³ Jesus answered them, “Stop grumbling among yourselves!⁴⁴ A person can come to Me only if the Father, who has sent Me, draws him, and I shall raise him on the last day.

⁴⁵ The prophets wrote: ‘God will teach everyone.’ Everyone who listens to the Father and learns from Him comes to Me.⁴⁶ Not that anyone has seen the Father. Only He who comes from God has seen the Father.⁴⁷ Truly, truly, I tell you, the one who believes in Me has eternal life.

⁴⁸ “I am the Bread of Life.⁴⁹ Your fathers ate the manna in the wilderness and died.⁵⁰ This is the Bread coming down from heaven, that anyone may eat from it and not die.⁵¹ I am the living Bread that has come down from heaven. If anyone eats of this Bread, he will live for ever, and the Bread that I shall give is My flesh, for the life of the world.”