

## Watch Your Words

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Good morning, everybody.

The title of our lesson this morning is, "Watch your speech."

We've all had those moments, haven't we? When our mouth seems to have a life of its own.

What did I just say anyway? Did I say that? I couldn't have said *that*?

Maybe we should call this lesson, "Watch your mouth."

That's what parents always used to say. Growing up. "Watch your mouth."

That's what God tells us, "Watch your mouth."

Very recently. Like last evening. A hostess in a restaurant asked if we'd like a high round top table. Well, no, not really. And I could have said "No, thank you!"

But I said ... kind of going off the rails a little bit ... with some hand motions. "Do I look like a high round top kind of a guy to you?"

And the hostess said, "I don't know you that well yet."

I always think that I have a label on my forehead that says this guy wants to sit by the kitchen or next to a garbage can or maybe at a high round top table.

But I could have just said "No, thank you. Not tonight, please."

It's easy to get triggered. It really is.

You get hooked by something unrelated that bothers you and you drag it over into this conversation. Or maybe you get to know someone so well that normal speech boundaries are crossed.

People talk to family in ways they would never talk to a casual acquaintance. And that's not right. Why do we think that we shouldn't extend the same courtesies to our family?

For example ... to our husbands and wives ... that we extend to strangers.

There are many things that should be said. There are opportunities for us to say necessary things as Christians or parents or good neighbors. There are many opportunities for us to say things that we ought to say because our speech can build somebody up, it can teach them.

There's no need to tear somebody down with our words.

My Uncle Claude spent some time in WWII in the Pacific, and I remember him talking to my dad one time and he said the most awful thing he ever saw was a flamethrower.

We sometimes use our mouths as flamethrowers ... in a kind of scorched earth fashion.

Think about some of the things that we talked about in our Bible class this morning as Jeff was leading us, there are things that we might say that never ought to be said.

God chose written and spoken words to reveal His nature. Think about that. We hear the Bible, and we speak it. We read the Bible, and we speak it to other people.

Think about how words are the way we learn what God wants us to do ... how we should live as Christians ...how we should live faithful lives.

Words are how we learn about God's love for us and His plans for us in Christ.

So, speech is important.

We read in the scriptures that the Word of God is more powerful than a two-edged sword. We read where Paul says, "I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God unto salvation to those who believe."

What I'm trying to say is that God gave us mouths and the ability to use them to communicate, to do good, and to bring glory to his name.

The things we say that never should have been said are a misuse of the capabilities that God has given us.

There are times when we do need to speak up, there are scads of times when a smile or a nod is called for. You can build up with your mouth, you can tear down. You can heal, you can soothe, you can encourage. Or you can be ashamed of what you said.

What you say lingers on after the sound waves die out; it lingers on, sometimes forever.

What can you remember from long ago that you heard said? The "good?" The "not so good?"

Do you remember things that built you up?

Maybe even the slightest thing.

Do you remember things that maybe pulled you down?

Things that were said to you? Things that you've said.

You've probably all seen that plaque or that little placard or whatever you call it: "Be sure your brain is engaged before shifting your mouth into gear."

Now, I always thought that was pretty insightful.

We have a hymn in our book that addresses angry words.

The title of the hymn is, "Love One Another."

It starts out saying, "Angry words, O let them never soil your lips. Never let them slip out of your mouth over an unbridled tongue."

In one moment ... in one second ... you can do a whole lot of damage.

The song says, "May the heart's best impulse ever check them ere they soil the lips."

Angry words can desolate and mar. "Love one another, thus saith the Savior."

One of our members from long ago when I was a teenager ... Hugo Winkler ... was a large part of our congregation. He was a life force. He was big. He filled up the doorway. He was strong but gentle,

When we in our old building ... when we were getting ready to put a baptistry ... Brother Winkler had a sledgehammer. He kept saying "now?" "Now?" Finally, we let him loose and he broke the concrete up.

He loved that song. Angry words. He led it a lot.

I wonder sometimes how often hymns mean something special to us, something that strengthens us or cautions us. They just ring true with us.

And I wonder why he loved that song so much. He was a big guy. He was an excitable guy, in a good way.

Maybe ... maybe there were times when he thought he should have held back.

I don't know if you're familiar with the area, but where Lorain Road goes across the bridge into Kamm's Corners, there is sometimes a traffic jam there. Brother Winkler was riding with my dad one time, and the traffic was backed up. There was this one guy who was making things worse by cutting in and out.

Brother Winkler, Hugo, hopped out of the car said, "I'll be right back." My dad watched him march down the line of traffic and reach through the window and pull this guy up and said, "Don't do that again."

He never would have hurt the man. But the message was clear.

He was a big guy. Animated. Maybe "love one another" and "angry words" resonated with him.

And that's good that we have a conscience in those things.

Luke 6:45 says, "The good man brings good things out of the good stored up in his heart; and the evil man brings evil things out of the evil stored up in his heart. For out of the overflow of his heart, his mouth speaks."

What you say flows out of your heart. A poet once said, "A man sees in the world what he carries in his heart." If you carry good things and loving things and constructive things in your heart, you're going to see that in the world."

If you carry things in your heart that are wrong, or cause you to spread anger, or hurt people, or to be pessimistic ... then that's what you're going to see in the world.

You need to get your heart tuned up.

Jesus calls us to be a light on the hill that so that everyone can see Him. We're to let the world know about the love of God and the Gospel.

And he also calls us to be the salt of the earth, preserving what is good and adding flavor to the righteous things in this life.

A few days ago, having not slept very well. Connie said "I'd like to hear at least one positive thing out of your mouth for the next while.

We have so much to be thankful for.

I recently saw this. 10 signs you're doing well in life. I'm not talking about your cars or your money or your job, or all the worldly things you have.

Ten signs that you're doing well in this life.

One, you have a roof over your head.

Number two, you ate today.

Number three, you have a good heart.

Number four, you wish good for other people.

Number five, you have clean water.

We live by Lake Erie. We take for granted an unlimited supply of clean water. There are places in this country that don't have an unlimited supply of water. There are places in the world that don't even have water, let alone clean water. We take clean water for granted.

Number six, someone cares for you. Even people that you are unaware of who are caring for you.

Number seven, you strive to be better.

Number eight, you have clean clothes.

Number nine, you have a dream.

Number ten, you're breathing.

God woke you up this morning; you're breathing.

And I'll add one more. Very important. God has poured out his love in Christ upon you, and you have hope eternal.

Those are 10 ... no 11 ... signs that you're doing well in this life. So much to be thankful for.

Consider this. You never really know the true impact you have on people around you.

You never really know most of the impact you have. You will never see it.

I remember one person who was instrumental in teaching some of us how to facilitate or to teach. She said there is nothing that you say or do that won't have an impact on somebody somewhere. Nothing. You never know the true impact that you have on those around you.

You never know how much someone needed that smile that you gave them didn't cost you anything.

You never know how much your kindness has turned someone's entire life around.

You never know how much someone needed that long hug or deep talk. Not everybody is good with hugs and deep talks, but a little bit doesn't hurt.

Don't wait to be kind. Don't wait for someone else to be kind first.

Well, what if I'm not much of a hugger or talker? You don't need to be. Your care and concern can be shown in so many ways, especially if you do it in the hard times ... not just in the easy times.

Don't wait for better circumstances or for someone or something to change.

Just be kind, be kind with your words. You never know how much someone needs it.

Likely much more than you feel you need it yourself.

Well, "I need encouraging words too," you say. If you want to be encouraged, encourage somebody else who needs your strength. Get outside yourself and focus on another.

You can say, "You're not alone."

"I'm always here for you."

"I'm proud of you. I'll always be proud of you."

You can say, "You mean the world to me, and I just wanted you to know I'm thinking about you."

"I'm grateful for you."

I heard someone say, not that long ago ... "I appreciate you." He didn't say "I appreciate what you did." He said, "I appreciate you."

That kind of stuck with me. When we say something like that, it seems awkward, doesn't it? Like a little bit forward?

But why can't I say, "I appreciate you."

"I appreciate you." You can say that.

Did you ever wonder ... I was ... while I was writing this?

Did you ever wonder what it would have been like to walk and talk with Jesus? And I know we always think we would learn from Him. We would ask Him questions. He would set examples.

But have you ever thought about what it might have been like to sit down at Martha and Mary's table with him and just eat? Just sit in silence with him and recharge your soul. Be around his gentleness and his kindness, Emmanuel God with man.

It's been quite a while ago ... we were working on this building, and we were painting things ... and my nephew Wesley was with me. He was little, and he said, Uncle John, did you build this church? You know ... knowing that my dad and I probably were involved in some part of the construction. And I just said, no, "Jesus built this church." A teaching moment, I figured.

Something you might say as a preacher or Christian. He was silent for a long time. Then he asked, "What was he like?"

What a wonderful question from a small boy

People should not have to explain why they deserve to be spoken to with respect and be treated with human decency.

You shouldn't have to explain why we should never talk down to someone or hurt them or strip them of who they are or change them into something you want them to be rather than who they want to be.

That's not the love of God.

People just want to be surrounded by good people, people that are good for them. Good to them. We can do that for them, can't we?

It takes patience and grace to remain kind in tough situations ... in cruel situations. It takes patience and grace.

I saw this quote, I'm sure that's the message Connie was sending to me. "We all have a sad story. Either make it your excuse or make it your motivation. That's your choice."

And then there's this one, it's called the Bob principle. "When Bob has a problem with everyone, Bob is usually the problem." That makes a lot of sense, doesn't it?

I collect a pile of little things ... little sayings.

I see little things and I screen-shoot them ... and I keep them because I identify with them.

I think these sayings, at least for me, tune up the heart so the mouth will bring glory to God.

I like puns. Sometimes, like the guy said, I have an “elevendency” for them. That’s an extra strong tendency, by the way.

And if you want to hear my “turtle and the snail” joke, I’ll tell you later. Some may like it, some may not. But it tickles me, and I laugh. I laugh.

We must walk gently in the lives of other people. Not all wounds are visible.

A coworker of mine years ago. She was insightful. And every now and then, she would send me a note that said, “be gentle, be gentle with yourself.” Her name was Dawna. Her father-in-law was a handful. He was slowly recovering from many demons.

Andy, Dawna’s husband, had a lot of patience and a lot of insight. And I heard him say, “On a bad day, he would need to cut his dad a lot of slack.

He ... he went like this (shaking a clenched fist). Andy said that on a bad day, this was all his dad could muster.

“That’s a good day for my dad. That’s all he can do. That’s progress for my dad.” He said his dad was doing the best he could right then. And if you’d known half of where he’d come from, you’d understand.

We can’t set some arbitrary standard on a person. We talked about this in class this morning. We can’t say a person has to be or do such and such before we’ll be supportive, rather than judgmental, withholding our care.

God does not act that way towards us.

Aldous Huxley wrote this ... It’s called “Walk Lightly.”

(I often do not.)

“Walk lightly.

It’s dark because you are trying too hard. Lightly, child. Lightly.

Learn to do everything lightly.

Yes, feel lightly even when you’re feeling deeply.

Just lightly let things happen and lightly cope with them.

So, throw away your baggage and go forward.

There are quick stands all around you sucking at your feet, trying to suck you down into fear and self-pity and despair.

That’s why you must walk so lightly.”

There’s a saying ... “Like a duck.” Let the harmful words roll off you like water off a duck.

Albert Einstein once said, “The best thing to do when it’s raining is to let it rain.”

Hard advice to take sometimes.

So now ... who’s going to be the breath of fresh air and righteousness?

There’s no one but us. We, the Children of God.

We are the breath of the fresh air of righteousness.

I'm going to go through a number of verses now ... just reading them with you. Just let them wash over you.

You don't try to reason them out and tinker with them. Just listen to what God says.

Ephesians 4:29, "Let no corrupting talk come out of your mouth. Only such as is good for building up as fits the occasion that it may give grace to those who hear."

We are to leave a person better than we found them.

James 2:4-5, "Know this my beloved brothers. Let every person be quick to hear, slow to speak, slow to anger."

One, be quick to hear. Then two, be slow to speak. Then three, hardly ever speak angrily.

Proverbs 15:12, "A soft answer turns away wrath, but a harsh word stirs up anger."

A soft answer disarms. Have you ever had to disarm an onslaught of words? Someone was coming after you. Someone was mad; someone was dressing you down; someone was angry at you. Maybe someone was abusing you.

Have you ever had to disarm that person?

Soft words don't escalate. Get that person to laugh. It will disarm them.

Colossians 4:6. "Let your speech always be gracious."

Not some of the time. Let your speech always be gracious. We need to be gracious to one another ... graceful with each other.

We need to walk gently among ourselves, "Seasoned with salt so that you may know how you ought to answer each person."

Think about that. Be gracious. I ought to answer that person this way. I ought not to say anything to that person. Each person requires something different ... but be gracious about how you do it.

Psalms 141:3, "Set a guard, O Lord, over my mouth. Watch over the door of my lips."

Don't let my lips part ... don't let my mouth get going ... until I make sure that my mind and heart is engaged.

Proverbs 12:18, "There is one whose rash words are like sword thrusts, but the tongue of the wise brings healing."

Proverbs 18:2, "A fool takes no pleasure in understanding, but only in expressing his own opinion."

One of the best things you can do when another person is talking frantically is to let them be heard ... let them know they've been heard.

You've been in one of those cycles? ... where the conversation keeps going in circles?

That's often because the person doesn't feel heard. Make sure that person feels heard, even if it means you don't say anything. Give them the last word ... at least for the time being. That will calm them down. And that's what they deserve, right? It's what you would want.

Proverbs 15:2, "The tongue of the wise commends knowledge, but the mouths of fools pour out folly."

Psalm 19:14 ... this brings back memories of an elder here at Lorain Avenue ... Mark Ulman, Sr.

He would always close his prayer with these words ... always.

“Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be acceptable in your sight, O Lord, my rock and my redeemer.”

Proverbs 18:14, “If one gives an answer before he hears, it is his folly and shame.”

1 Peter 3:7 ... this is something we studied on Wednesday nights over the last month or two ...

“Husbands, in the same way, be considerate as you live with your wives, and treat them with respect as the weaker partner and as heirs with you of the gracious gift of life, so that nothing will hinder your prayers.”

I saw a picture with a quote underneath it. I forget exactly what it said.

The wife was shorter than her husband. She was sitting up on the kitchen counter and he was standing in front of her, and she was wrapped around him.

The basic thrust of the picture was that he was getting his batteries recharged. She's the only one who can nurture his soul and take care of him. Bring him back to health, give him strength and send him out again.

Husbands, when you think that you can do it without your wife, you're stupid.

We had a deacon here years ago, that would say “that's just plain stupid.” He didn't pull any punches ... that's just stupid.”

Treat your wife with respect. She might be physically weaker, but she's stronger than you in so many ways.

“... and as heirs with you of the gracious gift of life, so that nothing will hinder your prayers.”

Treat her with respect if we want God to be open to your prayers.

This is how important it is to God that we treat our marriage vows seriously.

Proverbs 10:19, “Sin is not ended by multiplying words, but the prudent hold their tongue.”

You can't talk yourself out of sin with a lot of fancy language. Sometimes you just have to be quiet, listen to God and do as He wills.

When David got all upset, Nathan said, “You are the one.” The first and only thing out of David's mouth was, “Lord, I've sinned before you.”

Colossians 3:8, “But now you must rid yourselves of all such things as these. Rid yourself of all anger, rage, malice, slander, and filthy language from your lips.”

No anger in your heart. When you open your mouth, no rage in your heart. When you open your mouth, no malice or slander. No gossip or filthy language.

Get rid of all this stuff before you open your mouth.

Proverbs 18:20-21. “Death and life are in the power of the tongue and those who love it will eat its fruits.”

If you use your tongue for good, you will promote and reap the good fruits. If you use your tongue for evil, you will promote and reap the evil fruits.



The tongue is powerful. Respect its power.

Proverbs 25:11, "Like apples of gold in settings of silver is a ruling given rightly."

Ephesians 4:15, "Speaking the truth in love, we will grow to become in every respect, the mature body of Him, who is the head."

Christ is the Head. If we speak truth in love with one another, this body of Christ, us, Christians, will grow up ... mature ... into the Christ the head and become more like Him.

Proverbs 15:28, "The heart of the righteous weighs its answers. But the mouth of the wicked gushes evil."

The righteous person goes ... "What should I say?" ... "Should I speak at all?" ... "How should I speak it?"

The evil person just lets their mouth run uncontrolled.

Matthew 28:18-20 ... You wouldn't think, maybe, this one would have much to do with the mouth ...

But here ... "Jesus told his Disciples to go therefore and make disciples of all nations by baptizing them into the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit."

First, we need to teach them. How do we teach them? With our mouths?

Teach them how to become Christians, baptizing them into the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. And then, "teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you and surely I will be with you even to the end of the age."

Teach them how to become a Christian. Teach them how to live as a Christian.

We do that with our mouth. This is how God wants us to use our mouths.

Proverbs 12:25, "Anxiety weighs down the heart like an anchor, but a kind word cheers it up."

James 1:26, "Those who consider themselves religious yet do not keep a tight rein on their tongues deceive themselves ..."

They think they're righteous, but they're not. "And their religion is worthless."

Galatians 6:1 says, "if someone's caught in a sin, use your mouth, use your words to bring them out of it, to bring them back."

That's the proper use of your words.

Galatians 6:1 says to use our mouths ... our words ... to restore a person from sin.

Romans 14 9, "Therefore, let us make every effort to do what leads to peace and to mutual edification." Within our power to do so.

Let's make every effort to apply these verses to our lives ... to our mouths ... to our words.

There's so many more we could talk about.

Apply these verses to our lives.

Speak the truth in love.

Watch our words. Proverbs 18:21 teaches us that our words have the power of life and death. Be mindful of the impact your words have on other people.

Listen actively when someone is speaking to you.

Speak only with kindness, get anger and resentment out of your mind, out of your heart.

Before you speak, commit to always be seeking and giving forgiveness. Always seek reconciliation.

There are people who can't speak for themselves, and they need you to speak for them. Speak up for justice.

Our words have power. God has given us the ability, with our mind, tempered with our heart, to speak words for His glory.

Let's use our mouths for His glory. Let's watch our mouths.

Prayer is vitally important if we hope to have success in watching our mouths. God will help us achieve our goals when we ask Him.

This concludes our lesson for this morning. I thank you for your kind attention.

The words that come from the Word of God ... teaching the proper way for Christians to use their mouths ... bring much contentment.

We're now going to extend the invitation of Christ.

Brother Jeff is going to lead us in a hymn while you consider your soul's salvation.

If you find that you need to become a Christian in the waters of baptism, just come forward as we sing and we can complete this act of obedience within the hour. We have a baptistry full of water ... all ready to go.

Scripture tells us that we are buried with Christ in baptism and rise up to walk in newness of life, freed from sin.

Being baptized into Christ not only forgives our past sins; it also gives us the ability to pray for forgiveness of the sins we commit during our Christian Walk. All you need to do is to repent of your sins and pray to God for forgiveness. If we can encourage you or pray with you, let us know.

Please stand and sing.