

Prayer of the Week:

Give us grace, O Lord, to answer readily the call of our Savior Jesus Christ and proclaim to all people the Good News of his salvation, that we and the whole world may perceive the glory of his marvelous works; who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

(Source: Book of Common Prayer 2019, Collects of the Christian Year, The Third Sunday of Epiphany)

Prayer of Thanksgiving:

Almighty God, Father of all mercies, give you humble thanks for all your goodness and loving-kindness to us and to all whom you have made.

We bless you for our creation, preservation, and all the blessings of this life; but above all for your immeasurable love in the redemption of the world by our Lord Jesus Christ; for the means of grace, and for the hope of glory.

And, we pray, give us such an awareness of your mercies, that with truly thankful hearts we may show forth your praise, not only with our lips, but in our lives, by giving up ourselves to your service, and by walking before you in holiness and righteousness all our days; through Jesus Christ our Lord, to whom, with you and the Holy Spirit, be honor and glory throughout all ages. Amen.



Words Matter

James 3:1-12

January 24th

Intro

"Men like me, who possess hidden wisdom are freed from common rules just as we are cut off from common pleasures. Our, my boy, is a high and lonely destiny." -Uncle Andrew from The Magician's Nephew by C.S. Lewis

The keen moral insight of Lewis is clear; the moment one thinks that an action that would be wrong for others is OK for them, they have puffed themselves up with pride and are heading for disaster.

This is essentially the same lesson James gives in 4:11-12.

When we speak evil against one another or pass judgement, we become a judge of the law, not subject to the law. We speak ill of others from a perceived moral high ground.

For James, this makes no sense! His wisdom is this: Those who call themselves Christians are to find themselves as servants of God.

Words Create Worlds

This ties into James' theme of the power of our words in 3:1-12, which includes imagery from Genesis.

The first image from Genesis is when he reminds us that humans are made in the "likeness of God." Given that humanity is made in God's image, it is not right to bless God and then curse, slander, or revile people.

The second image from Genesis comes in verse 7 when he says that "every species of beast and bird, of reptile and sea creature, can be tamed and has been tamed by the human species."

"Taming" refers to Adam naming the animals (Gen. 2:19-20). In the ancient world, as in ours, if you named something you had authority over it. Taming, then, is a way of talking about authority. But, he says, despite naming the animals of creation, we are unable to tame the tongue.

What does James want us to get from this Genesis imagery? The first gift distinctive to humans is the gift of language to name the animals, therefore through our words we have the opportunity to continue God's creative work in the world.....or frustrate it.

Our words have the capacity to create worlds in which we and our neighbors must live. In much the same way as God spoke creation into being, so our words have creative power in the world.

This is why James uses such big - even cosmic - language to describe the potential peril of our words. He says our tongue is full of deadly poison; it's a fire; he goes so far as to say that the tongue can be a fire set by hell itself.

Three Questions For Reflection

Are my words consistent with my testimony of Jesus as Lord?

Is the tone of my posts on social media congruent with the tone of Jesus?

What kind of world are my words creating?

LORD, help us!