

Sunday 16th September 2018 The Power of Words
Isaiah 50:4-91 James 3:1-12 Mark 8:27-38

Intro

During September New Testament readings have been working through letter of James and Marks gospel

James is writing a discipleship programme.... how we as Christians should be aiming to live

And today's reading starts off with the words that every preacher loves... NOT!

'Not many should become teachers' vs 1

Great!!! Primary school teacher and now teaching people as a vicar!!!

SLOW learner !!! :-)

All of us who teach, in any way, should be cautious

Why? Because the power of words is great, both positively and negatively, and none of us are perfect so; take care, think carefully before speaking and Seek God's help

Pray again?

What do these 3 things have in common? a horse's bit, a ship's rudder and a lit match?

Each one of them holds the power to control, shape, guide, something much bigger than themselves

Wild, untamed horse becomes controllable by a small piece of metal in their mouths.. dressage

Huge cruise ship is steered by a relatively small piece of metal

Tiny 2" / 6cm thin stick can grow into a massive fire covering acres of land

James compares the power of these things to the power that each of us hold through our tongue

We know the power of a few words

Weight Watchers or Sliming world or something similar as you step on scales

Well done! : Bad week?

Sitting in a Drs consultation room

The scan is clear : It's not good news I'm afraid

Phone call from a friend

It's all over : He bought me a ring

There is huge power in just a few words

Sure many of us will have stories to tell of how a teacher may have influenced us positively and negatively

I went to the same secondary school for 7 years 1000's of words must have been spoken to me in that time

What are the clearest words I remember? At the end of my first year, standing outside a classroom in the new block, waiting for a dreaded Latin lesson and a German teacher walked past and said to me 'You will study Latin next year not German. You're not good at languages'!

For years I have believed that I was not good at languages

Just a few words can lift us up and make us feel a million dollars

Or they can squash us and leave us feeling devastated

Words have great power do they not? To influence, to shape, to encourage, to insult

And we all hold that power through the use of our tongue

Some of you may know the story of Rosa Parks

In 1955 in Montgomery, Alabama she, and 3 other African Americans were ordered to move to a different part of the bus to make room for white passengers.

She said 'No' and stayed seated where she was. When told by the bus driver that he would have her arrested she replied softly "You may do that"

She was arrested and fined \$10 but her few softly spoken words were the catalyst to a chain of events that went on to change the United States

I was reading this week of a Jewish lady who, as a child, was on a train with her younger brother going to Auschwitz. She had no idea what was in store for them. In the train she told him to 'Do up his shoelaces' in the sort of voice that older sisters can sometimes use with their little brothers! Once they arrived they were separated and she never saw him again. She survived and he didn't. Many years later she said "I walked out of Auschwitz into life and I made a vow. And the vow was, I will never say anything that couldn't stand as the last thing I ever say"

She understood the power of words.

James warns us about the diverse power of words... He challenges those he was writing to and us that with the tongue "we BLESS the Lord and Father, and with it we curse those who are made in the likeness of God. From the same mouth come blessing and cursing" Vs 9&10

Look at the account that we hear from Mark's gospel today.

Our much loved Peter is the first to proclaim that Jesus is the Messiah
Jesus asks his disciples "who do people say that I am?" and they give various responses
When Jesus asks them who they think he is Peter replies with those now famous words "You are the Messiah"

This is a turning point in Jesus' ministry

In a moment, without thought, from his heart, Peter declares in just 4 words, a life changing and powerful truth... that this man stood before Peter and the other disciples is the Messiah, the Lord, the one for whom they have been waiting for many years.

Just a few moments later, after telling them what was to come next, Peter resists the message that Jesus is sharing, he rebukes the one whom he has just proclaimed as Messiah. And the potential power of these words to harm the teaching and ministry of Jesus are huge and so Jesus' response is tough "Get behind me, Satan!"

In a few moments the words of Peter are of huge contrast

The incredible truth that Jesus is the Messiah

And the potentially destructive words of denial at what Jesus was teaching about his forthcoming death

Conclusion

The power of words is great, both positively and negatively

God doesn't want us to lose power

Peter proclaimed incredibly positive words

Rosa Parks was the catalyst to some amazing changes

The encouraging words of some of our teachers

have all made change and impact for the good

A danger is that we end up saying almost nothing at all because we fear saying something wrong

That is not what God wants

But our tongues, our words, the way we speak is something we all need to think about and be aware of.

Proverbs 12:18 says

Reckless words pierce like a sword

But the tongue of the wise brings healing

We all need to hear words of healing and wisdom and encouragement and blessing

We all need to be people who speak out those words and tenderly spoken words of truth

James says that the tongue cannot be tamed, it can be a deadly poison

But as Christians we have the availability of the Holy Spirit to help and guide and teach us

So what small things can we say or do or put into place so that the power of our words can be used to make a positive impact?

PRAY