

Blessing and Cursing
James 3:1-12

September 22, 2024

INVOCATION: Merciful Lord, we are thankful again that You have chosen us to be gathered together here today. We are honored to be in Your house as we step aside from the things of the world and dedicate this time to You. Hear our songs and prayers as acts of worship to You. Speak to us through the Holy Spirit today. In the name of Jesus, hear our plea. Amen.

WELCOME: Be sure to welcome visitors.

HYMN # 261 Wonderful Words of Life
HYMN # 446 Take Time to be Holy

ANNOUNCEMENTS:

MISSIONARY PRAYER CALENDAR

PASTORAL PRAYER:

OFFERTORY HYMN # 559 Rescue the Perishing

SERMON FOCUS: I must avoid poisonous words.

SERMON FUNCTION: The hearer will be cautious about his/her own words and those he/she chooses to listen to.

BACKGROUND: James was writing to the early Christian Jews in the 40's A. D. His focus was to encourage early Christians to holy living.

SCRIPTURE READING: James 3:1-12

INTRODUCTION: Some things that I was taught about survival if lost in the desert...

- Avoid direct sun if you can
- Signal for help
- Don't wander. People will be looking for you.
- Drink your water; conserve your sweat. People are often found dead still having water that they were trying to conserve.
- Don't drink your urine. It will poison you. There's a reason your body got rid of it!

In the same way, when we pass through this desert of life, we must beware of what we consume.

MESSAGE:

1. LIES ARE POISONOUS WORDS

a. Lies in teaching

- i. (2 Tim. 2:15) Paul reminded Timothy of the importance of study in rightly handling the word of truth!
- ii. Teachers who do not study and prepare *will* get it wrong. They will make up something in their mind that is not true. Teaching that is not true is **false teaching**.
- iii. People in churches are being led away from Christ and into better relationship with Satan by churches straying from the truth and spreading lies.
 1. Idolatry of preachers
 2. Idolatry of country
 3. Idolatry of self
- iv. James' statement that "not many should be teachers" isn't to discourage people from teaching. It's to ensure that those who are not called by God to teach realize the consequences of assuming that office.
- v. We, believers, must be aware that false words in teaching are a deadly poison. We must avoid using them and we must avoid consuming them. This truth also points to untruthful words in other areas of our lives.

b. Lies in politics

- i. It is very telling that we do not expect truth from our politicians.
- ii. We have no control over the sewage that they are spewing or how it is received by others.
- iii. We do, however, have control over how much of their lies we consume!

1. It's ok to turn off the TV.
2. It's ok to ignore social media.
- iv. We have even more control over how many of their lies we spread.
- c. Poisonous words in relationships
 - i. Lies will certainly damage our relationships.
 - ii. Even true words can be poisonous.
 1. True things said in an abusive manner.
 2. Excessive criticism.
 3. Words spoke in anger
- d. Every untruthful word comes from the father of lies.
 - i. You are of your father the devil, and you want to carry out your father's desires. He was a murderer from the beginning and does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he tells a lie, he speaks from his own nature, because he is a liar and the father of lies. -- John 8:44 (CSB)
 - ii. Lies draw people closer to the devil and further away from God!
- e. By contrast, truthful words, instead of being poisonous, are life-giving.

2. TRUTHFUL WORDS ARE LIFE-GIVING

- a. Truth preserves relationships.
- b. Confession and repentance restore relationships.
- c. The gospel gives people eternal life.
- d. Our words as disciples of Christ are to be a blessing to others.
 - i. With the tongue we bless our Lord and Father, and with it we curse people who are made in God's likeness. Blessing and cursing come out of the same mouth. My brothers and sisters, these things should not be this way. Does a spring pour out sweet and bitter water from the same opening? Can a fig tree produce olives, my brothers and sisters, or a grapevine produce figs? Neither can a saltwater spring yield fresh water. -- James 3:9-12 (CSB)
 - ii. As believers, we must determine not to be a spring of saltwater, but a spring of fresh water.
 - iii. Our words are to be words of life. To be otherwise is inconsistent with the nature of Christ. Christ is always consistent. We must also be.
- e. The best way that we can share life-giving words with people is to share the gospel with them.

3. THE GOSPEL IN SIMPLE FORM (adapted from Dr. James Merritt).

- a. Bad News: We are all sinners separated from God.
- b. Worst News: There is nothing we can do about our sin problem.
- c. Good News: Christ did for us what we cannot do for ourselves.
- d. Best News: Salvation and eternal life are a free gift, but you must receive it.