



‘Worship at home’ Sunday September 15th 2024

As we worship we are encouraged
to consider how we proclaim Christ,
by our words and our lives. You are invited
to find a **stick** from the garden to use for reflection.



Opening

The heavens proclaim the glory of God;
let us proclaim the glory of God in our worship.
All of creation expresses who God is;
**may we see each other as expressions of God,
made in Christ’s image.**

May the words of our mouths
and the meditations of our hearts be pleasing to God;
may we follow the way of Christ with our whole lives.



Hold your stick in your hand.
Feel the end: is it sharp and pointy?
Reflect on the following phrase.

***Sticks and stones may break my bones,
but names will never hurt me.***

Do you think this is true?

We are not always careful with our words. They can become
sharp and pointy, and cause hurt to others.

**When have you felt hurt by other peoples’ words?
When might your words have hurt others?**

**When have you felt encouraged and affirmed
by other people’s words?**

When have you been able to encourage and affirm others?

**When have you proclaimed the love of Christ
with your words? With your actions?**

Carefully feel the sharp or pointy end of your stick while you pray...

Prayer of Confession

Merciful God, we confess that we are not always careful with our words or our actions. We do not think about what we say or how it will hurt others. We express our own hurt, anger, frustration, resentment, without thought of its wider impact. We label people with names that put them down, sometimes unintentionally. We gossip and spread rumours about others. We say things that are not quite true in order to look or feel better.

We confess these hurtful words and ask your forgiveness. We have not shown your love by our words or our actions.

Bring us back to you, Oh God. Help us to follow your ways of love and grace, and to use our words to proclaim your goodness and glory. May the words of our mouths and the meditations of our hearts be pleasing to you, Oh God. Help us to show love in all we say and all we do. We pray in Christ, Amen.

Assurance of Forgiveness

Hear then Christ's word of grace to us: 'Your sins are forgiven'.

Thanks be to God.



James 3:1-12

Dear brothers and sisters, not many of you should become teachers in the church, for we who teach will be judged more strictly. Indeed, we all make many mistakes. For if we could control our tongues, we would be perfect and could also control ourselves in every other way. We can make a large horse go wherever we want by means of a small bit in its mouth. And a small rudder makes a huge

ship turn wherever the pilot chooses to go, even though the winds are strong. In the same way, the tongue is a small thing that makes grand speeches. But a tiny spark can set a great forest on fire. And among all the parts of the body, the tongue is a flame of fire. It is a whole world of wickedness, corrupting your entire body. It can set your whole life on fire, for it is set on fire by hell 2

itself. People can tame all kinds of animals, birds, reptiles, and fish, but no one can tame the tongue. It is restless and evil, full of deadly poison. Sometimes it praises our Lord and Father, and sometimes it curses those who have been made in the image of God. And so blessing and cursing come

pouring out of the same mouth. Surely, my brothers and sisters, this is not right! Does a spring of water bubble out with both fresh water and bitter water? Does a fig tree produce olives, or a grapevine produce figs? No, and you can't draw fresh water from a salty spring.

New Living Translation

Are you more of a talker, or a listener? Or both!

How many of us can still remember a compliment from a friend or internalised repeated criticisms from a schoolteacher even though they were spoken many years ago? The tongue is such a small part of our body, yet words can have such power to shape our lives, and the lives of those around us. Our words can bless or curse. Our words can embrace or exclude. Our words can affirm and heal or humiliate and destroy.

You cannot pick olives from a fig tree, nor draw fresh water from a salty spring. Our words reflect our inner identity, attitudes and values. They often say more about us than they do about the object of our speech. Elsewhere, the author of James recommends a spiritual discipline that is good for us and for those around us: "Everyone should be quick to listen and slow to speak" (1:19).

We each know that words are like toothpaste squeezed out of a tube, and once they are out, they cannot be put back in. We need to be careful about our words. Even more, we need to attend to our inner being, our prayer life, and our relationship with God. When we are clean inside, what comes out is more likely to be loving, kind and helpful. We are made in Christ's image, and when we follow his ways, our lives proclaim his love and grace.



Speak words
that build
and
encourage
others!

Prayer

Gracious God, we are reminded that our words have power to shape our lives and the lives of those around us. May we be careful with what we say and what we do, as we seek to live a life of faith following you. May our words and our actions be used to build up the Body of Christ and share love to those around us.



Loving God, we pray for those who feel they have no words:

- for refugees and asylum seekers
- for women and girls who have experienced sexist comments
- for people of colour who hear words of racism
- for people with disabilities who are told they are not enough
- for elderly people who are feel they are useless
- for young adults who are told they are entitled, selfish, and irresponsible

May we care for each other and look out for those who cannot speak their needs.

Healing God, we pray for the people and situations we are concerned about, as we name them before you...

May we show love and compassion as we are able. Help us to follow your ways of love and grace, and to use our words to proclaim your goodness and glory. Help us to show love in all we say and all we do. Amen.

You might choose to place your stick in a prominent place, and over the next week spend some time each day reflecting on your conversations, asking God to help you show love in all you say and all you do.



Closing

May the words of our mouths
and the meditations of our hearts be pleasing to God,
may we take up our cross and follow Christ,
and may the Holy Spirit empower us
to proclaim our faith by our words and our deeds. Amen.