

# Matthew: On Earth As It Is In Heaven

## Warning: Words Matter! \* Matthew 12:33-37

Go ahead and take your Bibles and turn with me to Matthew 12. While you are turning, let me tell you that I had a much better go of it this week than last. Florida State won the national championship (no cheers for that??), I got rid of my cold, we didn't cancel any services today, and most importantly I didn't spill anything on my laptop. And that's not because I got one of these as a friend suggested. Yes, a Sermon Saver Sippy Cup.

All right, today we have just five short verses to study together. Please follow along as I read:

*"Either make the tree good and its fruit good, or make the tree bad and its fruit bad, for the tree is known by its fruit. **34** You brood of vipers! How can you speak good, when you are evil? For out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks. **35** The good person out of his good treasure brings forth good, and the evil person out of his evil treasure brings forth evil. **36** I tell you, on the day of judgment people will give account for every careless word they speak, **37** for by your words you will be justified, and by your words you will be condemned." (Matthew 12:33-37, ESV)*

So, the title of the message today gives the big idea in this passage. It's Warning: Words Matter! Essentially Jesus is warning us that we need to be careful because words matter. Did you catch that? Listen to me carefully here; in this passage Jesus is giving us a shot across the bow, so to speak. And He's doing so by using some pretty strong language to grab our attention and show us that the words we speak are not immaterial. Every single one of them has eternal significance. And we know this because of what He says in verses 36-37. Look at it with me again:

*I tell you, on the day of judgment people will give account for every careless word they speak, **37** for by your words you will be justified, and by your words you will be condemned.*

Now, to be clear, Jesus is not saying that our words save us or prevent us from being saved. He's not saying that in order to be saved we always have to say what is right and avoid saying what is wrong. Rather, He is saying that on the day of judgment our words will be used as evidence of whether or not we have been saved, of whether or not we are truly God's children. We are going to see today that our speech is one of the best pieces of evidence if not the best piece of evidence of whether or not we are truly saved.

Now, as we begin I want to share a couple of things that will hopefully cause you to sit up straight and pay close attention this morning. The first is that we all speak a whole lot of words every single day. In fact, the average human being speaks between 14,000-17,000 words per day. Just an interesting side note here, and you probably knew this, but there is a big difference between men and women on this issue. Men average about 7,000 words per day, and women average - are you ready for this - 20,000.<sup>1</sup> And for the sake of my health I am not going to make any other comment on that. But either way, here is the point: whether we are male or female we all say lots of words- 200 billion in the average lifetime - and Jesus tells us that every single one of them matters. Now, I don't know about you, but that is a heavy thought. By the way, I think if Jesus were here today He would include not only the words we say but also the words we text, tweet, Facebook, email and blog - which for some of us is even more than we speak. So, you got this, teenagers? Your texts do matter. They will one day be brought out as evidence either for or against you on the Day of Judgment. One day we will give account for every word, whether we speak it or type it.

Here is the second thing I hope will grab your attention, and it comes from a quote I read this week by 19<sup>th</sup> century English pastor J.C. Ryle. He wrote about our passage today:

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.ask.com/question/how-many-words-does-the-average-person-speak-a-day>

*Truly these are very solemn considerations. If there were no other text in the Bible, this passage ought to convince us, that we are all "guilty before God," and need a righteousness better than our own, even the righteousness of Christ.<sup>2</sup>*

What He is saying is that our speech, more than any other thing, exposes our need for a Savior. In James 3 we are told that no man can tame the tongue, and I am pretty sure if we were honest with ourselves we would all admit that this has been our personal experience. I know it certainly is for me. It's rare that I go a day without saying something if not multiple things that reveal my depravity and need for a Savior. Are you all with me on that? The tongue, more than anything else shows that we need the righteousness that only Jesus Christ can provide. And so I want to point you to His righteousness from the get go today. Over the next few moments you may feel a fair amount of conviction and guilt, and if you do I want to remind you that Jesus died to exchange your sin for His righteousness.

Now, before we really get into our passage today we need to take some time to review what we learned last week in verses 22-32. Many of you weren't able to be here last week because of the weather, and so if that is the case for you, please pay close attention here.

In last week's passage Jesus healed a blind and mute man by casting a demon out of him. This led to the religious leaders, known as the Pharisees, to accuse Jesus of working by the power of Satan. The Pharisees became jealous of the attention Jesus was receiving and started to worry that they were going to lose followers to Him, and so they made an outrageous accusation about who He was. In response, Jesus told them that their accusation was contrary to the evidence. Instead, He said that His casting out the demon was proof that He was working through the power of the Holy Spirit.

Further, Jesus told the Pharisees that they had to make a choice. They had to choose whether or not they were with Him or against Him. And if they

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<sup>2</sup> Ryle, J.C. (2010-07-29). The Gospel of Matthew (Kindle Locations 2224-2226). . Kindle Edition.

were against Him, what they were really doing was blaspheming the Holy Spirit, because He was the one through whom Jesus was working.

From all of this we learned that the one and only unforgiveable sin is to deny the Holy Spirit's revelation of who Jesus is. That's what it means to blaspheme the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is the one who reveals to us who Jesus is, and to fail to believe what He reveals is the one and only sin that cannot be forgiven. So, that was last's week's passage – if you want a more detailed explanation I would encourage you to get a CD at Harmony Central after the service or watch it online at [harmonybiblechurch.org](http://harmonybiblechurch.org).

Now, in our passage today Jesus is continuing to respond to the Pharisees' accusation, and as I said earlier in doing so He is giving them a big warning. He's trying to grab their attention, which you can imagine He did when He called them a pack of snakes. And what He is trying to get across to them is that they need to be careful with their words. He's warning them that their accusations are serious and have eternal consequences. Ultimately, He is telling them that their words matter, every single one of them. And let's take a look from these verses as to why this is the case. Why do words matter so much?

## **Two Reasons Words Matter**

### **1. Words matter because they reveal our spiritual condition. (v. 33-34)**

Well first, words matter because they reveal our spiritual condition. Look at verses 33-34 again:

*Either make the tree good and its fruit good, or make the tree bad and its fruit bad, for the tree is known by its fruit. **34** You brood of vipers! How can you speak good, when you are evil? For out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks.*

In these verses, as He is prone to do, Jesus uses quite a bit of figurative language. He uses trees and fruit and snakes and hearts and mouths to

make the point that our words reveal where we are spiritually. What comes out of here (mouth) shows what is going on in here (heart).

In verse 33 He likens our inner life to a tree and the words we speak to as its fruit. And He says if the fruit we bear is bad; this shows that we are evil.

Then in verse 34 He goes a step further to show that what comes out of our mouth is simply an overflow of what is in our heart. The key phrase in this passage is the second part of verse 34: *out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks*. Everyone needs to memorize this phrase and never forget it. It's absolutely huge. The words that come out of our mouths always reveal what is going on in our heart. So get this; if you want to know how you are doing spiritually, all you have to do is listen to what you are saying. The fruit you produce from your mouth is the best indication of what is going on in your heart.

Now, key to understanding what Jesus is getting at here is to grasp what He means by the heart. In His commentary on this passage R.C. Sproul says that the heart is the "very center of our existence, the place within us where our true nature is to be found."<sup>3</sup> We have a tendency today to connect our mouth more to our brain than to our heart and therefore to not really think that what we say is always a true reflection of who we are. But make no mistake, Jesus is clearly telling us that we do not speak out of character. To put it another way, the words we say are a clear reflection of who we truly are.

This is why Jesus tells the Pharisees in verse 34 that it's impossible for them to speak what is good, because in their hearts they are evil. Let's backtrack a minute to verse 33. Jesus opens up this paragraph by telling the Pharisees to either make the tree good or bad. However, the word *make* does not actually mean to change, as if a tree can be made to be good or bad, but rather "to consider to be." What He's telling them is that their speech, especially about Him; shows what kind of tree they are. It shows whether

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<sup>3</sup> Sproul, R.C. (2013). Matthew. Wheaton, IL: Crossway.

they are good or bad, whether they are good or evil, and so they need to analyze their speech and use it to evaluate their spiritual condition.

And I hope the application is really easy for us to get this morning. All of us also need to analyze our speech and use it to evaluate our spiritual condition. This is especially true in regards to what we are or are not saying about Jesus. Remember, He told us last week that we are either for Him or against Him. There is no neutrality where Jesus is concerned. And so if we are not believing in and proclaiming Him as the Son of God, this ultimately means that we are evil and still in need of a Savior.

## **2. Words matter because they reveal what we are treasuring.**

So, that's the first reason that words matter – they reveal our spiritual condition. Here's the second, and it really goes along with the first. Words matter because they reveal what we are treasuring. Look at verse 35:

*The good person out of his good treasure brings forth good, and the evil person out of his evil treasure brings forth evil.*

This is similar to what Jesus said in the Sermon on the Mount in Matthew 6:

*For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also. (Matthew 6:21, ESV)*

In Matthew 6, of course, Jesus is talking about money. Here in chapter 12 He is talking about words. But the principle is the same. What we do with our money and what we do with our words both reveal where our heart is. They reveal what we truly treasure in life. Do you understand how serious this is? We can't fool ourselves into thinking our hearts are treasuring Christ if our speech shows otherwise. And so I want to ask you today, what does your speech reveal about what you are treasuring? What do your words reveal about what you are focused upon?

To help with this, I want to walk you through a series of questions. The Bible has a lot to say about our speech, and so I want to walk you through some

questions and related passages to help you analyze how your speech shows where your treasure is.

- **Does your speech tend to be true or false?**

Question number one; does your speech tend to be true or false? Ephesians 4:25 says this:

*Therefore, having put away falsehood, let each one of you speak the truth with his neighbor, for we are members one of another. (Ephesians 4:25, ESV)*

God is a God of truth – He’s a God that never lies - and so those who are treasuring Him will desire to speak the truth and will hate what is false just as He does. On the other hand if we have a tendency to lie then we are showing our treasure is our reputation, our money, our relationships, or some other idol that has a grip on our heart. Let me point out to you that in today’s world there are about 100 or more different ways to lie, many of which do not include words. Regardless, the point is the same. And so I want to ask you, which is it for you? Is your tendency to speak the truth or to tell a lie?

- **Does your speech tend to be pure or perverse?**

Question number two: Does your speech tend to be pure or perverse? Ephesians 5:3-4:

*But among you there must not be even a hint of sexual immorality, or of any kind of impurity, or of greed, because these are improper for God’s holy people. 4 Nor should there be obscenity, foolish talk or coarse joking, which are out of place, but rather thanksgiving. (Ephesians 5:3-4, NIV)*

I am not sure I need to add much here, as Paul is pretty clear. God wants us to be completely free from even a hint of sexual impurity, including in our speech. Pure speech shows we are treasuring Christ and His righteousness, and impure speech shows we are treasuring our sexuality and ourselves.

- **Does your speech tend to be thankful or complaining?**

Question number three: Does your speech tend to be thankful or complaining? Philippians 2:14:

*Do all things without grumbling or disputing. (Philippians 2:14, ESV)*

And then Colossians 2:

*Therefore, as you received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in him, **7** rooted and built up in him and established in the faith, just as you were taught, abounding in thanksgiving. (Colossians 2:6-7, ESV)*

Here is something I have learned in recent days; maybe it will be helpful to you. When we complain we are treasuring the things we don't have instead of the things we do have. And it's pretty easy to do this, right? We have a real tendency to focus on what we want rather than on what we have. But as a reminder for those of us who are disciples, what is the one thing that we will always have that should keep us grateful regardless of our circumstances? It's Jesus! He is our greatest treasure, a treasure we can never lose! That's why Paul can say in Philippians 3:

*I count everything as loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. (Philippians 3:8, ESV)*

Friends, the greatest treasure we can possibly have is Jesus Himself, and every other treasure pales in comparison. And so I want to ask you today: is your speech showing you are treasuring Jesus or are you treasuring something else that you wish you had?

- **Does your speech tend to build up or tear down?**

Ok. One more. Question number four: Does your speech tend to build up or tear down? Look with me at Ephesians 4:29, which I think is a great summary of what the Bible says about the words we speak.



*Let no corrupting talk come out of your mouths, but only such as is good for building up, as fits the occasion, that it may give grace to those who hear. (Ephesians 4:29, ESV)*

The gold standard for every word that we say is whether or not it is edifying. Everything that comes out of our mouths should be something that builds others up. When our speech does this it shows we are treasuring the things of the Lord, and when it does not, it shows that we are treasuring something else, most likely ourselves and what we want.

And so let me ask you now in summary, how are you doing with answering these questions? Perhaps you need some more time to consider them, but are you thinking you might have a problem? Are there some areas that you need to shore up? Are you thinking that maybe you have some work to do? If so, I want to talk to you now about how to do it. Let's finish the message today by talking about how to tame the tongue. I've got three things for you.

## **How to Tame the Tongue**

### **1. Repent**

The first thing we must do to tame our tongue is repent. Before you can get your tongue under control you must first admit that you need to do so and that on your own it's impossible. That's why the Apostle James tells us that *no human being can tame the tongue. (James 3:8, ESV)*

Of course the flip side of repentance is to place your faith in Jesus and trust that He can do for you what you cannot do on your own. I know it's possible that you might be thinking right now that there is no way you can stop lying, or complaining, or cursing, or speaking perversely. And you know what, you are absolutely right. You can't stop on your own. But you can through the power of the cross. Jesus came and died to do in you what you cannot do on your own. You see, the key to changing what you say is changing who you are at your core – in your heart. And there is only one

way that this can happen, through repentance and faith in Jesus. And if you will repent of your evil speech and turn to Him in faith, and continue to do so on a daily basis, He will give you what you need to tame your tongue.

## **2. Prayer**

This leads to the second thing we must do and that is pray. And you know what, I kind of hesitate to even mention this because it seems like a no-brainer. But I am quite sure that most of us aren't praying for the Lord's help in taming our tongue on a regular basis, if at all. Once again, brothers and sisters, we can't do this on our own, and yet God offers to always help those who come to Him in time of need. And so I really want to encourage you to begin praying passages like Psalm 19:14 on a daily basis.

*Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be acceptable in your sight, O Lord, my rock and my redeemer. (Psalm 19:14, ESV)*

Can you see here in this verse the connection with our passage today; the connection between our heart and our mouth? Between what we desire and what we say? I just want to plead with you my friends to begin praying passages like Psalm 19 and to watch how God uses them to help you control your tongue and bear precious fruit for Him.

## **3. Meditate on God's Word**

Ok, here's the last one, and it ties right in with what we just saw in Psalm 19. If we are going to acquire the skill of taming our tongues we must learn to meditate on God's Word. For this I want to take you to another Psalm, the very first one. In fact, this is so important I want you to turn there with me. Psalm 1. Let's just read the whole thing:

*Blessed is the man who walks not in the counsel of the wicked, nor stands in the way of sinners, nor sits in the seat of scoffers; **2** but his delight is in the law of the Lord, and on his law he meditates day and night. **3** He is like a tree planted by streams of water that yields its fruit in its season, and its leaf does not wither.*

*In all that he does, he prospers. 4 The wicked are not so, but are like chaff that the wind drives away. 5 Therefore the wicked will not stand in the judgment, nor sinners in the congregation of the righteous; 6 for the Lord knows the way of the righteous, but the way of the wicked will perish. (Psalm 1, ESV)*

Here again as it often does, the Bible tells us that there are two, and only two kinds of people. There are righteous people and there are wicked people. The difference between the two is that righteous people treasure God as seen by their continual meditation on His Word and resulting fruitfulness. Wicked people, on the other hand, follow the way of the world, which ultimately leads to their destruction.

Now, let me explain to you in very practical terms what this means. I can do so by using an expression we are all familiar with. Its acronym is GIGO. Do you know what GIGO stands for? Garbage in, garbage out. The positive way to look at this is TITO. Do you know what TITO stands for? Probably not because I made it up. It stands for truth in, truth out. The point is that what you meditate on, what you think about, what you put into your life, will eventually overflow into the words that you speak. What you put in will eventually come out. Do you remember what I told you is the key part of our passage in Matthew 12 today? *Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks.* What is in our hearts will eventually come out in what we speak.

So let me explain how this works. What comes in here (eyes) and here (ears) will eventually work its way to here (heart). And whatever makes it here (heart) will eventually come back out here (mouth). Now, this does not mean that what we consume is determinative, because as we have seen the heart is ultimately determinative. But it does mean that what we consume and what we focus upon will have a great degree of influence on the condition of our heart.

I'm going to get real down and dirty with you here today. There are some of you who wonder why you never experience the peace and joy and excitement and fruitfulness that we talk about here at Harmony Bible

Church every weekend. There are some of you who really struggle with this whole following Jesus thing and just don't really seem to get it. If I can, this morning, I want to suggest to you two reasons why this might be the case. One, you either aren't a disciple and therefore have a bad heart, or two, you are putting a lot of garbage into your heart and not nearly enough truth. Either way you have a pretty serious problem, and either way the solution is exactly what I am proposing to you today. You need to repent, pray, and more than anything else begin to meditate on God's Word. You need to greatly increase your input of the truth into your life.

If you don't believe me, just do an experiment this week. Commit to taking time each day, even if it's just 15-20 minutes, to spend in prayer and digging into God's Word. A great place to start is right here in the Psalms. Just pick one and read it over and over again and then pray through it for a few moments. Do that this week and then next Sunday stop and consider if it has made a difference in helping you tame your tongue. And here is what I know will happen: I can absolutely guarantee that if you will consume God's Word on a regular basis, it will begin to consume you. That's because the Word of God is quick and powerful and it cuts right to the heart. Hopefully you have experienced its power today, a power I pray you will experience more and more in the days ahead.

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