

SERMON NOTES Sunday 2nd March 2025

sunnysidechurch

Theme: **Faith makes a difference to what we say**

Passages: **James 3, James 5.13-end**

Some of the main themes from the sermon: -

Blurting out

As our series on James draws to a close, we are looking today at what this practical man has to say about how our faith should affect what we say. In our digital world we communicate every bit as much through emails and our online posts as we do in face to face conversation. In both cases the danger comes from the unguarded nature of the way we communicate. We sometimes just blurt things out or press send in a way that is 'untamed' to use James' words (v8). We break God's heart when we behave like this (v9-11).

Sticks and stones...

Words matter. Kind words of praise can build us up. By the same token, unkind words or unjust criticism can really hurt. A stick or a stone may leave a bruise but a cutting comment or a verbal betrayal will leave a scar that lasts long after the bruise has healed. When words are used as weapons, they can do lasting, irreversible damage. What we hear cannot be unheard (v6). It is all the more damaging when the person making the withering criticism is someone we trust either because of their position (v2) or because we are close to them.

The thought behind the words

It seems that James realises that there is a two stage process that we need to undergo. Firstly, we need to think before we speak or press send. Is what we're going to say kind and true and a fair comment? Secondly, and more profoundly, we need to grow into people who think kindly of others, who see them as people 'made in God's image' (v9). James wants us to be people who are 'wise and understanding' (v13) and who therefore don't harbour 'bitter envy and selfish ambition' (v14 & v16). As we allow Jesus to grow in us we become people who increasingly don't feel the need to score points over others (v17-19).

Using words for good

Peacemaking (v18) is not simply a matter of not saying unkind things. It is also a matter of being active in saying (and doing) things that build other people up. Noticing the efforts they make. Caring enough about them to help them.

Sometimes we can be silent when we know that a word of encouragement can make all the difference.

What have I learnt from our look at James?

Faith in Jesus makes a difference because:

- We know that God is for us so we need no other affirmation
- We choose to be more like Jesus
- God at work in us, changes us.

Some questions for thought and discussion this week:

1. ***Think of a time when somebody said something to you that really made you feel better about yourself. What did they say? What difference does it make to you today? Share your thoughts with your house group.***
2. ***Spend some time bringing the experiences you have shared before God. Give thanks for the way in which other people have supported and affirmed you.***
3. ***If it is not too painful, reflect on a time when somebody said something that wounded you. (It may have been a long time ago). What did they say? What difference does it make to you today? Share your thoughts with your house group.***
4. ***Can you recall a time when a person's silence, when you had longed for a word of comfort or support, made a difference to you? What difference does it make to you today? Share your thoughts with your house group.***
5. ***Spend time bringing before God the experiences where the words or silence of other people have hurt you. Ask God to heal you and to mend the relationships that have been damaged.***
6. ***Are there things you could do going forward (during Lent perhaps) that would allow James' advice to enrich your faith, so that you could 'love Jesus more dearly and follow him more nearly, day by day'.***