

**Sunday Worship for 16th August
Tenth Sunday after Trinity**



Introduction

Though we cannot come together physically, we gather spiritually as the family of God in our Father's presence to offer him praise and thanksgiving, to hear and receive his holy word, to bring before him the needs of the world, to ask forgiveness for our sins and to seek his grace, that, through his son Jesus Christ we may give ourselves for his service.

Service leader's intro from Paul Clayton

A warm welcome to everyone this morning, I feel the summer is moving on too quickly, so let's enjoy what is left. Hopefully in the Autumn term, from September onwards, we will be back to some form of normality in the church, where those who take part in the services will be in the church (with obvious restrictions). Brian leads the way this Sunday, preaching from the lectern as we continue in our series on the Book of James. The theme is "Careful Speech: What A Christian Says"; knowing Brian this should be an interesting sermon with some good practical points.

Let's have a moment's silence as we begin our worship.

Grace, mercy and peace
from God our Father
and the Lord Jesus Christ
be with you
And also with you

**Lord, direct our thoughts
teach us to pray.
Lift up our hearts to worship you
in spirit and in truth
through Jesus Christ.
Amen**

The night has passed and the day lies open before us. Let us pray with one heart and mind.
Silence is kept

As we rejoice in the gift of this new day,
So may the light of your presence, O God,
Set our hearts on fire with love for you;
Now and forever.
Amen

Song: Lord I come before your throne of grace

**Lord, I come before Your throne of grace,
I find rest in Your presence, and fullness of joy.
In worship and wonder I behold Your face,
singing 'What a faithful God have I'.**

***What a faithful God have I,
what a faithful God.
What a faithful God have I,
faithful in every way.***

**Lord of mercy, You have heard my cry,
through the storm You're the beacon,
my song in the night.
In the shelter of Your wings hear my heart's reply,
singing 'What a faithful God have I'.**

***What a faithful God have I,
what a faithful God.
What a faithful God have I,
faithful in every way.***

**Lord, all sovereign, granting peace from heaven,
let me comfort those who suffer
with the comfort You have given.
I will tell of Your great love for as long as I live,
singing 'What a faithful God have I'.**

***What a faithful God have I,
what a faithful God.
What a faithful God have I,
faithful in every way.***

Confession

God so loved the world that he gave his only Son Jesus Christ to save us from our sins, to be our advocate in heaven, and to bring us to eternal life.

Let us confess our sins in penitence and faith, firmly resolved to keep God's commandments and to live in love and peace with all.

**Almighty God, our heavenly Father,
we have sinned against you,
through our own fault,
in thought, and word, and deed,
and in what we have left undone.
We are heartily sorry,
and repent of all our sins
For your Son our Lord
Jesus Christ's sake,
forgive us all that is past;
and grant that we may serve you
in newness of life
to the glory of your name.
Amen**

May the God of all healing and forgiveness draw us to himself,
and cleanse us from all our sins
that we may behold the glory of his Son, the Word made flesh,
Jesus Christ our Lord

Amen

Readings

James 3: 1-12

3 Not many of you should become teachers, my fellow believers, because you know that we who teach will be judged more strictly. ²We all stumble in many ways. Anyone who is never at fault in what they say is perfect, able to keep their whole body in check.

³ When we put bits into the mouths of horses to make them obey us, we can turn the whole animal. ⁴ Or take ships as an example. Although they are so large and are driven by strong winds, they are steered by a very small rudder wherever the pilot wants to go. ⁵ Likewise, the tongue is a small part of the body, but it makes great boasts. Consider what a great forest is set on fire by a small spark. ⁶ The tongue also is a fire, a world of evil among the parts of the body. It corrupts the whole body, sets the whole course of one's life on fire, and is itself set on fire by hell. ⁷ All kinds of animals, birds, reptiles and sea creatures are being tamed and have been tamed by mankind, ⁸ but no human being can tame the tongue. It is a restless evil, full of deadly poison. ⁹ With the tongue we praise our Lord and Father, and with it we curse human beings, who have been made in God's likeness. ¹⁰ Out of the same mouth come praise and cursing. My brothers and sisters, this should not be. ¹¹ Can both fresh water and salt water flow from the same spring? ¹² My brothers and sisters, can a fig tree bear olives, or a grapevine bear figs? Neither can a salt spring produce fresh water.

This is the Word of the Lord.
Thanks be to God.

Matthew 15: 1-11

15 Then some Pharisees and teachers of the law came to Jesus from Jerusalem and asked, ² "Why do your disciples break the tradition of the elders? They don't wash their hands before they eat!" ³ Jesus replied, "And why do you break the command of God for the sake of your tradition? ⁴ For God said, 'Honour your father and mother' and 'Anyone who curses their father or mother is to be put to death.' ⁵ But you say that if anyone declares that what might have been used to help their father or mother is 'devoted to God,' ⁶ they are not to 'honour their father or mother' with it. Thus you nullify the word of God for the sake of your tradition. ⁷ You hypocrites! Isaiah was right when he prophesied about you: ⁸ "These people honour me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me. ⁹ They worship me in vain; their teachings are merely human rules." ¹⁰ Jesus called the crowd to him and said, "Listen and understand. ¹¹ What goes into someone's mouth does not defile them, but what comes out of their mouth, that is what defiles them."

This is the Word of the Lord.
Thanks be to God.

Careful speech – What a Christian says

Whatever else you may say about James, he gives you it straight from the shoulder – not like the office manager who had to tell a secretary that she was being sacked. He invited her into his office and said *Miss Smith, I don't know how we are going to get along without you, but starting Monday, we're going to try.*

In today's reading, James starts with teachers. People who teach, he says, have to be very, very careful in what they say and do. I wonder if you, like me, remember some of those who taught you at school. Do you? There was the one we called 'Nero' who tried to teach us Latin by walking up and down between the desks reciting verbs and conjugations. It did not work. But another Latin teacher who we called 'Fingers Fowler' made it interesting and we learned. One history teacher, who for some reason we called 'Seth' was dull. Another made it interesting and even invited us to his home to look together at historical magazines.

Why was James making his point about teachers? One commentator thinks it may have been because, in the various Christian scattered churches to whom he is writing, there were people putting themselves forward for leadership roles who were not the right people to be leaders. That is why, at St. Mary's and All Saints' our leaders and preachers do what they do because they are specifically invited to do what they do and are not self-selected.

James is of course absolutely right in saying that leadership and teaching in the Church is a sacred and therefore very responsible job and reading the first part of this third chapter brought home to me what an honour from God it is that I do these talks - but also what a responsibility.

Tom Wright, our former Bishop, suggests some ways in which preachers can get it wrong:

- Talks constantly pushing a particular line
- Talks pouring scorn on a cherished doctrine
- Talks advocating something that's not quite right

That is why all of us who do the talks at St. Mary's must make sure that those talks are bible-based and undergirded with prayer.

But I think that those of us who hear the talks have a part to play in this business of teaching. Have you ever at the end of a sermon thought to yourself '*I didn't quite understand that bit about such and such*' or '*I am not sure I agree with what he or she said about such and such*' If that happens, take it up with the preacher and discuss it.

But teaching here at St. Mary's does not come just from the lectern. It comes from those who lead the children's work and from within home groups. Keep on praying for them.

Back to James. After his very trenchant advice about teaching he turns his attention to speech, taking the tongue as the instrument of speech. We get those brilliant comparisons about its size on the one hand and its effect and influence on the other. We have all seen in the TV adverts those huge cruise ships – some of us, I think, may have actually been on them. Their direction is governed by that little device at the back – sorry, stern. And big horses controlled by that little bit of metal in their mouths.

Four little stories:

Joe was taking part in a social Zoom session with five other people. All six were visible on the computer screen but not everyone knew everyone else so the host asked them to introduce themselves. Joe told the

rest what his name was, where he lived, that he was retired and what his former profession was and what he did in his spare time. It was only after the session closed that he realised that he had not mentioned his Christianity and his church activities – an opportunity missed

Peter has a friend who has breast cancer. He told her he would pray for her and, in e-mails and the odd Zoom meeting, mentioned his continual concern and prayers. She, not a committed Christian, began to ask questions about God and church activities. Where might that lead her – to a knowledge and love of Jesus? June brings her little grand-daughter, Abigail, to a Christmas family service. Though she lives fairly close to the Church, she has never been in it before. The church folk chat to her and tell her not to worry if Abigail wanders around. June is back with Abigail at the next family service and the next and the next.

Angela likes things to stay the same. She is comfortable with what she has been used to over the years. Her Church leaders start to change things to encourage younger people to come to church. Angela voices her objection, not to the church leaders, but to others of a like mind in the congregation. Result – a split loveless church.

What would James have made of those four little stories do you think?

Let's leave James for a minute. What did **you** make of the passage from Matthew's gospel? At the start we have the religious bosses of the time telling Jesus off because his followers did not wash their hands when (or perhaps before) eating. They did so because it was traditional and that was what their question was really all about. Jesus challenges them about how they have, by tradition, changed the meaning of God's command to people to honour their father and mother.

On the face of it, it all seems a bit trivial; but it points up how we are to deal with change. Does what we have done for ages still fit in with what God wants us to do now so as to reach out to encourage people to come to know about and commit to Jesus. We sometimes need to think 'out of the box' about how we do our evangelism and our worship. Has lockdown had anything to say to us about what we do and how we do it? When we get a new vicar will he or she have ideas new to us? How will we react?

But it's the last two verses of the passage from Matthew which chime with the part of our James' passage dealing with tongue because it focusses on:

- what we say and how we say it
- when we should speak and when be silent
- what governs what we say and how we say it

Jesus has answered the question his challengers have asked about washing and eating. He now turns to the principle underlying that conversation. It's what comes out of your mouth that's important. Does this ring bells with what James has been saying? A few verses further on he goes more deeply into this. The key statement is this. *'What comes out of the mouth begins in the heart'*

This little conversation, overheard at Speakers' Corner in London's Hyde Park, illustrates the point:

If you had two houses, wouldn't you give one to the poor?

Of course I would.

If you had two cars, wouldn't you give one to the poor?

Of course I would.

If you had two shirts, wouldn't you give one to the poor?

*Hey, I've **got** two shirts.*

It's the heart that produces the talk

That little story makes a fairly obvious point. What was in his heart was not a concern for the poor but how he could make a good impression.

Going back to Joe and his introducing himself on Zoom, his relationship with God was not quite right. His heart did not govern his speech and he missed an opportunity to invite a discussion, whether then or later, about his belief. Peter, on the other hand, showed his friend that his concern for her was also God's concern.

And what about Angela – thinking about herself and not about bringing people to know God – unlike those who, by what they said, showed June God's love and care for her and Abigail.

It's the heart that produces the talk

One of James' examples of the power of tongue was that of a huge ship being controlled by a very small rudder. I want to turn that on its head.

Let's again picture that huge cruise ship, looking like a very posh big hotel afloat and God as its captain, in complete charge of its speed, its direction, its safety. If we want to learn how to teach and if we want to be sure when we should be speaking and what we should be saying, we need to be aboard God's wonderful ship under the divine guidance of its wonderful, caring captain. Let's pray.

Father God we ask for your Holy Spirit to reign in our hearts and guide our lives and particularly when to speak and when to be silent, what to say and how to say it, so that it is to your glory. In Jesus' name. AMEN

Affirmation of Faith

Let us declare our faith in God.

**We believe in God the Father,
from whom every family
in heaven and on earth is named...**

**We believe in God the Son,
who lives in our hearts
through faith,
and fills us with his love...**

**We believe in God
the Holy Spirit,
who strengthens us
with power from on high....**

**We believe in one God;
Father, Son and Holy Spirit.
Amen.**

Song: May the mind of Christ my Saviour

**May the mind of Christ, my Saviour,
live in me from day to day,
by his love and power controlling
all I do and say.**

**May the word of God dwell richly
in my heart from hour to hour,
so that all may see I triumph
only through his power.**

**May the peace of God, my Father,
rule my life in everything,
that I may be calm to comfort
sick and sorrowing.**

**May the love of Jesus fill me
as the waters fill the sea.
Him exalting, self abasing:
this is victory.**

**May we run the race before us,
strong and brave to face the foe,
looking only unto Jesus
as we onward go.**

Prayers (written by Cheryl Moore)

Let us pray.

Gracious God, you are the source of all wisdom and at a time in which so many seek direction we pray that you would inspire the hearts and minds of your people that we may teach and guard our faith which has held fast the lives of generations before us. We pray for all Christian leaders that the true word of God would dwell richly in their heart that they would be led by your Spirit to knit together your people in the bonds of love.

Lord in your mercy **Hear our prayer**

We pray for our Queen, for the leaders of our nation and all in authority. May respect and co-operation be shown between those of differing views. During these challenging times of the Covid – 19 pandemic we pray for all who have responsibility for the welfare of others; give them wisdom and right discernment in their decision making and protect those who are called to serve in positions of danger. Help us Lord to play our part by being responsible citizens following safety procedures and by supporting those who are vulnerable.

Lord in your mercy **Hear our prayer**

Heavenly Father, It is easy to become overwhelmed by recent tragic events happening in the UK and around the world in addition to the ongoing battle against the coronavirus – the horrific explosion in Beirut, ongoing areas of conflict, the continuing refugee situation, natural disasters causing flood and famine and the recent train derailment near Stonehaven, Aberdeenshire. Our world needs your presence and strength to bring about relief for those suffering trauma and loss and for those selflessly giving of their skills and support. We lean on you Lord during these times of darkness and pray for a safer brighter future.

Lord in your mercy **Hear our prayer**

Father, we thank you for our worshipping family at St Mary's whether worshipping at home or in church this-morning – we thank you for all our clergy and leaders, for our growth in knowledge of you, for fellowship and support and for our young people. We pray that we shall be able to come together again to worship and sing our praises soon when the time is right, and in the meantime, continue to communicate and support one another. We continue to thank those who are enabling our church building to be open to all who wish to come for prayer. We also bring before you and pray for Pam and Trevor, and Brian and Ann, and their families as they move to pastures new. We thank you for guiding them to St Mary's and for the gifts they have brought and shared. Be with them all Lord.

Lord in your mercy **Hear our prayer**

Caring God, we bring before you now those in most need in our community, the sick, the elderly, the housebound, those in care homes, hospital, medicating at home or awaiting surgery. . . . We pray that through the work and devotion of carers they will feel your courage and comfort during their time of need.

We pray also for Brian and Stella Jones as their work continues at The Moses Project with the most vulnerable of our wider community and for the Burgess family, our missionaries in Peru, who have supported many families spiritually and practically during the coronavirus pandemic. Keep them safe and well Lord as they go about your business.

Lord in your mercy **Hear our prayer**

We pray for those who feel the pain of grief at the loss of a loved one whether recent or as each anniversary passes. Help us to support all who mourn with our prayers and with practical help both this day and in the weeks and months to come. We especially remember today the family of Carol Blakebrough who died on Tuesday.

Lord in your mercy **Hear our prayer**

Finally Lord, we pray to you in the words of Stephen Cherry -

Give me this day, a lung full of spirit, an eye full of beauty, a step full of joy, a mouth full of praise, and hands full of nothing but desire to do your will.

Merciful Father, **accept these prayers, for the sake of Your Son
our Saviour, Jesus Christ. Amen**

Collect for the day

**Lord of heaven and earth,
as Jesus taught his disciples to be persistent in prayer,
give us patience and courage never to lose hope,
but always to bring our prayers before you;
through Jesus Christ our Lord.**

The Lord's Prayer

**Our Father in heaven,
hallowed be your name.
Your kingdom come,
your will be done
on earth as in heaven.
Give us today our daily bread.
Forgive us our sins
as we forgive those
who sin against us.
Lead us not into temptation
but deliver us from evil.
For the kingdom, the power
and the glory are yours,
now and for ever. Amen**

The Peace

At this point, we would normally share God's peace with each other.

We cannot do that physically but please spend a few minutes now praying for specific people at St. Mary's...

Song: Tell out my soul 631

**Tell out, my soul, the greatness of the Lord!
Unnumbered blessings, give my spirit voice;
tender to me the promise of his word;
in God my Saviour shall my heart rejoice.**

**Tell out, my soul, the greatness of his Name!
Make known his might, the deeds his arm has done;
his mercy sure, from age to age the same;
his holy Name, the Lord, the Mighty One.**

**Tell out, my soul, the greatness of his might!
Powers and dominions lay their glory by.
Proud hearts and stubborn wills are put to flight,
the hungry fed, the humble lifted high**

**Tell out, my soul, the glories of his word!
Firm is his promise, and his mercy sure.
Tell out, my soul, the greatness of the Lord
to children's children and for evermore**

The Blessing

**The Lord bless us and watch over us,
the Lord make his face shine upon us
and be gracious to us,
the Lord look kindly on us
and give us peace**

Go in peace to love
and serve the Lord.
In the name of Christ,
Amen.