

16th Sunday after Pentecost, Mark 8:27-38 (Proper 19)

The Tongue

Isaiah 50:4-9a

Psalm 116:1-9

James 3:1-12

Preached at the Lutheran Church of Our Saviour, Greenville, SC on Sunday September 12th, 2021.

The steadfast love of God, the life of Jesus Christ, and the growth of the Holy Spirit be with you all. Amen.

*A young man, working in the **produce** department of the local **supermarket**, was asked by a lady if she could buy half a head of lettuce.

He replied, “**Half a head?** ...

These grow in whole heads, and that’s how we sell them!”

“You mean,” she persisted, “that after all the years I’ve shopped here, you won’t sell me a **half-a-head** of lettuce?”

“Look,” **he** said, “If you like, I’ll go ask the manager.”

She indicated **that** would be appreciated.

And so, this young clerk marched to the front of the store and said to the manager,

“You’re not going to believe this,
but there’s a **lame-brained** idiot of a **lady** back there
who wants to know if she can buy **half-a-head** of lettuce!”

As **he** spoke, he noticed the manager **gesturing**.

And so, he turned around and noticed

that the woman had followed him to the front of the store.

Quickly he responded,

“And this **nice lady** was wondering if she could buy the other half.” ____

*Our **tongues** can both **build-up** and **tear-down** a person.

In **all** of our readings today, we hear about the **use** of the **tongue**.

In our **first reading**, Isaiah said:

“The Lord God has given me the **tongue** of a teacher,
that I may know how to **sustain** the **weary** with a word.” ...

The author of our **Psalm** mentions **calling upon** the name of the Lord;
that God “has heard the **voice** of my supplication”

and “God is full of compassion.” ...

James writes in our **second reading**:

“The **tongue** is a small member, yet it **boasts** of great exploits.”

“**No one** can **tame** the tongue.”

“From the same **mouth** come blessing *and* cursing.”

___ *“From the same mouth come blessing **and** cursing.”* ___

How **true** this statement is in today’s **gospel reading**!

A reading we studied back on the **second** Sunday in **Lent**.

One minute, Peter is **praising** Jesus, confessing: “You are the Messiah!”

Next, he is **rebuking** Jesus

for telling about **the Christ’s** up-coming death and resurrection!

Peter was probably thinking:

How could Jesus say such a thing?

- that he will **suffer** and be **rejected** by the religious leaders?

- and that he will be put to **death** on a Cross?

(...That’s the punishment for scoundrels, thieves, and murderers!...)

How **dare** Jesus say such **nonsense**! _____

*How many times do we find ourselves acting in the same manner as **Peter**;
one minute **praising** with our lips, and the next minute **cursing**! ___

The human language is **powerful** and can be **difficult** to control.

We have all experienced

how what is **said** can bring **joy** to the heart ... or bring great **sorrow**.

James reminds us: “**All** of us make **many** mistakes.” ...

We are asked to **contain** our speech, to keep it in **check** - but we **can’t** do it!

We are both **saint** and **sinner** simultaneously ___

Sinner ... merely by our **human** status and **wicked** deeds,

and **Saint** ... saved by the **grace** of God

through **baptism** into the **Body** and **Blood** of our Lord Jesus Christ. ___

When we **sin** using our **tongue**, humbly **repent** and **return** to the Lord our God!

Unpleasant words have

wrecked **many** a home,

divided **many** a congregation,

and sent **millions** of people to **despair** and **ruin**. ___

However, words of **peace** and **kindness**
can **uplift** a person's **esteem**;
motivating others to **reach-out** and **help** their neighbor,
and bring **hope** to a world of darkness. _____

*On a hill in an **English** churchyard stands a **gray** slate **tombstone**.

This **quaint** stone bears an **epitaph** not easily seen,
unless you stoop over and look closely.

The faint **etching** reads:

“Beneath this stone, a lump of clay,
Lies Arabella Young,
Who on the twenty-fourth of May,
Began to **hold** her tongue.” _____

Do we **think** before we speak?

Are we **careful** of what **words** we use when addressing others? ...

The book of **Proverbs** tells us:

“**Reckless** words **pierce** like a sword,
but the **tongue** of the **wise** brings **healing**.” ...

Baptized into the **death** and **resurrection** of Jesus,
we are called to live Christ's **wise teachings**
of unconditional love, kindness, and concern.

But when we fail to do so,
without delay **apologize** to those we have wronged,
and apologize also to our **Lord** for **straying** from His teachings!

Be as **bold** as **Job**, who said:

O Lord, “**Teach** me, and I will **hold** my tongue;
make me **understand** how I have gone **wrong**.” ...

***Life** and **death** are in the power of the **tongue**!

Confucius said in the 5th century B.C.:

“The truly good [person] is **slow** of speech.” ...

Lord, help us **not** to be **quick** in running our mouths!

Help us Lord to **control** our **tongues**

so that we do **not** destroy another person's **spirit**. _____

The **tongue** is like **fire**;
it can be a tool to **aid** us, to keep us **warm** ...
or it can **eradicate** a whole forest!

Authors **Dan** and **Nancy Dick** wrote in their book titled *Wisdom From the Bible*:

... “The words of our mouths are the **reflections** of our **hearts**.

Like a **fountain**, we **spring forth** either **good** or **foul** water,
depending on the source.

If we keep **Jesus Christ** enthroned in our **hearts**,
then we can **rest assured** that all of our words will be **gracious**,

but if we continually **take control** of our lives
back from Christ’s loving hands,
then we must take **responsibility**
for words that may **issue forth** in **anger** or **unkindness**.

Christ is willing to **transform** our hearts;
to **clean up** the source of our **life’s fountain**.” ... [End quote] ...

*Our words **do indeed** reflect who we are!

I pray what comes **forth** from our **tongues**
will be a **living example** of Christ **present** in our hearts!

I pray our tongues **sing forth** in **praise**, and **not** **condemnation**!

And I pray that the Lord will give us **all** the **tongue** of a **teacher**;
that we may **sustain** the **weary** with His Word of **never-ending** grace!

Our good and understanding Lord Jesus
knows how hard it is for us humans to bridle our tongues.

This is why he died on the Cross, so our **human sin** would die with him ...

And this is why he rose from the tomb, so we can **joyfully** proclaim
“I am a **forgiven sinner**
and an **inheritor** of eternal life.
Thanks be to God!

Amen.