

15th Sunday after Trinity

Opening Prayer

Now let us pray together.

Grant us, Lord, the help of your Holy Spirit as we look together at your Word, that He may enlighten our minds and lead us into all truth. In Jesus' Name.

Amen

Reading: James 3.1-9

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.

³When we put bits into the mouths of horses to make them obey us, we can turn the whole animal. ⁴Or 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. ⁵Likewise, 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. ⁶The 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.

⁷All kinds of animals, birds, reptiles and sea creatures are being tamed and have been tamed by mankind, ⁸but no human being can tame the tongue. It is a restless evil, full of deadly poison.

⁹With the tongue we praise our Lord and Father, and with it we curse human beings, who have been made in God's likeness.

Reflection:

We turn to James once again for our Epistle reading and today it's about controlling the tongue. We tend to think that this is trivial, but he's keen to show us that it's tremendously important.

I'm always impressed by the TV coverage of the Trooping of the Colour. I'd love to go to Horse Guards Parade to see it happening live. Isn't it astonishing that the voice of one man can get immediate response and complete obedience from hundreds of men! That's the power of the voice. That's why James wants us to look at this carefully. Social media is pouring out words all the time and thousands of people believe and do what it says.

Let's imagine a man in a jeweller's shop. He asks to see a wedding ring. The shop keeper hands it to him. 'This ring,' he says, 'is very well made and it's guaranteed for life.' 'Thank you,' says our friend. The question is – is he married? No, he's not.

The following week, there is a man in church standing beside a beautiful woman. He puts a ring on

her finger and says 'With this ring I thee wed.' The question is - is he married? Yes, of course he is, but what's the difference? It's just that the words have to be right. If they are, they have the power to make a life-long marriage. Our words can have great power, says James. And we use them all the time.

Where do our words come from? From our mouths, of course. Yes, but what about our thoughts? Deep in our minds and hearts, thousands of words are born every day. They all want to come to life and be spoken to someone else. But who controls our minds and thoughts? I do. And there lies the danger. And that's why Jesus wants to live in us. We should pray every day - 'Make my heart your palace and your royal throne.'

Words are safe under his control. They bring blessing to other people and praise to God. But that may not be the case if I am in control of my heart and mind. I may hurt people or confuse them. I may distort the truth.

Words under the control of Jesus are very powerful. They are strong but kind. They are truthful and loving. They help people and heal their depression and wounds. And they bring about thanks and praise to God. That's why James says that this matters so much. He must have known the ancient words of Isaiah when he went to the Temple and saw an amazing vision of God. He said, 'I saw the Lord.' At once he was made aware of his own condition – especially his words – and he said, *I am a man of unclean lips and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips.* But God granted him cleansing and he was able to begin his work as a mighty prophet.

What would we say if we had a vision of the Lord, high and lifted up, enthroned in glory?

MDB

Prayers:

We thank you, Father, for the gift of speech and language and for the joy of conversation. Keep us constantly aware of the power of our words to hurt other people or distort the truth, and help us each day to bring all our speaking under your control. We ask this in Jesus' name. Amen.

Collect for the fifteenth Sunday after Trinity:

God, who in generous mercy sent the Holy Spirit upon your Church in the burning fire of your love: grant that your people may be fervent in the fellowship of the gospel that, always abiding in you, they may be found steadfast in faith and active in service; through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord, who is alive and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever.

The Lord's Prayer

As our Saviour taught us, so we pray:

**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.**

Blessing:

May the Binding One unite you,

May the One Beloved invite you,

May the Loving One delight you,

Three in One, joy in life unending. Amen.

*You may wish to end your time of quiet with God with
music.*

BENEFICE SERVICE ON PAPER

For

15th Sunday after

Trinity

12th September 2021

