

Sermon Title: "The Power of Words" Series: "Skillful Living in God's World" August 24, 2014 Pastor Dave Sattler Texts: Proverbs 10:11, 18-21, 31-32; 15:1; 16:23-24 Sources: NIV Life Application Bible; Commentaries: Phillips & Koptak; "The Wisdom of Proverbs" by Kidner; Alex Ferguson's "My Autobiography"; Tolkien's "Two Towers"

Review & Introduction <Slide>:

- Good morning, I'm Dave Sattler, one of the pastors here at NSAC continuing the series "Skillful Living in God's World" ... our summer journey through the book of Proverbs.
- Proverbs is probably the most down-to-earth writing in the entire Bible.
- It's meant to provide God's people with wisdom for real life - at home, at work, at play.
- As we've learned, not everyone who exhibits exceptional skill or brilliance also possesses wisdom.
- Our wisdom is limited. Like MP said at the outset,
 - Q: "The wise person is the one that orients their life around God."
- This is what it means to be skillful navigators in God's world: continually acknowledge our need for God and follow Jesus ... surrendering and inviting the Spirit's influence into every part of our lives.
- **<Slide>** I really love words.
- On our recent family camping trip to the US, I was admiring the names of the cities we passed through: Coeur D'Alene, Idaho ... Missoula, Montana ... and my favorite ... **Moose, Wyoming.**
- I'm also excited to hear the 'broadcast-call' of a couple new Vancouver Canuck names this fall:
 - Lucas Sbisa ... and ... Nick Bonino. Their names have a beautiful ring to them!
- But probably my favourite all-time is Keith Whitaker's mother-in-law's name, Gina's mom:
 - Filomena Nalewajek. Magnificent. Majestic. Symmetrical. Wish I had a tag like that!
- **<Slide>** ILL - Part of my vacation reading this summer included the autobiography of Alex Ferguson, Manchester United's famous and highly-successful soccer coach for 26 seasons.
 - Upon retirement, one of the gifts he received was this 'hair-dryer cake.'
 - What was that all about? Shedding some light on Sir Alex Ferguson's notorious dressing-room 'hair-dryer' treatment, Star Man United striker, Wayne Rooney says:
 - Q: "When it happens, the manager stands in the middle of the room and loses it at me. He gets right up in my face and shouts. It feels like I've put my head in front of a BayBliss Turbo Power 2200." And Rooney evaluates, "It's horrible. It spurs some of the lads on, but it crushes others." - Wayne Rooney in Daily Mail UK, 14 September 2012.
- The power of words. Myself a coach, I relish those moments to address the team ... right before a game, at the half, or in those precious post-match scrums when 'game-emotions' are raw and players need to hear from their coach win or lose.
- In most cases, I plan what I'm going to say carefully and strategically. Words can discipline or destroy, 'crush' ... or 'spur' on and instill belief. Words are powerful. Extremely powerful.
- **<Slide>** We'll zero in on Proverbs Chapter 10 this morning. Please turn there on your electronic device or pg.997-998 in the blue Bibles.
- It's difficult to imagine a more critical area for God's transformation to take place than in our speech.
- Of course we love to dismiss the power of words - both, those that go out of our mouths and those that come in - with that old saying:
 - Q: "Sticks and stones may break my bones, but names - or words - will never hurt me."
- But, that's 'garbage!' "The words of the reckless pierce like swords" - Proverbs 12:18 says.
- In God's economy, harsh words are seen as a 'form of violence'.
- I'm not sure there's anything more potentially lethal than the human tongue.
- Others' hurtful words can sit right there in our guts, 'bludgeon' us "like a club" (25:18), or 'trap' us ... for weeks, years, even our whole lives ... if we do not seek God's healing.
- Words often hurt. Deeply.
- <READ/PRAY>: "God, control me by Your Spirit & move me out of the way."

Text Outline:

1. <Slide> Holding Your Tongue (10:19)

- V 19: "When words are many, sin is not absent, but whoever holds their tongue is wise."



- Let's apply simple mathematical logic to this proverb. If a primary way that we sin is through our speech, then ... the more we say, the more we sin. Make sense?
- One commentator I read this week says aptly, Q: "Words are like sheep, the more there are of them, the better the chances some will go astray." - Koptak, NIV App Commentary, p 293.
- ILL - As a pastor - one who's supposed to talk a lot - it's part of the job ...
 - Shouldn't I get more of a 'free pass' on this?! I wish!
 - But we pastors love to talk. Verbal diarrhea is our forte. Listen to me now!
 - Per capita, pastors probably hurt more people with their words than most other professionals. I am cognizant of how much weight my words carry.
 - I know I've hurt many in this church and I am sorry. Thank you for your patience with me.
 - In recent years I've been counting more and more on the Spirit to guide my communications with people - to help me hold my tongue. And I've seen some growth in my life in this area.
- I'm learning that many things are better left unsaid. The wise person knows when to 'spend' words and when to 'save' them. Less words = less sin. Wise advice.

2. <Slide> Fitting Words (10:32)

- V 32: **"The lips of the righteous know what is fitting, but the mouth of the wicked only what is perverse."**
- ILL - Much of my life I have lived with a sort-of 'Wild West' mentality when it comes to speech.
 - Impulsive. 'Shoot first. Ask questions later.' Speaking without thinking.
 - Not to 'blame-shift', but it's a bit of a family trait, that: never meeting a word we didn't like to **blurt** out loud. And as far as words go, "blurt"'s a great sounding one, isn't it?!
 - There are so many things I've said to people I wish I could take back.
 - Or immediately after I've spoken, I've wished I could hit that 'super-power button' to make me invisible or been able to crawl in a hole and never be seen by that person again.
- Proverbs 10:21 reminds: "but fools die for lack of judgment" in their speech.
- Ill-advised, ill-timed, ill-thought-out words can 'kill' both the receiver AND the deliverer.
- "A gentle answer turns away wrath, but a harsh word stirs up anger." - Proverbs 15:1.
- Responding well in the 'heat of the moment' is vital.
- Often in conflict, I have tended instead to 'fight fire with fire' or more accurately, 'fight fire with an even hotter fire.' This has generally not gone well. Or diffused the situation at all.
- My rising voice only triggers a harsher response. Yet it's hard to argue with a whisper.
- I am still wrestling - both in theory and practice - with the reality that I am responsible for:
 - A) What I say, B) when and how I say it, and C) how it will be received by my recipient.
 - I don't like it.
 - But this is especially important in our closest relationships where we tend to hurt others the most with our words even though we know well those with whom we're interacting.
- Proverbs 16:23: "The hearts of the wise make their mouths prudent." A couple of guiding questions for prudent speech: "Should I be saying this right now?" & "Should I be saying it this way?"
- What we're saying may well be true, but if our timing's off, if our tone doesn't show care and thought for the person with whom we're speaking ... and we know it, our words become 'unacceptable'.

3. <Slide> Nourishing Words (10:21)

- V 11: **"The mouth of the righteous is a fountain of life."** V 20: **"The tongue of the righteous is choice silver."** V 21: **"The lips of the righteous nourish many."**
- Wise words are likened to "choice silver", seen as a sign of redemption in the ancient world.
- ILL - The need for others to speak life into us is woven into our DNA.
 - I believe there's a sort-of 'external audit' we all crave from time to time.
 - We need people to breathe life into us - to nourish us with words.
 - I am grateful to God for people over the years who have believed in me - seen something in me I never saw or affirmed what I already knew - and have intentionally told me so ...



- I think of Mr Barbush, my grade 5 teacher who saw something in this quiet kid and called it out of me - "You can be a public speaker," he told me.
 - There was Mr Simpson, my youth soccer coach, who despite the fact I was far from the best player on the team, made me the captain because he saw leadership in me.
 - And Mel Hoskyn, the pastor who supervised my internship in my early 20's, and affirmed my calling and pointed me into the ministry.
 - I think of friends who've stuck by me, supported me through hard times and even carried me with words of love and confidence ... when I didn't have it. What a lift!!!
- In this dark world, it's so easy to lose our 'compass.' Some days, 'death' is all this world feeds us.
 - It's vital we place ourself in community with people who can speak in a way that nourishes us.
 - One of the other great themes of Proverbs Ch 10 is how wealth is to be stored up and shared.
 - Well, not all of us have material wealth to share, but all of us have the capability of speaking encouragement and life to richly profit others.
 - With our words, we can literally speak life and healing.
 - This is the Spirit's work. May we be a people who speak nourishing words to one another ... and pouring out of here ... powerfully pronounce redemption to our community.

4. <Slide> Wisdom Words (10:31)

- V 31: "**The mouth of the righteous brings forth wisdom.**"
- This term "righteous" appears lots in Proverbs.
- 'Wisdom only comes from righteous mouths,' says Solomon.
- ILL - Yet from our very first words ...
 - On the playground when we're barely old enough to talk, through the 'bravado' of our adolescent ranting, and on to 'seasoned savvy' of our boardroom-talk, we are tempted to use words to manipulate. This is part of the Fall; it's connected to our brokenness and sin.
 - We all have it. We can't resist it. We use words to power over others.
- Truth is: we cannot transform our speech on our own. Without first God's transformation of our heart we just keep hurting people with our words over and over and over again.
- This is something for which we need Jesus.
- APP - Perhaps this is your story today ...
 - I know bad language and 'potty-mouth' are a big part of North Shore culture, but they are often degrading and offensive to others.
 - Awhile back a friend of mine felt convicted about swearing so much, confessed and asked the Lord for help. And God has been slowly 'cleaning up' their mouth.
 - The other day they told me their swearing has been cut by 80%!
 - They feel great and are better to be around!
 - Maybe you're burdened by the habit of slipping into your foul and negative 'construction-site' or 'locker-room' or 'Friday-night-party' language and it's not exactly winning you favour with those closest to you. God would love to free you from that.
 - Or maybe you have a problem with anger that often boils over into yelling, putting people all around you on edge. I believe the Lord longs to give you a new inner peace today - perhaps even gift you with a new 'inside voice' that will put your loved ones more at ease.
- Wise words flow from a heart, surrendered to Jesus and transformed by the Spirit.
- Come to Jesus. His death makes it possible for our hearts and speech to be made new again.
- Be filled. Allow the Holy Spirit to season your words with love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, gentleness, goodness, perseverance, & self-control. The Spirit's infilling will flow into new words.
- And similarly, without God's healing, we keep living in the hurt of other people's words.
- This too is something for which we need Jesus.
- APP - Maybe this is your story today ...
 - Some of you carry huge wounds in your heart from falling victim to verbal abuse - perhaps it was a parent, a teacher, a pastor, a sibling, a spouse, a friend, or maybe even a stranger.



- There's a tape of hurtful voices from your past and it plays like a broken record in your mind:
 - "You're not good enough." "You'd be better if you were more ..." "You embarrass me." "I will never forgive you." "I don't love you anymore." "I'm done with you."
- Hear these words of truth: You shall NOT be defined by the voice or opinion of anyone else.
- **<Slide>** ILL - When I was a kid, my mom would give us ...
 - 'Honey & lemon' in hot water when we were sick.
 - I'm not sure it had any scientific-healing value but it sure felt like it worked as it washed over my sore throat and down into my stomach. It seemed a cure for anything.
 - Proverbs 16:24 says:
 - "Gracious words are a honeycomb, sweet to the soul and healing to the bones."
- Hear God's voice today: "There is no one like you. I made you. You are special. I died for you. I am proud of you. You belong with Me. I love you."
- Allow the power of these gracious words to wash over your soul and cure your 'broken bones'.

<Slide> Conclusion:

- ILL - There's hardly a person in all of Scripture, who was hurt more by his own words and impacted by the words of others, than **Peter**.
 - We're first introduced to Peter going about his business fishing on the Sea of Galilee. Jesus showed up at his workplace and uttered 3 powerful words, "Come, follow me" (Mt 4:19) - words that would alter Peter's life and in fact change the world forever ...
 - Some time later, Jesus had now been preaching and performing miracles in and around Peter's home town of Capernaum. Huge crowds followed. Opposition also grew in this time. After one particular "hard teaching", many disciples deserted Jesus and "no longer followed him." "Are you going to leave me now too?" Jesus asked the 12. Peter piped up, "Lord, to whom shall we go? You alone have the words of eternal life." (Jn 6:66-68)
 - Peter seemed to get it. At times. But he was also wildly impulsive.
 - One day, while they were heading to Caesarea Philippi, Jesus asked the disciples, "Who do you say that I am?" Peter blurted out his confession, "You are the Christ!" (Mk 8:29)
 - Mere moments later, Jesus informed them of His pending suffering & death & Peter took Him aside to contest the plan. Jesus responded as if Peter were channeling the devil himself, "Get behind me, Satan!" He said, "You do not have in mind the things of God, but the things of men." (Mk 8:32-33)
 - For Peter this public rebuke in front of his peers must have hurt. Deeply.
 - Then, when they were having 'family dinner' in Jerusalem the night before Jesus died, Peter made his big 'show-boating' declaration, "Even if all fall away, I will not." (Mk 14:29)
 - Jesus' announced, "Peter, 'You will disown me three times.'" (Mk 14:30) Oh, how those words must have stung coming from a friend! And Peter would take a long while to recover.
 - Still even after the resurrection, Peter was hurting from the failure of his reckless words. That's what put him back on the Sea of Galilee. Fishing again. Licking his wounds. Reeling.
 - And Jesus came again with 2nd chances, re-calling Peter, "Feed my sheep. Follow me!" (Jn 21:17/19)
 - Weeks later at Pentecost back in Jerusalem, now under the powerful anointing of the Holy Spirit, Peter's heart became wise and his mouth inspired.
 - One commentator says, Q: "It was as if Isaiah's 'live coal' had touched Peter's unclean lips and Peter was filled with an honesty and courage he had never known before." - Phillips Commentary, p 493.
 - This is what the Spirit does! We see a new Peter post-Pentecost.
 - I know Paul's 'Damascus-Road' experience gets a lot of press, but Peter's 'turn-around' is no less miraculous! And Peter probably had a little less natural brilliance to work with.
 - In Acts 2, Peter steps up with his new Spirit-led tongue and preaches perhaps the most influential sermon of all time. 3000 repent and are baptized on the spot!
 - Amazing. God used Peter - transformed - to turn the world upside down. Somewhat surprisingly, Peter's words would become life & healing to so many in the dark 1st Century Roman world.
- When it comes to words, I believe there's a 'touch of Peter' in all of us.
- His story calls us to believe in the power of Jesus ... both to heal the hurt from words said to us and to transform our words and truly bless others. Amen.

