

March 3, 2019

KIBC Sunday Worship Service

Message by Pastor Teiichiro Kuroda

Title of the Message: "Do You Know the Power of the Tongue?"

—The Way to Use Our Words That the Lord Blesses—

Text: James 3:3~5a

3:3 When we put bits into the mouths of horses to make them obey us, we can turn the whole animal.

3:4 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.

3:5 Likewise, the tongue is a small part of the body, but it makes great boasts.

Introduction

There was an old story that happened (9.11.1999) in New York City. A squirrel climbed up a powerline of the Metro-North Railroad that runs in the suburbs of New York City and it caused an unstable electric current flow. Then the brackets on the train roofs didn't work well. A train caught an electric wire that was hanging down. As a result, the whole power line was broken and about 47,000 commuters were held up in Manhattan that night. The small squirrel caused serious damage.

Last September, my wife and I went on a mission trip to Australia. As we love to put ourselves in great nature that God created, we were able to make time to take a walk in a national park. The park was a rain forest and there were many big trees of over 20 meters high. I saw that one of them fell down and blocked the path. A local said that the big tree was damaged by termites and finally fell down. It was an unbelievable story. The tiny termites struck the great tree down.

My friends. The Bible teaches as below—

3:5 Likewise, the tongue is a small part of the body, but it makes great boasts.

We can't see the tongue from outside that is in our mouth. However, the words that we utter from the mouth have great power.

James teaches that teachers who use words have a great responsibility in his epistle, starting in chapter 3 verse 1.

He also teaches in verse 2 that there is no human being that does not make a mistake in words. And he teaches in verses 3 and 4 about tongues (words) by taking an example of ordinary things in their lives in those days.

James uses two examples: one of a horse and the other, a ship.

Let's look at them together.

Main Points

1 . A Horse Bit and A Ship Rudder

1) The Social Background

Let's study first the reason why James taught the problem of words.

He wrote the epistle in around A.D. 60 when Nero was the fifth Emperor of the Roman Empire. In those days, the Roman Empire was peaceful and prosperous. People traveled freely and their businesses was more prosperous than ever. It was 4 years later that Emperor Nero began to persecute Christians and churches.

However, the church that denied Paul and James kept the version of Christianity that made much of the form of the Moses' law and rituals. Their self-righteous attitude was just like the one that Jesus accused the scholars and Pharisees of having.

Matthew 23:1 Then Jesus said to the crowds and to his disciples:

23:2 "The teachers of the law and the Pharisees sit in Moses' seat.

23:3 So you must be careful to do everything they tell you. But do not do what they do, for they do not practice what they preach

In those days, there were many priests in churches, not just ordinary people.

Acts 6:7 So the word of God spread. The number of disciples in Jerusalem increased rapidly, and a large number of priests became obedient to the faith.

A large number of priests had influence on church members. They eagerly read the Bible and studied the law. On the other hand, Peter, John and James were not priests or theologians. Their point of view was as below —

1 John 1:1 That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked at and our hand have touched—this we proclaim concerning the Word of life.

1:2 The life appeared; we have seen it and testify to it, and we proclaim to you the

eternal life, which was with the Father and has appeared to us.

They had experienced the living God, rather than studying texts. As they really experienced the living God, they couldn't keep their mouths shut. The Christian Church continued growing peacefully but there were **people who were all talk and no deeds.**

The teachers of the law and priests were **men of words**, not **men of deeds**. James had a sense of crisis within the Christian churches. Therefore, he taught the Jewish Christians about the precious faith by using examples of **a horse and a bit**, and **a ship and a rudder**.

2) A Horse and A Bit

A bit is a tool to control a horse. The bit must be put on the correct place or it cannot control the horse. A man can handle a horse by a bit that is put in correctly. A horse has its will, but a man can easily handle a big horse with a small bit.

3) A Ship and A Rudder

The other example is **a ship and a rudder**. A ship moves by the blowing wind that is the natural power. However, a man can handle a ship by a small rudder, no matter how big the ship may be.

The truth is that both relationships between a horse and a bit and a ship and a rudder is that a small thing can move a big thing as it wants.

We learn from these two examples that the words from a small tongue cause serious problems.

2. The Power of the Tongue

1) How to Use the Tongue

The tongue is a mere organ of the body. However, it has an influential power to move human lives. A word a can give courage. A word can help us decide. Words move our lives. What words do we give and receive every day?

The negative aspects of the words that we utter are when we boast, speak arrogantly and criticize people. Such words drive others to corruption. Conversely, the positive aspects are to grow spiritually by using the tongue (words) correctly. We finally receive glory from God.

If we make a mistake in using the tongue, we should receive training by God and miss a chance to receive His glory. How about our tongues? Each of us has a tongue that is hidden in our mouths. How do we control our tongues?

James teaches as below —

1:19 Everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to become angry.

2) The Way that The Lord Blesses

Then how can we concretely put words into practice?

① To Be Quiet and Pray (to Pause)

God's Word is positive one that encourages us and gives courage, power and guidance. God knows everything about us, and He also completely understands what we need. The Bible records as below—

Psalm 139 :1 You have searched me, LORD, and you know me.

139:2 You know when I sit and when I rise; you perceive my thoughts from afar.

139:3 You discern my going out and my lying down; you are familiar with all my ways.

139:4 Before a word is on my tongue you, LORD, know it completely.

When we become quiet before God Almighty, we are given wisdom from above.

② To Store God's Word (Devotion)

If we store the Word of the Bible, we are able to have fellowship with the Lord God anytime and anywhere. When we continually pray to God and store His Word in our hearts, we are sensitive to God's intervention to problems that we meet every day.

Then you, "Experience your God" that I always say.

The writer of Psalms praised God as below—

Psalm 119:11 I have hidden your word in my heart that I might not sin against you.

119:71 It was good for me to be afflicted so that I might learn your decrees.

119:72 The law from your mouth is more precious to me than thousands of pieces of silver and gold.

119:103 How sweet are your words to my taste, sweeter than honey to my mouth!

119:105 Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light for my path.

What do you think today's message? Let's remember James' advice and put it into practice.

Conclusion

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—The Way to Use Our Words That the Lord Blesses—

Let's conclude today's message by the Epistle of James, Chapter 1:19 as below—

1:19 Everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to become angry.

* God bless you!