

Dorset South & West. Written Service.

Sunday 15th September 2024.

May the words of my mouth.... Prepared by Revd Jean Quick.



Call to Worship

I love the Lord, for he heard my voice; he heard my cry for mercy. Because he turned his ear to me, I will call on him as long as I live. Psalm 116

STF 69

Ye holy angels bright,
who wait at God's right hand,
or through the realms of light
fly at your Lord's command,
assist our song,
or else the theme
too high doth seem
for mortal tongue

Ye blessèd souls at rest,
who ran this earthly race,
and now, from sin released,
behold the Saviour's face,
his praises sound,
as in his light
with sweet delight
ye do abound.

Ye saints who toil below,
adore your heavenly King,
and onward as ye go
some joyful anthem sing;
take what he gives,
and praise him still
through good and ill,
who ever lives.

My soul, bear thou thy part,
triumph in God above,
and with a well-tuned heart
sing thou the songs of love.
Let all thy days
till life shall end,
whate'er he send,
be filled with praise.

Prayers of adoration and confession

God of majesty and power,
Who spoke and this world was,
Who breathed and this world lived,
Who counts the hairs upon our head,
Who cares about every minuscule part of our lives,
Who sees our thoughts, hears our every word and reads our hearts,
Who loves us more than we deserve,
We bring to you today, our sacrifice of praise.

A prayer of confession

Lord God, your love for humankind present in the beginning of all things,
extends throughout history and touches even my life.
Your love sees failings and forgives.
Your love feels pain and wipes away our tears.
Your love knows grief and comforts the sorrowful.
Your love sees sin and still loves the sinner.
Forgive us when we fail to live lives that reflect your love.
Forgive us the many times when we take for granted all that you have done for us.
Transform us, through your Spirit, and empower us to serve you, this day and all days. **Amen**

Bible Reading: James 3

Not many of you should become teachers, my fellow believers, because you know that we who teach will be judged more strictly. We 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. When we put bits into the mouths of horses to make them obey us, we can turn the whole animal. 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. 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. 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. All kinds of animals, birds, reptiles and

sea creatures are being tamed and have been tamed by mankind, but no human being can tame the tongue. It is a restless evil, full of deadly poison. With the tongue we praise our Lord and Father, and with it we curse human beings, who have been made in God's likeness. Out of the same mouth come praise and cursing. My brothers and sisters, this should not be. Can both fresh water and salt water flow from the same spring? My brothers and sisters, can a fig tree bear olives, or a grapevine bear figs? Neither can a salt spring produce fresh water.

STF 113

O worship the King, all-glorious above;
O gratefully sing his power and his love:
our Shield and Defender, the Ancient of Days,
pavilioned in splendour, and girded with praise.

O tell of his might, O sing of his grace,
whose robe is the light, whose canopy space;
his chariots of wrath the deep thunder-clouds form,
and dark is his path on the wings of the storm.

The earth with its store of wonders untold,
Almighty, your power has founded of old;
established it fast by a changeless decree,
and round it has cast, like a mantle, the sea.

Your bountiful care what tongue can recite?
It breathes in the air, it shines in the light;
it streams from the hills, it descends to the plain,
and sweetly distils in the dew and the rain.

Frail children of dust, and feeble as frail,
in you do we trust, nor find you to fail;
your mercies how tender, how firm to the end,
our Maker, Defender, Redeemer, and Friend.

O measureless Might, ineffable Love,
while angels delight to hymn you above,
your ransomed creation, though feeble our praise,
in true adoration our voices we raise.

Reflection

How many different types of tongue can you think of?Here's a few:

The tongue in your shoe that sits under the laces....ouch! So uncomfortable when it is out of place.

A Tongue and groove joint which allow two flat pieces of wood to be joined strongly together to make a single flat surface.

How about tongue twisters? Try the one at the end of this service, which of course makes us think about our own tongue and how we use it to communicate.

Have you thought about what you do with your tongue? This small little organ helps us to talk, taste, digest, and eat. It's the only muscle in the body that functions without help from your skeleton and is often considered the strongest, but most sensitive muscle in the body. Much like a fingerprint, your tongue is unique to you.

The tongue is not something we reveal and can be seen as unsightly and quite rude to show to others, except your health care provider.

How would you describe your tongue? Does it run away with itself or is it something you have managed to tame?

The Bible has much to say about the tongue and in Proverbs 18:21 we read that the tongue has the power of life and death! In Proverbs 15:4 the tongue, we are told can bring healing or crush the spirit. James uses three different images to describe the taming of the tongue and the damage an uncontrollable tongue can do.

Firstly he talks about the bits put 'into the mouths of horses to make them obey us, we can turn the whole animal.' I guess we are all guilty of saying things we wish we could take back? If only we could stop and think before we speak. Our words would hopefully be more controlled. I came across a useful acrostic to help us do just that, ask yourself a few questions before you speak:

Think...T- is it true? H- is it helpful? I- is it inspiring? N- is it necessary? K- is it kind?

If we could use that acrostic as a kind of bit in our mouths we would have the power to transform people's lives for the better. Remember too James epistle is a call to Christian action, to living out the gospel we profess. We need to control our speech so that we profess our faith and encourage others to believe in the faith we are privileged to embody.

I heard a real heart warming story about a young man who had Down's syndrome and struggled to say the right things to people, especially to encourage them or brighten their day. He worked in a supermarket and helped pack bags at the checkout. With the help of his father he found a way. They would each evening print out a little phrase that would be affirming and encouraging. The next day with about three hundred little pieces of paper the young man would set about his work and slip one quote in each person's bag and say simply to them, "I have put something very special for you in your bag, I hope it will brighten your day?"

The outcome was that people would queue to be at his checkout. Some would shop more regularly because they wanted that special treat in their bag. Other staff seeing this found ways they could brighten someone else's day. The girl working with the flowers would pick up any that had broken stems and pin them to an elderly woman's coat or a young lady's to brighten their day. This is a true story from the USA, wouldn't it be lovely if it happened in our town? Or if we could find ways to transform someone's day by our words. If we could 'get the bit between our teeth'. To be so determined that each day we could find something affirming to

say to someone that would brighten their day. With that little gesture by the littlest organ in our bodies, we could transform our world.

Secondly James talks about the ships rudders. '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. Likewise, the tongue is a small part of the body, but it makes great boasts.'

That's still true today. We watched all the huge ships moored in Weymouth Bay during those testing times during the Covid lockdown. We marvelled at what we saw above the water but it is a small part of the vessel unseen that is the driving force. Thankfully the rudders steered a safe course to shelter the vessels. So it is easy to see the allusion James makes. Choose your words carefully. The words you speak control the tone of your life. The tongue can run away with itself if we let it and make great boasts. I think of another saying about ships, 'empty vessels make the most noise!' If our lives, our vessels are full of Christ then surely we want to make a difference with our own lives and the people around us for the good. What are the words you said yesterday that made you feel you had said something good and worthy of your faith? Hard question maybe? When you think of the skills a captain employs to steer a rudder, they are hard won lessons that reflect many years of practice. We too can practice the skills of steering our words so that they change and steer the direction of our lives. People who speak words of gratitude become more grateful. People who speak words of love become more loving. People who complain become grumpier. That is why Scripture says, "Do everything without complaining." (Philippians 2.14) What words will you choose to say tomorrow? Finally James asks us to, 'consider what a great forest is set on fire by a small spark. The tongue also is a fire,'. Fire can warm and fire can burn. Fire can be a blessing or a dreaded disaster. It all starts from a little spark. Every year we read about people who have put themselves first and a carelessly lit barbecue has set fire to and destroyed acres of Heathland. Or I think of the fires that have been ignited by the spark of dangerous evil words. The inflamed speeches of the little German painter sparked a rage that flamed into the horrors of the Second World War. Words can warm the heart or words can inflame hatred. We recall from war memories the famous words, 'careless talk costs lives'. In this last illustration about the tongue, James is telling us that being careless with our tongue can lead to disastrous consequences. Learning how to tame it and control it is a hard lesson that needs help and daily practice.

When I was a child, there was a saying that we used to say, "*Sticks and Stones may break my bones, but words will never hurt me!*" However, as we have grown older, I am sure we have found that that is not altogether true. There are many physical injuries that we've suffered: However, all of those things may have healed over time. Yet, there are some things that perhaps have been said to us, that while we have tried our best to forget them, we still feel the pain that they caused.

Some influential figures have shown us that it is possible to control our tongues and to steer our lives and to influence others to a better way of life. Think of Mahatma Ghandi for example, his words and use of his tongue spread a philosophy of nonviolence and peaceful revolution. I am sure you can think of others who have inspired you with their wonderful gift of a controlled, calming encouraging tongue.

In conclusion, Xanthus, the philosopher, once told his servant that the next day he was going to have some friends for dinner and that he should get the best thing he could find in the market. The philosopher and his guests sat down the next day at the table. They had nothing but tongue—four or five courses of tongue—tongue cooked in this way, and tongue cooked in that way. The philosopher finally lost his patience and said to his servant, "Didn't I tell you to get the best thing in the market?" The servant said, "I did get the best thing in the market. Isn't the tongue the organ of sociability, the organ of eloquence, the organ of kindness, the organ of worship?"

Then Xanthus the philosopher said, "Tomorrow I want you to get the worst thing in the market." And on the morrow the philosopher sat at the table, and there was nothing but tongue—four or five courses of tongue—tongue in this shape and tongue in that shape. The philosopher lost his patience again and said, "Didn't I tell you to get the worst thing in the market?" The servant replied, "I did; for isn't the tongue the organ of blasphemy, the organ of defamation, the organ of lying?"

James seeks to advise us to watch our words. That is a tall order considering that the average person uses around 25,000 - 30,000 words per day. That's a lot of talking!

We are familiar with devices that keep our heart healthy by counting our daily steps, ten thousand is often the goal! What devices could count our words and keep our tongues healthy? May the love of God help us not to have a careless tongue but a controlled tongue. May we say with the Psalmist: "Let the words of my mouth, and the meditation of my heart be acceptable in thy sight, O Lord..." Psalm 19:14. Amen.

Prayers for others

Let us pray for those who use their tongues to make decisions and to enable and to teach.

We pray for all who have the power to inspire and influence others by their words. We pray for politicians and teachers. That their words might be seasoned with truth and wisdom for the greater good for all people.

Lord in your mercy, hear our prayer.

Let us pray for young people today. There are so many different ways that they can use their words and take in the words and influence of others. Especially on social media platforms. We pray for an end to things like cyber bullying and the use of online communication for evil intentions. May we find ways to use this gift of technology so that we can expand and inspire our words and minds in ways that are edifying and inspiring.

Lord in your mercy, hear our prayer.

We pray for all who use their words to calm and bring health and healing. For all who work in any capacity within the healthcare sector.

We pray for those who have been so hurt and affected by the unkindness of others words. May we be guided into how to bring hope and healing to them.

Lord in your mercy, hear our prayer.

Let us join our prayers and words together in the words of **The Lord's Prayer**.

STF 707

Make me a channel of your peace.
Where there is hatred, let me bring your love;
where there is injury, your pardon, Lord;
and where there's doubt, true faith in you:

*O Master, grant that I may never seek
so much to be consoled as to console;
to be understood as to understand;
to be loved, as to love with all my soul.*

Make me a channel of your peace.
Where there's despair in life, let me bring hope;
where there is darkness, only light;
and where there's sadness, ever joy:

Refrain

Make me a channel of your peace.
It is in pardoning that we are pardoned,
in giving unto all that we receive,
and in dying that we're born to eternal life.

The Blessing.

May you hear the words of God the Father and embrace the truth
May you know the love of God the Son who in His teachings taught us how we should live
May you sense the peace of God the Spirit flowing through you and speaking words of peace and wisdom
May you find yourself within the unity of God the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit and know yourselves truly blest. **Amen.**



George Eliot: "Blessed is the man who, having nothing to say, abstains from giving wordy evidence to the fact!"