



“False Witnesses”

“Realities”

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We are coming to the tail end of our Realities series. Today is the second

to last week of the series.

I posted a Facebook comment a couple of weeks ago, before the message on the Sabbath, and I said that I believe that the next four messages were going to be, probably, the four most crucially important messages that I have given all year. And I still believe that. I have gotten an incredible amount of feedback so far, in fact, the Sabbath message was far and away by most responded to message we have done yet, because I think that it is something that we all resonate so clearly with... But the weird thing about the Sabbath is, and please hear this knowing that there is no condemnation for those who are in Christ... but most people feel okay, comfortable even, admitting that they struggle with it. There is almost a pride to that... and I say that including myself in it. I am as guilty as the next person. There is almost a pride that goes along with working too hard, too often. And as you are working out these Realities in your life this week and moving forward, consider that. Pray about that. Ask for healing in that area of your life if that is you.

But today’s subject, though I am certain it will hit home for many of us, I think we will be a little less willing to accept that we are guilty of this. And hopefully it is because we are not, but the reality is that this is one of the easiest traps to fall into, and is one of the most deadly.

I do not think that there is one single issue that has had a more negative effect on the church as a whole, than this subject right here.

It is the ninth command. And it says “You shall not bear false witness.”

So without further ado, lets look at the words of Jesus Christ by opening up our bibles to Matthew 12:33-37:

A Tree Is Known by Its Fruit

“Either make the tree good and its fruit good, or make the tree bad and its fruit bad, for the tree is known by its fruit. You brood of vipers! How can you speak good, when you are evil? For out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks. The good person out of his good treasure brings forth good, and the evil person out of his evil treasure brings forth evil. I tell you, on the day of judgment people will give account for every careless word they speak, for by your words you will be justified, and by your words you will be condemned.”

All week long, I have read this passage over and over and over and over. There is something about these words that are chilling to me.

“On the day of judgment people will give account for every careless word they speak”

Another version puts it like this “every idle word you speak”

Every “morally useless” or “hurtful” word that you speak.

Your words matter.

One commentator (Commentary Critical and Explanatory on the Whole Bible) says it this way “Words, as the index of the heart, however idle they may seem, will be taken account of, whether good or bad, in estimating character in the day of judgment.”

Your character is weighed on a scale by the weight of your words.

How did you speak about God? How did you reflect God as you spoke to others?

We talked about this last week when we talked about honor. There is the power of life and death in the tongue (Proverbs 18:21)

We need to honor people in the way that we speak to them, and in the way that we speak *about* them.

So today we are going to look, very closely, at words.

Because the ninth commandment has a great deal to do with words.

The ninth commandment is “You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor”

So what does it mean to bear false witness?

False witness is the Hebrew word שָׁקֵר šā·qēr - and it means “a lie, or a breach of faith.”

It is so much more than just a lie. It is so much more than making something up. It is also an abuse of information. It is not being trustworthy. It is not controlling your tongue. It is lying, and it is gossip. And it destroys communities and it destroys churches, and it destroys trust faster than anything else I have ever seen.

It is the 9th commandment, and the Hebrew letter that represents nine is the letter “Tet” and the word picture for “Tet” is a picture of a snake. Now think about this. What does a snake represent? You can take this one all the way back to the fall of man... How does the serpent manage to get man to fall?

He bears false witness against God.

He convinces Eve, “yes, God said that, but that is not true. That is God’s paranoia that you are only one step behind him and if you eat of the fruit your eyes will be opened. If you eat of it, you will level the playing field.”

He lied about God. He made Eve think that God has an insecurity issue. He painted a picture that was not true, and she bought into that picture.

From the beginning of time entire worlds were being destroyed by the stupid words that are said, so it actually makes a lot of sense that Jesus would say what he did in Matthew 12.

A few books later through the New Testament, Jesus little brother James writes what really seems to be a bit of a case study on Jesus' words in Matthew 12.

There is such a parallel.

James does this a couple times in his Epistle. James 2 runs parallel for a while with Matthew 7, and here in chapter 3, James writes and extends this passage that goes right along with Matthew 12.

That is found in James 3:1-12, and we are going to slowly go through that entire set of scriptures today as we explore this topic. James starts by saying:

James 3:1-2:

“Not many of you should become teachers, my brothers, for you know that we who teach will be judged with greater strictness. ² For we all stumble in many ways. And if anyone does not stumble in what he says, he is a perfect man, able also to bridle his whole body.”

James starts this, talking about how not many should be teachers...Why? Because teachers have to say a LOT of words. And Jesus makes it very clear that we will be judged according to every careless word we speak... So James says, “not many of you should do that, that job requires a lot of words.

Charles Spurgeon reflects the heart that I believe is appropriate for teachers to have. He once said this “There is no good preacher who is not moved almost to the point of tears at the end of every sermon at how poor was the message he just delivered.”

It is not about beating yourself up at the end of every day. Its about the Reality that a lot of peoples lives are at stake, and its not something to take

lightly. Preachers do it weekly, with a high volume of words every week... but in every conversation you have, something is at stake. Relationships are at stake. Souls are at stake. Sometimes life altering decisions are at stake.

But everything taken in context with this first line in James that we all quote so often, is so clearly about words.

And like Jesus said, “the careless ones are going to be measured against you.”

This is hard for me because words are kind of my thing. They have been since I was a teenager writing lyrics for songs. I even tried to write a few books when I was a teenager, I have no idea if they exist anywhere anymore or not. They were not good. But over the years, I have seen the way that my words have been used in incredibly powerful ways to help people heal. I have seen words that God has used me to speak that have caused the “aha” lights to go on in someones head. I have seen my words be instruments in people meeting Jesus... and on the flip side of that, I have seen the way I have been able to conjure up an incredible amount of power in arguments and confrontations by using words as weapons. I know how to do that. I know how to use words to gain control of situations and what I don't realize in those fleshly moments is that my words have control over the situation, not me. I am not the one in control. My words have control over me just as much as they have control over whoever I am using them against.

James is telling us to guard our words. In fact he says, “If anyone does not stumble in what he says, he is a perfect man!” (James 3:2) It says that if a man can control his tongue, then he can control everything about his life.

This is the one place that more people fall than any other area.

And those weapons aren't only available on the battlefield. Words are so powerful. When you are in the moment, they are absolutely available to you. They can be used for the brutal destruction and character assassination of the person you are against. And we know that. That is why Proverbs (12:18) says that “Reckless words pierce like sword.” Words are weapons. And they will win battles that they should not ever be in.

Words can win battles, but they can also start wars. Wars you will never be able to win. Wars that nobody can win.

and it happens almost passively. We *start* wars in peoples lives by the things we think we are saying in safe places, because to most people, its still a secret if you only tell “one” person, and so suddenly, the things said in confidence, spread in confidence.

Because everyone thinks they can trust *someone*.

And I think that this is a reality that has subtlety crept into the church of Jesus Christ and is working night and day to destroy it from the inside out.

The Twinkie Situation

Do you guys remember a few years ago, when word got out that Hostess had filed for bankruptcy and was planning on going out of business?

Wikipedia described that day like this:

“On November 16, 2012 the company (hostess) filed a motion in the United States Bankruptcy court for the southern district of New York in White Plains, seeking permission to close its business, and to sell its assets.” On November 21, 2012, that motion was accepted. "

The world turned upside down that day with twinkie lovers everywhere running around like chickens with their heads cut off. Everything on Facebook that day was the twinkie. Pictures of the twinkie with a halo over its head made its way around the internet... reminding us that twinkies were on an upward journey toward heaven and would probably be eaten in a matter of moments by the Apostle Paul.

It was a sad, sad day for the American junk food industry.

The day came and went, and most of us moved on. I didn't really think much about the twinkie the following day or any days thereafter.

Fast forward a few weeks, and I am sitting in my office one evening working and I get a text message from my friend Tony. He was writing me about another friend of ours. The message said something like “Dude, _____ is on the news!”

That was it.

Now, the person he was writing me about was a very good friend of mine. I had known him since I was three years old. We used to go sledding in his front yard. He and his wife had recently had their first baby, and he had a great job. So I am thinking, if He is on the news,

HE MUST HAVE DONE SOMETHING AWESOME!

Did he rescue someone from a burning building?

Tony was like... “no. no. no! He is on Crime stoppers!”

Okay, so then I am thinking, “Crime stoppers? Did he stop a crime?”

That is how much faith I have in humanity and in my friends.

But Tony quickly assured me, “no. dude, you don't understand. They are after Him.”

I couldn't figure it out. Why are they after him? So He told me “It said that it is a sexual assault case.”

I was just sitting there in my chair, shocked. I knew this guy, and this did not sound like my friend. He is a family man, they owned a nice home, he had a lot of great things going for him, and beyond that it just didn't sound like Him. So I asked again, “Are you sure that it is him?”

Tony said “dude. I am starring at his face right now. Its him. There is a thousand dollar reward for information leading to his arrest.”

A few minutes later, I get another message from Tony, saying “Its on the crime stoppers website!” and then he sent me the link.

Sure enough, it was, clear as day, my friend. They zoomed in on his face on one photo, they zoomed in on one of his tattoos on another photo. There was literally no doubt, this was our friend.

On the top of the page it says "1,000 dollar reward for information leading to the arrest..." and then it listed these three scenarios. and the second incident was the one involving my friend. The page read: "The second incident occurred on November 16th in a store on the 700 block on Clinton Road in Grand Ledge. Workers told police that a man entered the store and inappropriately touched a woman. The suspect is described as a white male in his late 20's, with a shaved head and a tattoo on his right ankle."

Without a doubt, I knew the man. So I wrote Him a text... Tony had already written him as well. I said "look, this is obviously a misunderstanding. But first of all I want you to know that your face is all over the news, and that your face is all over this website... Its obviously you. You just need to turn yourself in. Just go down there, turn yourself in, and figure it out.." Then I asked him, "do you have any idea about any of this situation? What happened?" He looked at the picture, saw where he was, and he said to me "Dude. The last time I was there was the day I found out Hostess was going out of business and they were taking away twinkies! That was the day hostess announced it was over! I just wanted to get one more twinkie. Thats it!" Thats what he went to do!

To get a twinkie.

and if you look at the date, November 16th... you saw the article about hostess at the beginning... November 16th! There are no holes in this story. That is an air tight alibi. I have never seen a more air tight alibi! There could not be a more air tight alibi. So I agreed, thats what happened. I told him, "I put full faith in you... thats what happened. All you wanted was a twinkie.. somehow, that turned into sexual assault, but I don't believe that you really did that. Lets figure it out."

But then, he had to explain it to his wife. He is married, they have a beautiful little daughter. She was born just a couple of weeks before our daughter Brooklyn Jain was born, just a great family. Now, I don't know how

that conversation went because I never talked to him about it, but his wife had just had a baby. Typically, that is not the time that woman feel the most secure. I know for me, that would have been the worst time possible to be accused of something like this.

They just bought a brand new house in a family neighborhood... He has a great job, he had to go to his job and explain, look, I have to go and take care of this thing. "they say I did this, I don't know what its all about, but I have to figure it out." He had to take time off of work. He had to explain it to his neighbors... I mean technically, this is the type of thing that gets you put on the sex offenders list. It was kind of a big deal. So he goes down to the police station and he shares his side of the story. He says, "I just wanted a twinkie. He said, I went for a twinkie... I didn't assault any woman. I don't know what this is all about. I literally went in, I bought my twinkies, and I left." Thats what he said. And the police officers, they listened as he told his story... and told him, "okay, maybe this is just a really big misunderstanding but lets figure this out." So they approached the store, the people who reported it, and tried to find out what actually happened.

They looked for a victim, but there was no victim.

All there was, was a store clerk who will go record as saying, and I quote:

"A butt was touched."

A butt was touched! So the store clerked stood in the back on his little store, and he watched from a distance what he thought was a butt being touched, and he let it go... he let my friend walk out of the store. There was no confrontation. There was no:

"Hey! Did you touch her butt?" to my friend... There was no "Hey, did he touch your butt?" to the girl. There was none of that. It just happened... he left the store, having no idea anything was wrong. Possibly it was an accident, maybe he brushed against her... maybe they were both going for the twinkie at the same time. I don't really know what happened, but something happened that this clerk thought was worth going to the police over.

So as the police looked the case over, they said to my friend, "ok, this was just a really big misunderstanding."

I asked my friend, "did you collect the thousand dollar reward?"

"No. they didn't give me the reward." And I said, "they should give you that reward. They put your face on TV for no reason at all and made the entire city think you were a pervert."

This is a man who has a family. A brand new family. A wife. A kid. A job. A brand new home in a family neighborhood. And they put his face on the news. Because somebody stood in the back of a store who is bored, thought he saw something... was too timid to confront anybody but was more than willing to spread the word about it...

Jump to a conclusion...

and I guess that there wasn't any news that day.

All his friends saw it. His family saw it. A lot of people knew about it, a lot of people were after him. Really, if you think about it, its funny. But really, its sad. and messed up.

I thought it was funny, because I still tend to err on the side of immaturity and I knew that it was going to be fine.

But when I told my wife, after we momentarily laughed it off, she paused, and then said something that wrecked me because of how true it is. She said:

"That sounds like the church."

And i thought about it. I thought long and hard about that.. and I realized, wow, what a perspective. Doesn't that sound like the church sometimes? We stand back, and we see somebody, and we judge them before we even know the situation... before we ever get to know them. Instead of looking for somebody's potential, we look for the things that could potentially destroy them... We jump to conclusions. awful conclusions! Conclusions

that in most cases are at best a far stretch from what that person actually did or what that person actually is like. Then unlovingly and unbiblically we spread those conclusions around to anyone who is willing to give us an audience.

When we are called to bring out potential in people, when we are called to love people, and to err on the side of love and err on the side of grace and mercy and forgiveness and yet we jump these conclusions about our brothers and our sisters and we allow those conclusions to define our view of them.

And it happens all the time. And God HATES it. It in no way reflects who he is whatsoever. He hates it.

The 7 Abominations

I want to show you something.

Proverbs 6:16-19 gives us a powerful list of 7 things that God hates. They are known today as the 7 abominations:

- 16 There are six things that **the Lord hates**,
seven that are an **abomination** to him:
- 17 haughty eyes, a lying tongue,
and hands that shed innocent blood,
- 18 a heart that devises wicked plans,
feet that make haste to run to evil,
- 19 a false witness who breathes out lies,
and one who sows discord among brothers.

So the Seven Abominations are:

1. Haughty Eyes
2. A lying tongue
3. Hands that shed innocent blood
4. A Heart that devises wicked plans
5. Feet that make haste to run to evil
6. A false witness who breathes out lies

7. One who sows discord among brothers.

Some of these things do seem pretty bad, don't they?

But others, it almost seems strange that they would be in the same category as things like murder (hands that shed innocent blood).

But notice how many of these have to do with the junk that we conjure up with our words. A lying tongue, a false witness who breathes lies, one who sows discord.

It seems like almost half of this list could easily be attributed to gossip, and the other four have to do with things that seem far, far worse.

But now flip ahead just ten chapters to Proverbs 26:17-26:

- 17 Whoever meddles in a quarrel not his own
is like one who takes a passing dog by the ears.
18 Like a madman who throws firebrands, arrows, and death
19 is the man who deceives his neighbor
and says, "I am only joking!"
20 For lack of wood the fire goes out,
and where there is no whisperer, quarreling ceases.
21 As charcoal to hot embers and wood to fire,
so is a quarrelsome man for kindling strife.

Notice all of the language here about fire. Keep that in your mind. The man who deceives his neighbor is like a madman who throws fire... but where there is no whispering, the quarreling ceases just like a fire will go out when the wood runs out... all of the language here is related to fire.

- 22 The words of a whisperer are like delicious morsels;
they go down into the inner parts of the body.
23 Like the glaze covering an earthen vessel
are fervent lips with an evil heart.
24 Whoever hates disguises himself with his lips
and harbors deceit in his heart;
25 when he speaks graciously, believe him not,

for **there are seven abominations in his heart**;
²⁶ though his hatred be covered with deception,
his wickedness will be exposed in the assembly.

The person who can't control his tongue... the person who whispers things in peoples ears.... the person who gossips... is guilty of ALL seven abominations.

What are they again?

1. Haughty Eyes
2. A lying tongue
3. Hands that shed innocent blood
4. A Heart that devises wicked plans
5. Feet that make haste to run to evil
6. A false witness who breathes out lies
7. One who sows discord among brothers.

The first time this was pointed out to me, it blew my mind. The things that we say about each other go so far beyond the destruction that we ever intended to cause. The thing that we think is completely harmless is actually murder.

James 3:3-6 says:

“³If we put bits into the mouths of horses so that they obey us, we guide their whole bodies as well. Look at the ships also: though they are so large and are driven by strong winds, they are guided by a very small rudder wherever the will of the pilot directs. ⁵So also the tongue is a small member, yet it boasts of great things. How great a forest is set ablaze by such a small fire! ⁶And the tongue is a fire, a world of unrighteousness. The tongue is set among our members, staining the whole body, setting on fire the entire course of life, and set on fire by hell.”

The example of the boat is actually amazing... the idea that the boat may seem like this huge vessel that is completely driven by the wind, but they are actually guided by the small rudder wherever the pilot may direct them. This is a very good example, because against an uncontrollable wind, a

large ship with no rudder is completely powerless. But this one little piece, if the captain can control this, he can control the whole ship no matter what the wind is doing. That boat is powerful, but you can bring it under control, and you can use it for an incredibly powerful and useful purpose.

But then James switches to the example of a fire. But he is no longer speaking in metaphors like when speaks about the horse, and the boat. He actually says, "The tongue is a fire."

Earlier this week we were working on our house, and Zach was helping us with electrical in the walls that we were replacing... There is one wall in the kitchen that he asked us to remove, so he could put better electrical in for the heavy appliances, so we took out this wall and behind the wall were these open loose wires that had been in there for years and years, and as he grabbed them, they started sparking.

We started to look at the drywall that we had just taken off, and it had these burn marks on it, like there had been fires inside the walls that somehow were contained and never spread.

Its actually kind of a miracle. That in all the years of those wires sparking in those walls, making the inside wall black with char, nothing ever caught fire and burned the whole house down.

James is telling us that when you use words as weapons, you won't have that luxury. The fire it will cause will not be contained in that little wall. A spark will set afire your entire life, and it will spread to your community.

And maybe at first glance, when you look at the Ten Commandments, you may wonder why this one is in there. It seems like words would be a lighter command. But did you know that the ancient Rabbi's actually put gossip in the same category as murder, rather than stealing or coveting. Because think about it, when a person steals, they can give it back. When you murder someone, you can never, ever give back what you have taken. And the same is true when you slander someone, it's a fire. It can never be undone or returned, all you can do is try and "make up for it." So the rabbis put it in the same category as murder.

and what do you know? God put it in the same category too. The Ten Commandments are not ranked in order of importance.

It is in the same category as murder.

And when you spread something about someone else, whether it be untrue, or an embellished “you version” of a truth that was none of your business in the first place, you are murdering that persons character. You are defining them to someone else by something that is none of either of your business.

and those words are fire. And it spreads, incredibly quickly.

And before you know it, their face is on crime stoppers.

Their close friends are calling them. Concerned.

Their acquaintances are trying to figure out how they can cash in on the reward without it being known that they were the rat who sold out their “friend” for a little money.

All the while there was no victim.

Because there was no crime that actually took place.

Until now.

Now there is a victim.

And his character has been destroyed. And his face has been broadcast to his entire community.

Because something in us gets strength from tearing down others. Its sick. And its human nature, and a reality that we are forced to work against.

The Hebrew term for gossip is “*lashon hara*” (laSHON hah-RAH {Listening to the language of the Bible, chapter 11) and it literally means “The evil Tongue.”

From the beginning Satan has used words to destroy people. Words destroy people. They dehumanize people.

One of the dumbest things that kids say is “sticks and stones may break my bones but words will never hurt me.” and its crucial that as we raise our children we make sure they know that that is a lie. That statement in and of itself bears false witness to a reality of life that is detrimental for kids to grow up understanding.

The words that children hear at incredibly tender ages have lasting implications on their entire lives. We don't even realize how much we are defining our childrens future by the things we are saying to them now, and by the things we say in front of them now. By the things that they are learning to say to each other, now. By the things they are hearing from their teachers, and their schoolmates, now.

Words can destroy your friendships. They can destroy your heart. They have the power to destroy your soul. Words put thoughts in peoples minds that have eternal consequences and enormous earthly impact. Words are absolutely weapons.

The tongue is a restless evil. We are about to read that in a second. Satan has been at this for a very long time because lies are his only weapon. Unfortunately, for a lot of people, lies are all that he needs.

The serpent bared false witness against God and it caused the entire fall of man, in the same way that the bully in high school bears false witness against the 15 year old girl, that she is sleeping around with the seniors, and whether its true or not, whether it happened, or not, it takes all of five minutes to spread to the entire school... and she becomes like Tamar who we talked about during our “giving and taking” message...

“Where can she carry her shame?”

And the only place you can carry shame like that, where it will actually be lifted, is to the cross of Christ. But maybe she doesn't know that yet. Maybe

all she can see is her brokenness constantly being flaunted before her eyes by her peers.

What are you making that girl see?

Or the 14 year old boy who momentarily questions his sexuality... and he shares it with just one friend, probably his closest and most trusted friend, because nobody can keep a secret like that all to themselves... But like any secret, you have to tell someone... so that person tells his "one person" and before long, word gets out...

In confidence, it spreads.

and the word that people are saying is that "he is gay." And he is 14, and he is still learning about himself, and he is learning about his body and about his feelings and he doesn't really know what he is yet, but he becomes defined by what people are saying instead of what God says.

And he can't get a grip on what any of it means and he just feels different because all of his friends are making him feel different and before you know it we have teenagers who can't even figure out who they are yet, being shaped into what people are saying about them... They are growing into the part our words are creating.

And others are carrying their shame to the darkest places and ending their own lives before they ever got to see who they are.

Because of words.

Words shape people. They define people. and they destroy people.

And that is a reality.

All seven abominations are living in the person who can't control their words because they shed innocent blood. They sow discourse. They lie. They run to evil, they bear false witness.

They do all seven and they don't even realize it!

And this junk is alive and well in the church of Jesus Christ today and it has to stop because it is in no way a reflection of our maker.

We are supposed to be Christians. People who bare the name of Christ

Our words are supposed to be life to people. Our words are supposed to be representative of the fact that no matter what you are going through, the cross of Christ is bigger. No matter how hard it seems, the cross of Christ is stronger.

No matter what you have done, the Cross of Christ paid for it.

Grace pays the bills that our worthless words rack up.

But this is important. The last thing that Jesus says in Matthew 12, and the last thing that James says in this passage in James 3, is crucial.

Jesus says it this way “by your words you will be justified, and by your words you will be condemned.” and James explains why.

James explains it like this, and we will read it in a second.

With your words, you praise God. With your words, you spread the gospel. Words are actually one of the greatest tools that God has given man. He created everything with words, and we have an incredible power to paint a world of life for people through the words that we speak. We can't share Jesus people without them. We can live the gospel... We have all heard that famous saying “Preach the gospel, and if necessary use words.” And where the heart behind it is amazing, its rather difficult to preach the gospel without words. We should always live our lives in such a way that people naturally see Jesus in us... But when the rubber meets the road somebody has to tell them what that difference is that they are seeing. At the end of the day the gospel is something we proclaim. It is something we speak. Paul put it this way in Romans 10:13-14 “For “everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.’ How then will they call on him in whom they have not believed? And how are they to believe in him of whom they have never heard? And how are they to hear without someone preaching?”

When James tells us not many should become teachers, he is not trying to limit how many of us preach the good news of Christ. That is the ONLY way that people can come to an understanding of what a relationship with the living God looks like. What it means. James is saying, watch your words.

So what Jesus is saying, and James explains in more detail, is, words can do anything. That can take you anywhere, they can lift up, or destroy. They are how we praise Jesus. But holiness can't stand in the presence of evil. When Jesus was dying the cross, the bible says that God had to forsake Jesus in that moment (Matthew 27:46), because Jesus had taken on all the evil of the world, and God could not be in the presence of that evil. He had to forsake Him. He had to leave him to die alone. Because sin separates us from our Holy God.

Its the same way with our words. How can God bless a person who uses his mouth to bring cursing to people? It is the opposite of God. How can He accept the praise of someone who out of the same mouth utter the worst and most hurtful things about other people? Look at the way that James puts it:

James goes on to say (James 3:7-12) and this is so connected to that passage in Matthew that we read at the beginning:

“For every kind of beast and bird, of reptile and sea creature, can be tamed and has been tamed by mankind, ⁸ but no human being can tame the tongue. It is a restless evil, full of deadly poison. ⁹ With it we bless our Lord and Father, and with it we curse people who are made in the likeness of God. ¹⁰ From the same mouth come blessing and cursing. My brothers, these things ought not to be so. ¹¹ Does a spring pour forth from the same opening both fresh and salt water? ¹² Can a fig tree, my brothers, bear olives, or a grapevine produce figs? Neither can a salt pond yield fresh water.”

And just like that, we are back on fruit. The same place that Jesus started his passage on words that we read at the beginning.

The fruit of your life will be demonstrated by your words.

Your life will not be better than the words that you speak. Your relationships will not be healthier than the things that you speak about them.

Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth will speak.

It is absolutely the gage of your condition and of the way that you value that which God has placed before you.

We can not curse those who are made in the likeness of God and think we are not cursing God. This is his creation. We are God's greatest work. We meant so much to him that even when he gave us the ten commandments, the majority of the commands deal with how we take care of each other. How we treat God's greatest treasure. Because God gave us this world to care for it. He gave us each other, to care for one another. To love one another.

Are you starting to see the way the Realities work? They are connected, and they build off of each other, so if you don't have the first, you will never have the second. The last six commandments help you know how you relate to people. The MAJORITY of them have to deal with how we relate to each other... last week we said that the fifth commandment is when everything changes, it is the first commandment dealing with how we relate to each other and that command is honor. If you don't have honor, you will never have the 9th commandment. If you don't honor people, and put an enormous amount of value on them, why would you ever be careful with the words you say about them?

Don't you see it?

God is trying to teach us how to see each other through his eyes. Because he values people. So he teaches us to honor each other because if we honor we would never kill. If we value, we would never kill. We would never cheat.

If we put weight on someone, we would never steal from them...

Who would dare steal from a king? Who would dare steal from the child of a King?

Who would dare steal from a child of God?

Who would dare speak lightly of a child of God? Who would dare gossip, slander, or lie about a child of God? Knowing that God is a very protective Father.

Who would dare speak negatively about a child that God looks down at and smiles... a child that God looks down at and sheds a tear when they are far from him, because of how much he desires to be near to each of his children.

Words are powerful. So powerful. When we talked about the 4th commandment, we talked about how everything God created he created by his breath. By the words that he spoke. He spoke light into existence, order out of chaos... Life out of nothing, by words.

But when he looked at the broken mess that we all have made of our lives and of his beautiful creation, suddenly, words weren't enough. The same tool that God used to bring life, we used to bring death.

But He did not overcome death with it.

Have you ever noticed that?

God created everything that we know and experience with his words, but when it came time to save the world, he could no longer just speak it. We had distorted the power of words so greatly that God needed something even more powerful.

So, as James puts it just in the following chapter, "God gave a greater grace." (James 4:6) A grace that surpassed the miracles that words created, and a grace that surpassed the messes that words created.

He gave us love.

John 3:16 says that For God so LOVED the world, that he gave Jesus. He gave his only son up to the death that we created by all of the false witnessing that we believed. The false witness we believed in the garden when the serpent lied about God. The false witness we believed when the bully in school made us question our worth. The false witness we believed that said we are better than someone else. Or we are worth LESS than someone else.

We have all been victims of, and are all guilty of being false witnesses.

We are all false witnesses.

We have all done this.

But its time that we stand together and fight against this. Shut down gossip when it begins. Resist the urge to talk about people. And instead use our words to show people how much Jesus loves them. How much Jesus changed us. There is power in our words. Lets use that power for the sake of spreading the gospel.