
Alright, what's up Traders Point family? How are we doing today? It's good to see you. It's good to be with you. Those of you joining us in person at any of our campuses, if you are joining us at tpcc.org online, or wherever you may be watching from around the world, we are really glad to have you.

And, before we get started today I'd like to pray because the Presidential election is this week. I just want to pray for all of our hearts and minds in all of that. I know we have people all over our country, and even within our church, who see things differently politically.

That's okay, because we know Jesus is not a Democrat or a Republican. He doesn't hitch his wagon to either political party. He's his own deal. And, government is important. I want to encourage you to vote, be involved, research, and pray. But please know government is not our savior, Jesus is.

We can be rest assured in all of that, regardless of who is in office our mission is unchanged. Yet I'm very well aware of the fact that the results of this election are going to hit people differently. Some, when they hear the results of it, might be fearful, and some might be relieved.

Some might be angry, and some will be celebrating. Some will be grieving, and some will be happy about it. I want you to know that regardless of how this thing goes you are welcome here. This church is for you. This is home. We're going to continue to keep our eyes fixed upon Jesus. Let me pray.

Father, we come to you right now and this has just been a marathon of a year. We've got a Presidential election coming up this week. We know it is divisive and emotional. There are a lot of good reasons around that.

Father, today I want to re-center our hearts and give up control to you. We want to surrender it to you. We acknowledge you are sovereign regardless of the results. I pray as a church we will have great empathy and compassion. That we would fight for unity so the world would know that the hope of the world is a man named Jesus, not the President of the United States.

So, we thank you. We love you. We pray that we can feel your Spirit in this room in these next few moments together as we just want to quiet our own hearts and open our ears to what it is you want to say. There is a lot of noise right now. We acknowledge you are speaking and you want to speak, so we want to listen.

We ask this in Jesus' name. Amen.

Well, we are continuing on in this series in the Gospel of Luke that we have been in for a while now. We started it back in August, then we took a break, and are now coming back to it.

Luke is one of the four gospels: Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John are the first four books of the New Testament. They are a recording of the life and ministry of Jesus, so that we might know him better.

Each one of these individuals who write out the gospels, they had a specific audience or group of people in mind. I went over this last week that Matthew wrote specifically for the Jewish people, Mark writes for the Gentiles, John writes for anybody who is brand new to faith, but Luke writes for a friend.

I love that. We get to benefit from it, but Luke had one individual in mind when he writes out Luke and Acts. The guy's name is Theophilus. Luke even tells us. He says, "Theophilus, I've taken the time to put together a well-ordered account."

In other words, "I've been very thoughtful about it. I've done my research so that you might have confidence in what I've written about Jesus to help settle your spirit." It was very clear Theophilus had an unsettled spirit. He had questions he didn't have answers to.

And we are in a year where we need our own hearts settled. As we come to Luke 6, Luke is unpacking for us a message that Jesus preached that gets very practical. Now he wants to strengthen our spirits.

Today is November 1. We've got two more months left of 2020—anybody else happy about that? I am. We need strength to grind out the rest of this year. Here's what 2020 has taught me. Most of life I can't control. But I want to finish strong. I want to lean in, and I want God to continue to be at work in and through me.

Luke 6 is such a great content for that. Because Jesus gets to a part of his message where he gets really, really practical. Like, what Jesus has to teach us here is relevant to our lives.

One observation I've had over all the years I've had preaching and teaching is that the vast majority of people want messages that are practical. You don't just want head knowledge, you want to know what you can do with it. And you want it relevant, to connect to your life and your life circumstances.

But there seems to be a line, and I don't know what it is, when you cross from application and relevancy into what I would call meddling. It's kind of like, "That's a little too close to home."

Can I just kind of tell you to buckle up? Because what Jesus has to say both today and next week is going to feel a little bit like that. Here's another way to say it. Jesus is going to get all up in your business. Jesus is going to get really relevant and super-practical in an area of our lives that is super, super convicting.

I don't know if any of you remember this television show from a few years ago called Tattoo Nightmares. Anybody remember that? It was this television show where people got a tattoo that they later regretted. And they wanted to get ride of it.

They would actually go in and try to have it removed or turned into something else. Here are a few of my favorites. This tattoo right here: no regrets. You might want to do a spell check before you get permanent ink put on your arm. Here is another one: plan ahead.

So, the premise of the show was that there were these people who would go in and get this tattoo (they maybe got in a careless or inebriated moment) that they needed to change into something else or remove.

I've never had a tattoo. And I've therefore never had to have one removed. But I've had a few friends who have. They say that getting the tattoo removed is painful, and it doesn't fully go away. There are still effects from it. There is still a little bit of an imprint of the tattoo on their skin.

Here is what I want you to consider with me today. What if the words that we said to other people in a thoughtless moment, in a careless moment, in an angry moment, what if those words got permanently tattooed on their skin where you could see them?

I know that sounds crazy but what if? What if everything you said to other people got tattooed on them for their life for everybody else to see? Would that cause you to stop for a moment and give some more thought to what you might say? I would hope so.

All of us have had these moments in our lives where words have escaped our mouths that were thoughtless, impulsive, and careless. They were hurtful, hateful, and mean spirited.

And they may not have gotten tattooed on somebody's skin, but I guarantee it left a mark on their soul. I guarantee it impacted their self esteem and their spirit in some way. I would imagine you've had words spoken to you that have impacted you in that way.

They impacted the way you saw yourself. They impacted your self-image. Because you see, words are really powerful. That's why the Bible says things like this in Proverbs 12:18.

"The words of the reckless pierce like swords, but the tongue of the wise brings healing."

And there are going to be moments where we will say things that maybe we didn't fully mean in the moment. We said it out of passion. We said it out of frustration. We didn't intend for it to have the kind of effect it had on others.

And then there are going to be times when we meant every word of it. We know full well the impact of our words in the lives of other people, but we said them anyway.

Here's the thing. Once we let those words fly, we can never get them back. We can tell the person that we're sorry. We can say we didn't mean it. We can ask for a do-over. But like a bad tattoo, those words aren't going to go away.

Did you know that the average person speaks 16,000 words a day and something like 525,600,000 words over the course of their lifetime? Some of us more than others, give or take a few million. Did you know that's the equivalent of writing a 60-page book every single day with the words we say?

Now, I bet if you were to write a 60-page book, you would probably take the time to be very thoughtful about it. You would edit it, spellcheck it. You would make sure the sentences were complete. You would make sure it was very thoughtful.

But we are talking every day. The words coming out of our mouths are enough to fill a 60-page book, but maybe we don't even remember what we said yesterday. And with that many words being spoken, there are bound to be a few slip ups.

Have you ever said something so mean-spirited and cruel that it even surprised you as soon as it escaped your lips? And immediately you caught yourself and were like, "Wait a second, I didn't mean that. I'm really sorry. I don't know where that came from."

And yet, one of the hardest lessons when it comes to the words we speak is that we can't get them back once they're out there. It's sort of like trying to put toothpaste back in the tube. Have you ever tried to do that? No, you haven't, because you can't it's messy. You just clean it up afterwards.

I've said some things in my life, and I know many of you can relate to me, to the people who I know and love that I immediately regretted and was embarrassed by.

A big part of what I do is talking from this platform. And there have been things I've said from this stage that I've regretted. You know, oftentimes as I prepare a message it is one thing to just study and prepare the content, but it's another thing to deliver it. So, every weekend right before I get up on this stage to deliver it, I pray. There are several things I ask God for before I come up here.

Every now and then I have somebody ask me, "Are you still nervous to get up there." I'm nervous every time. And they are like, "You don't seem nervous," because I'm faking it. I'm nervous because I know what's at stake.

I will pray several things back in the green room. I will pray that God would help my words to be clear, because I don't want to muddy the waters for anybody. I will pray that my words would actually give someone hope, because I know there are a lot of people looking for hope.

I pray my words would be accurate, because I want to accurately represent what God is saying from his word. I don't want to imply my opinions into his word. I want to present it clearly and accurately.

I even pray, and I know this is going to sound a little bit unusual, I pray that God would make me funny. I know he doesn't answer that prayer very often. But the reason why I pray that God would make me funny is because I know that humor actually relaxes us and opens us up to some deeper truths we need to hear.

But I also pray that God would help my words not be destructive, even unintentionally, because it's happened. There have been moments over the last decade or more where I've attempted to use some humor, and it actually hurt people or they emailed me later to say, "You said this, and it came across this way." I know there are thousands of ears listening to my words right now. It's sort of like a mine field I'm walking through.

Actually, I try not to be super-tied to my notes, which means that oftentimes I talk faster than I think. And that's scary. I'm always like, "God, help my words to be constructive, not destructive," which means I have to go deeper than just watching my tongue.

Whatever I say actually comes from a deeper place. And this is what Jesus is getting at with what he says in our passage today in Luke 6:43-45. It's only three verses long, but he packs a ton in here. He simply says this.

"A good tree can't produce bad fruit, and a bad tree can't produce good fruit. A tree is identified by its fruit. Figs are never gathered from thornbushes, and grapes are not picked from bramble bushes. A good person produces good things from the treasury of a good heart, and an evil person produces evil things from the treasury of an evil heart. What you say flows from what is in your heart."

So, our heart is the source of our words. What you say will reveal your heart every single time. Now, I don't know about you, but it frustrates me that something so small can have so much influence and impact on my life and my relationships.

Did you know that your tongue only weighs about 70 grams, 70 percent of it is made of water, 20 percent is made of muscle, and 10 percent is fat? It's a weird collection of muscles. Did you notice your tongue never gets tired or sore? Did you ever notice that?

I will talk for several hours today, but I didn't have to warm up my tongue. I had to warm up my throat, but I didn't have to warm up my tongue. I wasn't in the green room doing tongue

stretches. That's a weird image. Before I go for a run I'll stretch out my hammies, but I've never had to stretch out my tongue. I've never pulled my tongue.

I've never had to put some sort of ointment on my tongue because the muscle got sore, but I'll wag that thing all day long. And I know from experience that I need to pay more attention to this small little muscle in my body than any other muscle, because even though it is small it is the most powerful.

James, the half-brother of Jesus has a lot to say about our tongues in his letter in the New Testament. He says this in verse 8 of chapter 3.

"No one can tame the tongue."

Nobody. You're like, "I think I can." You can't. Nobody can fully tame what comes out of your mouth. You have to go deeper than that. So, we see in Genesis that God brings life. He creates through words. God's words bring life. God's words bring hope.

And then we have an enemy, Satan, whose words bring death, destruction, fear, and division every time. Therefore, one of the most defining characteristics of someone who has fully given their heart to Jesus and is fully following after Jesus, as imperfectly as we all do it, is that it will change our words.

It will change our speech. We're never going to get it 100 percent right, because we're all still sinners. We're all still imperfect. But our words, more and more, will bring life and light rather than darkness and death.

So, James is challenging us to go deeper. Jesus is challenging us to go deeper. He says, "Listen, you want to control your tongue? Then you've got to submit your heart. You've got to check that to see what is really going on."

You see, many of us, what happens maybe on the day of our conversion, the day we give our life to Christ is that we gave our heads to Jesus. We had some questions, we got some answers. We reasoned it through, and then we came and prayed a prayer. We got baptized.

What Jesus is after, he may start with your head, but what he's really after is your heart, the core of who you are. How do you know if you've fully given Jesus your heart? How do you know that?

Jesus actually says two big things in all of his teaching in the New Testament, that are indicators of whether or not he has our full hearts or not. And the first thing Jesus would say, and this is not what this message is about, but this is what Jesus taught is this:

Checkbooks

Our finances will reveal where your heart is every time. In fact, in Matthew 6:21 it says, "Wherever your treasure is, there the desires of your heart will also be." He says, "The desires of your heart always follow your treasure."

The reason why Jesus talks about money so much is because he knows our hearts follow it. If you send your treasure to where you want your heart to be, your heart will follow it. It's never in reverse.

But you know that second indicator of your heart?

Tongues

It's your speech. *"For whatever is in your heart determines what you say."*

I don't want you to misunderstand that, because our salvation is not dependent on the words we speak—thankfully. Otherwise we'd all be in trouble. However, we shouldn't use our imperfection as an excuse to say whatever we want. In other words, I'm saved by grace and therefore I can give that person an ear full.

No, what Jesus is saying here is this. The condition of our heart is often revealed by the content and tone of our speech. That's why he uses the analogy of a fruit tree.

He says, "A healthy fruit tree is going to produce healthy fruit, but an unhealthy tree is going to produce unhealthy fruit." It all springs up from the condition of our hearts.

Going back to James. Whenever James writes everything he says about our speech... He was one of the leaders in the Jerusalem church. James' letter is one of the most practical in the New Testament, I think because he was dealing with so many problems.

The church James was writing to was just a hot mess. People were hiding behind giving lip service to their faith. They were refusing to live it out. They were refusing to have faith that would change anything about the way they were living. They refused to care for orphans and widows around them.

That leads him to say things like, "Faith without works is dead." Yeah, you are saved by faith, not your actions, but your actions will always reveal your faith every time. Well, he says something very similar in verse 26.

"If you claim to be religious but don't control your tongue, you are fooling yourself, and your religion is worthless."

So, if by our speech, regardless of what we believe, regardless of if we call ourselves a Christian or not, but if by our speech our words are divisive, fearful, angry, cutting, degrading, and abusive, it should cause us to stop for a minute and ask where our hearts really are.

Can I say, especially with election week coming up, this also includes the keyboard. This also includes the comments that we make, the statements we make, the re-posts.

As Christ followers we have to be so careful of our words. It doesn't mean our opinions aren't valid. It doesn't mean we don't have perspectives we need to share. It simply means the tone and direction of our words should bring life. Are they bringing life? Are they bringing hope?

James says, "You're only fooling yourself. You're only going through religious motions, if you don't watch your tongue."

So, the question is, "Who is really in control of my heart? Is it my fear, or is it the Spirit of God? Is it my anger, or is it the Spirit of God? Is it my low self-esteem, or is it the Spirit of God?"

And we can answer that however we want, but our words will reveal where our hearts are every single time and the stakes are pretty high. And the two places the Bible speaks to our speech the most is the Book of Proverbs in the Old Testament and in the words of Jesus.

Jesus addresses our speech more than anyone else in the Scriptures. It matters to him. Which is why some of the most difficult, unsettling things that he ever taught were what we are to do with our tongues. What he is doing is encouraging you and me today not to just keep a tighter rein on our tongue, to try to watch what we say, but to take the lid off our heart and take a look inside. Because our words are shaped there.

Our words spill out of our hearts. And Jesus is saying, “Hey listen, those words that surprised you when you said them, they really shouldn’t have, because they’ve been marinating in your heart for a while.”

Those words that you said that sort of took you by surprise were like a seed that’s been in the soil of your heart for a while. It finally took root and blossomed above the surface. Because the mouth speaks what the heart is full of.

I mean, we’ve really got to pay attention to our inputs. What is it we are taking in with our eyes and ears? What is it we are filling our heads with? Because all of that, it sort of germinates in our hearts and then whatever fruit we’re producing reveals it.

When I was in college, I took a preaching course. Preaching in college is called homiletics, and it’s basically a whole class on how to put together sermons and deliver them in effective ways. Part of that is just practical experience. Two or three times each semester, each of us in class would have to put together a message and preach it in front of the class with a camera in the back.

Afterward, the class would critique us and then we would go back and watch the film of it. It was just a brutal experience. But I’ll never forget one afternoon. One of the students in the class, he got up to preach his message. He was a really fiery guy. He was full of passion.

At one point in the message he slipped and said a foul word. Well, it sort of ruined the message. You could see that he said it, and didn’t mean to say it. It sort of spilled out. And, it kind of surprised him. Everybody was shocked in the room, and he tried to recover from it. He just kind of went on. He finished.

Afterward he kind of dropped his head and went over and took his seat. It was time for us to critique. We made several observations about his introduction, his transitions, and his main point.

And then at one point one of the guys raised his hands and said, “Hey bro, did you mean to cuss?” And I will never forget this. The professor was sitting in the back of the room. He had his head down and was making notes. And with his loud, booming voice he said, “If you get it out of your heart, it will stay out of your mouth.”

I don’t remember the message that day. I don’t remember any of the sermons preached that semester, but I do remember the professor saying that and it stayed with me. Don’t just try to tame or control your tongue. If you get it out of your heart, it will stay out of your mouth.

In fact, let’s work that in reverse. What do you want to come out of your mouth? Then, start putting that in your heart. This is why reading God’s word is so important. And if you’re not signed up for our Daily Bible Reading, I want to encourage you to. You can do that on the website or on our app. We’ll email you a Daily Bible Reading. It just takes a few minutes to read God’s word.

It’s not just about knowing all the content of the Bible, although that is helpful, it’s not just being aware of what the Bible has to say, although that’s helpful, it’s giving God an opportunity to speak into your life. It’s the question of we’re all being disciplined by something; we just have to ask by what.

And I’m afraid in the day and age in which we live we are being disciples more by social media than we are God’s Word. That we’re actually being disciplined more by CNN or Fox News than

we are God's Word. Some of us are being disciplined more by coffee conversations, music, or entertainment.

It's not that any of those things are bad in and of themselves, but then something comes out of your mouth and you're like, "I don't know where that came from." Well, it's been in your heart for a while.

Have you ever noticed, at least this is true for me, when I watch a movie I'm really impacted by the actors and actresses, especially the good ones? You know the ones who are really distinct in the way they say things? Like the Sylvester Stalones and the Denzel Washingtons, and the Merrill Streeps?

When I get done watching a movie, for the next half-hour I'll talk like them. It's really weird. Why am I doing that? I'm parroting them, mimicking them. We do the same things with the inputs and the content that comes into our minds and our hearts. Which is why Proverbs says this:

"Above all else, guard your heart, for everything you do flows from it."

And what we take in and think about Jesus says are like seeds. And they will eventually produce fruit. So, in an unguarded moment when maybe words surface that are crass, cutting, or crushing, we say, "I'm not sure where that came from," the Spirit of God very gently, but very directly says, "I know where it came from. It's been in your heart for a while."

You see, we understand the metaphor inherently about our heart. But in Hebrew culture the heart was the metaphor for the center or the core of the person. The spiritual and emotional hub that all other spokes of life came out from and are connected to. So, Jesus says, "Above all else guard that."

And just like you wouldn't want to contaminate the primary water source for the city, don't contaminate the heart by the things you put into it. So, you guard your heart by being proactive. Psalm 119:11 says this:

"I have hidden your word in my heart, that I might not sin against you."

And Psalm 141:3 says this:

"Take control of what I say, O LORD, and guard my lips."

And this verse shows us that when it comes to our words there are going to be moments when we need to be proactive and intentional. Sometimes the things that go unsaid are just as harmful as the things that are said. Isn't that true?

Maybe for you, the words that have hurt the most are the words that you've longed to hear but they never came. Maybe words from your father like, "I'm proud of you, and I'll always be here for you no matter what," but for whatever reason your dad couldn't bring himself to say that to you. And he still can't, and it hurts.

Maybe you just wanted to hear your mother say, "Sweetheart, I love you no matter what. You are beautiful, precious, and a treasure." But your mom could never say that to you, maybe because her mom couldn't say it to her.

Maybe right now you're in a relationship, maybe married or with a boyfriend or a girlfriend, and words that are spoken are careless, hurtful, cutting, and degrading. And it hurts.

Maybe you just long to hear somebody, maybe a coach, teacher, or authority figure of some kind, say, "I'm with you. I'm cheering you on. You've got what it takes," but nobody is in your corner saying the words you so desperately need.

And the opposite is true as well. Especially at the end of this year where everybody is emotionally exhausted, spiritually beat down. We need more than ever to be speaking words of life into each other.

And I know there is a lot of fear and uncertainty, but we don't serve a God of fear. The same God who told us 365 times in Scripture to fear not is the same God who still says that today. The same God who said, "I am in control of yesterday, today, and tomorrow" is still in control of all the uncertainty that we see.

And now more than ever, we need to not be speaking words of fear and hopelessness, but words of confidence and strength. Because we serve a God who still rules with his feet up regardless of a pandemic, regardless of an election. And right now, we just need to resubmit our hearts to him. And we need to pay attention to what is being said. And, when the Spirit of God prompts us to say something to bring life, say it.

I'm sure this is all review. You've seen this before. There are three simple questions for all of us to consider before we say something. You've seen this, right? The first is this:

Is it true?

Like hey, don't say something if it's not true. We all probably should have learned that as kids. But make sure it's true. But just because it's true doesn't mean you should say it. Right? I thought I might get a couple of amens there. You need to go to the next question:

Is it helpful?

So, it might be true but maybe it's not helpful. Maybe I need to watch that. There's a third question:

Is it kind?

When the answer to all three of those is yes, by all means go ahead and say it. I think for all of us, we just need to slow up and be a little more thoughtful about the words coming out of our mouths.

More than that, at a deeper level, we need to resubmit our hearts to Jesus. Can we do this here at the end of a year as a church family, regardless of whether you're here physically or online? That we would resubmit our hearts to Jesus and say, "Please take control of this so that you can control this."

There is a lot at stake, maybe more than you might realize. You know, we all hear examples of things where this has gone bad, but I think we need examples of where it's gone well.

Several months ago, there were a couple of ladies of different ethnicities who both go to our church who got into a little bit of an argument, a little debate, in the comments section of my social media.

And it was kind of going back and forth. There were others contributing to it. But these two primarily were going back and forth, not agreeing on things. It was getting sort of tense.

One of them at one point said, “I don’t know if this is helpful, for us to be going back and forth like this. I don’t think we’re convincing each other of anything. But, if you’d like to get together and have coffee and a conversation about this, I’d be more than happy to do that. Just DM me.”

I didn’t hear anything else, but about three weeks later one of them reached out to me. She said, “I wanted to follow up with you about the whole deal. I just want to tell you that she messaged me, we exchanged information, we got together for coffee actually a couple of times.

“She was able to hear me out and know my heart, and I was able to listen to hear, hear her out, and know her heart and ask her questions about the way she sees the world. And she asked me questions about the way I see the world. We prayed together, and I think I gained a sister.”

Can I just say that’s the way it should be done? We don’t have to agree on everything in order to be brothers and sisters. We really can be unified, we really can be civil. We don’t have great examples of it right now in society, but it’s possible. In fact, Jesus says, “It’s one of the marks of somebody who’s fully given me his heart.”

So, can I just say, as somebody who is still in process, somebody who has not fully gotten this right, I’m right in the battle with you? Can we resubmit our hearts to Jesus, so he may produce the kind of fruit we might be proud of? The kind of fruit that can bring light in a really dark world right now, and hope in the midst of a lot of fear.

Today, if you would like to give your life to Jesus, we would love to meet you in that conversation. You can simply text the word Jesus to 87221, and our team will follow up with you. We’d love to answer any of your questions and walk with you, and whatever is the next step in your spiritual journey.

In fact, that’s always the challenge and the goal. Whether you’ve been following Jesus for 30 years, 3 days, or not yet, that what you would do in our time together is take that next step in front of you, whatever that is, in your spiritual journey to grow closer to Jesus. And we’d love to help you with that.

What I want to ask is at all of our physical locations, and wherever you may be joining us at home, even though I know this might be a little unorthodox, if you could stand to your feet so we can just ready our hearts to respond in worship?

You know, the song we sing at the end of the service is not just a way to try to end the service because we don’t know how else to end it, it’s a response. It’s a response to what we’ve just heard from God’s word.

Now is not the time to duck out early, in fact, traffic is not bad anymore so you don’t have to. Let’s just stay in this moment, and ask the Spirit of God to work on this, so we can work on this.

Father God, we come to you right now. I thank you that you’re so willing to say tough things we all need to hear. And I can’t think of anything tougher than this, to pay attention, to watch our speech, because right now we’re just letting words fly so carelessly for all kinds of reasons—fear, anger, stress, worry.

We just want to settle our hearts and ask you to come into our hearts. We want to resubmit them to you right now, so our words will be a reflection of your Spirit, not our fear.

God, I pray for that individual right now, who is really hurting. That individual who is so worried about the election this week, somebody who is just fed up with the pandemic and all the talk about it. That right now your Spirit would come right into the space where he or she is standing, right into the living room, the backyard, the seat where he or she is. And that you would begin to do a work in him or her from the inside out, that only you can.

God, I pray that as we lift up our voices in unity and as we sing to you, that we could be an example to the rest of the world of what it looks like to hold onto hope in the midst of fear, what it looks like to look to you to be the source of our strength rather than other areas and pursuits of life.

God, you are our audience right now, an audience of one. Not just in this moment, but in the way we live our lives and in the words we speak. So, we pray that this would be a sweet, sweet aroma to you as we lift up our voice and sing. We ask this in Jesus' name. Amen.