



FROM THE PASTOR

Weekly Devotional

The Simplest Way to Combat Gossip: Stop Listening to It! Pastor Heiple

Their throats are an open tomb; with their tongues they have practiced deceit; the poison of asps is under their lips; whose mouth is full of cursing and bitterness. — Romans 3:13-14

Today we continue our study of Question 144 of the *Larger Catechism*, which asks, “What are the duties required in the Ninth Commandment?” The third part of the answer states, “The duties required in the Ninth Commandment are... discouraging tale-bearers, flatterers, and slanderers.” Last time we considered our obligation to protect the names and reputations of our neighbors with our actions. Today we consider how we must do that in our conversations; both what we say and what we give our ears to.

We all sin with our words. The text from Romans quoted above is one of many such passages, describing the great evil caused by the speech of man. This sad fact should not be; for God created man in His own image and likeness. Mankind is like God, and so it is his great duty and privilege to make sure he always acts like God. Therefore, most especially in the gift of speech, man should imitate his Creator: he should speak the way God speaks. God creates all things with His words and He saves all His elect through His words. God’s Word brings life in both creation and salvation. God speaks always and only what is good, what is right, and what is true. God’s Word embodies perfectly the character and nature of God. Thus, the Son of God is also said to be the Word of God and He comes to perfectly reveal who God is (John 1:18).

Alas, for us sinners, our words likewise reveal who we are. James says man’s “tongue is a fire, a world of iniquity... which no man can tame,” (Jam. 3:6, 8). We all sin with our lips. The godly know this, admit it, and mourn over it. Recall Isaiah, who was already a prophet when he had his vision of almighty God in the temple. Prophets were given the great privilege to speak the holy and pure words of God. There is a sense in which no one has better speech than a prophet. And yet when Isaiah saw the Lord, the first thing he was convicted of was his unclean lips. Surely the lips, tongue, and throat of a man bring about more evil in the world than anything else in all of God’s creation. However, for a man to be able to spread sin with his words, he needs an audience. Here is where today’s instruction is so important to us. In order to oppose the evil of sinful words, we must not only watch our mouths, we must put a guard over our ears.

Even as our mouths like to speak evil, so our ears like to hear it. There is just something about seeing the shame or disgrace of another that appeals to our sinful hearts. The so called “gossip” magazines, television shows, and web sites comprise an industry that is worth many millions if not billions of dollars. Each one tries to outdo its rivals in claiming to have the absolute up-to-the-minute news, rumors, and reports. Moreover, not only do they not try to hide the wrongness of what they are doing, they proclaim and celebrate it. They boast of having the juiciest information, the most shocking quotes, the latest dirt. They love and seek to inflame scandals and controversies as they spin stories and fabricate headlines until there is very little truth left in them; and the more outrageous, the more shameful, and offensive the better. And let us not forget that they are only able to continue doing this because millions of Americans love it, spend money on it, and keep coming back for more. They peddle dirt because we purchase dirt. So much so that even serious news organizations, political campaigns, and religious media now compete in sensationalism.

Beloved it ought not to be so! May God grant that you and I would be diligent to do what we can to discourage tale-bearers, flatterers, and slanderers by first and foremost, not listening to them! May God give us a holy conviction of the sinfulness of desiring to hear of evil befalling another person, and when we do hear of such things, may we feel bad and not good. May we be ashamed to discover the details of another’s disgrace and instead seek to cover their shame, like Japheth and Shem covered the shame of their father Noah. Let us pray for those who are caught up in scandalous evil, and may God grant our nation repentance from the great sin of gossip!



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THE GOD OF JACOB

Sunday Morning · April 21, 2024



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The Celebration of Worship



Prelude & Welcome

Reflection & Preparation

Psalm 105:3-5

Call to Worship

Psalm 46

Leader The LORD of hosts is with us; the God of Jacob is our fortress. Come, behold the works of the LORD, who has made desolations in the earth.

All **He makes wars cease to the end of the earth; He breaks the bow and cuts the spear in two; He burns the chariot in the fire.**

Leader "Be still, and know that I am God; I will be exalted among the nations, I will be exalted in the earth!"

All **The LORD of hosts is with us; the God of Jacob is our fortress.**

Invocation

Hymn

All Creatures of Our God and King · Trinity 115

Scripture Reading

John 1:35-51

Again, the next day, John stood with two of his disciples. And looking at Jesus as He walked, he said, “Behold the Lamb of God!” The two disciples heard him speak, and they followed Jesus. Then Jesus turned, and seeing them following, said to them, “What do you seek? “ They said to Him, “Rabbi “ (which is to say, when translated, Teacher), “where are You staying?” He said to them, “Come and see.” They came and saw where He was staying, and remained with Him that day (now it was about the tenth hour). One of the two who heard John speak, and followed Him, was Andrew, Simon Peter's brother. He first found his own brother Simon, and said to him, “We have found the Messiah “ (which is translated, the Christ). And he brought him to Jesus. Now when Jesus looked at him, He said, “You are Simon the son of Jonah. You shall be called Cephas “ (which is translated, A Stone).

The following day Jesus wanted to go to Galilee, and He found Philip and said to him, “Follow Me.” Now Philip was from Bethsaida, the city of Andrew and Peter. Philip found Nathanael and said to him, “We have found Him of whom Moses in the law, and also the prophets, wrote-- Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph.” And Nathanael said to him, “Can anything good come out of Nazareth?” Philip said to him, “Come and see.”

Jesus saw Nathanael coming toward Him, and said of him, “Behold, an Israelite indeed, in whom is no deceit!” Nathanael said to Him, “How do You know me?” Jesus answered and said to him, “Before Philip called you, when you were under the fig tree, I saw you.” Nathanael answered and said to Him, “Rabbi, You are the Son of God! You are the King of Israel!” Jesus answered and said to him, “Because I said to you, `I saw you under the fig tree,` do you believe? You will see greater

things than these.” And He said to him, “Most assuredly, I say to you, hereafter you shall see heaven open, and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of Man.”

Song

Hear the Call of the Kingdom · Insert

Worship in Giving

*Offertory**We Are Convinced* · Mark Hayes

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Hymn

The Tender Love a Father Has · Trinity 93

Pastoral Prayer

Sermon

The Blessing Must Go to Jacob · Dr. Ray E. Heiple, Jr.*Genesis 27:42-28:22 NKJV*

⁴² And the words of Esau her older son were told to Rebekah. So she sent and called Jacob her younger son, and said to him, “Surely your brother Esau comforts himself concerning you by intending to kill you.

⁴⁵ Now therefore, my son, obey my voice: arise, flee to my brother Laban in Haran.

⁴⁴ And stay with him a few days, until your brother's fury turns away,

⁴⁵ until your brother's anger turns away from you, and he forgets what you have done to him; then I will send and bring you from there. Why should I be bereaved also of you both in one day?”

⁴⁶ And Rebekah said to Isaac, “I am weary of my life because of the daughters of Heth; if Jacob takes a wife of the daughters of Heth, like these who are the daughters of the land, what good will my life be to me?”

¹ Then Isaac called Jacob and blessed him, and charged him, and said to him: “You shall not take a wife from the daughters of Canaan.

² Arise, go to Padan Aram, to the house of Bethuel your mother's father; and take yourself a wife from there of the daughters of Laban your mother's brother.

⁵ May God Almighty bless you, and make you fruitful and multiply you, that you may be an assembly of peoples;

⁴ And give you the blessing of Abraham, to you and your descendants with you, That you may inherit the land In which you are a stranger, which God gave to Abraham.”

⁵ So Isaac sent Jacob away, and he went to Padan Aram, to Laban the son of Bethuel the Syrian, the brother of Rebekah, the mother of Jacob and Esau.

⁶ Esau saw that Isaac had blessed Jacob and sent him away to Padan Aram to take himself a wife from there, and that as he blessed him he gave him a charge, saying, “You shall not take a wife from the daughters of Canaan,”

⁷ and that Jacob had obeyed his father and his mother and had gone to Padan Aram.

⁸ Also Esau saw that the daughters of Canaan did not please his father Isaac.

⁹ So Esau went to Ishmael and took Mahalath the daughter of Ishmael, Abraham's son, the sister of Nebajoth, to be his wife in addition to the wives he had.

¹⁰ Now Jacob went out from Beersheba and went toward Haran.

¹¹ So he came to a certain place and stayed there all night, because the sun had set. And he took one of the stones of that place and put it at his head, and he lay down in that place to sleep.

¹² Then he dreamed, and behold, a ladder was set up on the earth, and its top reached to heaven; and there the angels of God were ascending and descending on it.

¹³ And behold, the LORD stood above it and said: “I am the LORD God of Abraham your father and the God of Isaac; the land on which you lie I will give to you and your descendants.

¹⁴ Also your descendants shall be as the dust of the earth; you shall spread abroad to the west and the east, to the north and the south; and in you and in your seed all the families of the earth shall be blessed.

¹⁵ Behold, I am with you and will keep you wherever you go, and will bring you back to this land; for I will not leave you until I have done what I have spoken to you.”

¹⁶ Then Jacob awoke from his sleep and said, “Surely the LORD is in this place, and I did not know it.”

¹⁷ And he was afraid and said, “How awesome is this place! This is none other than the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven!”

¹⁸ Then Jacob rose early in the morning, and took the stone that he had put at his head, set it up as a pillar, and poured oil on top of it.

¹⁹ And he called the name of that place Bethel; but the name of that city had been Luz previously.

²⁰ Then Jacob made a vow, saying, “If God will be with me, and keep me in this way that I am going, and give me bread to eat and clothing to put on,

²¹ so that I come back to my father's house in peace, then the LORD shall be my God.

²² And this stone which I have set as a pillar shall be God's house, and of all that You give me I will surely give a tenth to You.”

Notes

Hymn

The Man Who Once Has Found Abode · Trinity 90

Benediction & Postlude

Following the service, the elders will be available to pray with you at the front of the sanctuary.