

## *The Power of Words*

*Proverbs 1:20-33; Mark 8:27-38*

Okay, I'll get it together and then we'll use words, unfortunately, because that was all the worship I needed, folks.

So, words can hurt. Words can bless. Words can give life, words can bring death...there are words of wisdom, and dare I say, there are words of utter stupidity. And we're left with the challenge, the request and sometimes the plea that we can sort out which ones are which. And it's not always so easy as we might think. The scriptures are full of all manner of dichotomies, and we heard about one this morning. It's in the words from Mark (more words):

“What will it profit them to gain the whole world and forfeit their life?” Somewhere in the province of Alberta – and it sticks in my head that it was in the town of Boyle, Alberta, which is probably why I paid attention to it in the first place – someone had gone up to the top of the grain elevator and printed the words, “What does it profit?” What does it profit? What do we gain from an economy that is bursting at the seams if we sell our souls to get there? What do we gain by being “the best there is”...anybody watch that tennis match yesterday? Whew, wow. Okay, I was more than watching them, I have to say. And those two young women are in the absolute prime of their physical ability. Absolute top of their game in terms of physical ability. But some young people at the Olympics this year refused to compete based on the fact that they were at the top and their bodies were about to give out. What does it profit any of us to be at the top of our game if it means destroying the very thing that put us there? Now I'm talking in terms of actual, physical beings who sometimes end up destroying their bodies to get to the top of their game, but let's take a moment metaphorically, shall we? What does it profit us to be at our best if it means we ain't got anything, folks?

I saw a thing on Facebook this week, it was great. It was an elderly person and three young people sitting around a campfire. The elderly person was saying, “For just one brief moment in time, the world was a beautiful place, full of economic and technological grandeur. That was a brief moment in time before we all blew ourselves up.”

Well, what does that all have to do with words? That sounds like a lot of words, I suppose. It has everything to do with words. It has everything to do with the kind of promises we make to one another, and what we mean by those promises. It has everything to do with what we say as we teach our little ones and grow them up into elders. It has everything to do with the message that we want to convey about who we are as a community, as a city, as a province, as a nation, at a time when there's so much uncertainty. Words have become a major issue in the midst of the COVID crisis. Words tell us, "Don't wear masks; it's all a hoax." Words tell us, "We have researched vaccines, we have studied them for years, we have put these things in place, we have tested and we know that they will work." And words say, "The vaccine is going to injure your body. The vaccine doesn't work. We have research that proves." And somewhere in the midst of all of that we have to, in our wisdom, determine truth.

Jesus put a very very interesting question to the disciples when he said "Who do people say that I am?" And they had lots of answers, but mostly the answers had to do with his ability as an amazing prophet. He was able to somehow cut through and see what was happening in the hearts and souls of the people around him. And the community and the economic and political nature of his time, and he was able to move people to make change in a way that was so amazing that we still talk about it 2000 years later. His words held sway, but much, much, much, much more than that were his actions. Though I may speak, but have not love. Though I may sing, but only of meaninglessness. Though I may invite, but really not welcome. Jesus had an interesting response, as he said, "Don't tell anybody. Don't tell them. Don't spread this word. Don't go out and spread it more. Spread the action, my friends." It matters not what they call me. It matters how they see me. It matters not what they call us. It matters how they see us.

So yes, words are incredibly powerful, and I just wanna say, so is silence. And even more so, so are actions. But let's raise up one another through all that we say and all that we do, but mostly, all of who we are. So that, in fact, we become an example – not just a noisy gong or a pounding symbol. Amen.