

- (image: Smile/words, words, words)

Introduction

- Knife (image: knives) - useful for good and bad purposes, chopping vegetables, stabbing...
 - a knife can bring strength & healing, through food preparation, through being a useful tool out surviving in the wilds, in the hands of a skilled surgeon...
 - equally a knife can do great damage, bring hurt and pain...
- What is it that makes a knife a useful tool?
 - its sharpness!
 - but its that very sharpness that also makes it dangerous
- Words: amazing tools given us by God, power to do great good, but also great evil
- The writers of the Proverbs have a lot to say about words!!
 - pick out three areas for tonight:

Truth

- First area is truth.
- (image: right/wrong)

Story

- (image: adult baptism)
- "A man was being baptised in a remote village, high in the mountains. Before his conversion he had been an outrageous liar, and the villagers were sceptical of this sudden change of heart. The missionary doused him in the freezing waters of a mountain river, and the man emerged shivering. 'Is it cold?' asked the missionary, anxiously. 'No, its fine,' said the man. 'Duck him again, Pastor,' shouted a villager, 'he's still a liar!'"

(12:19) Truthful lips endure forever, but a lying tongue lasts only a moment.

- (image: right/wrong)
- *Truth is stronger than evil - though both last after they have been spoken - build with what is strong!*
 - easy to deceive, slip into not telling the full truth, the whole picture, presenting ourselves in the best light, covering up what we are not proud of.... easier to do than we sometimes care to admit!

Story

- Archbishop. He came across three men arguing over a fine copper kettle. 'Dear me,' he said, 'whatever is the matter?' 'Well, tha knows, reverence,' explained the eldest, 'tis like this. Whoever can tell biggest lie, gets yon copper kettle.' The archbishop was shocked. 'Why,' he exclaimed, 'I don't know how you could countenance such a thing. I have never told a lie in my whole life!' The men were impressed 'Tha canst 'ave this kettle then, for tha's biggest liar of all!'
- Sometimes we who are "religious" forget to continually examine ourselves - and act on what we find as we look within!

Discretion

- (image: toothpaste)
- Have you ever tried putting toothpaste back in its tube?
 - (want you to think about what that would be like for a moment!!)
- Second area: discretion
- Once words are out, they can't be taken back:
 - and those words have consequences!
- Like sparks thrown onto the floor of a dry forest....
- One particular "spark" that is very commonly tossed out is the spark of gossip.
- Did you know: "A gossip is a person with a keen sense of rumour!"
- Simple answer is shut up! Restraint; guarded lips...
- Two ears, one mouth.

- Same principle applies in many areas:
 - where the words are angry;
 - where we are apt to jump to conclusions, or might not have all the facts;
 - where we might hurt someone with what we say...
- All stuff we would acknowledge, that we know
 - BUT - need to examine ourselves and seek to put into practise, at home, at work.
- If we do find ourselves in the position of having used words wrongly, we need to act quickly to put the situation right:
 - say sorry;
 - ask forgiveness;

Value

- *(image: thank you/value)*
- Can you remember being congratulated for something you had done? *(pause!)*
 - that someone had noticed, taken the time to say;
 - didn't you feel valued, important, even if only for a short while?
- Or an occasion when you were given good advice by someone who had listened to your situation, and had a real concern for your best interest?
 - advice that saved a lot of heartache later?
- Third area is the value, the good that can be done through our words.
- Those words that we remember have a power and an effect that went far beyond the energy the speaker used to move the muscles in their throat to actually speak!
- The Proverbs we read describe them as like a honeycomb, sweet, or like jewels, rare and valuable.

Action?

- *(image: smile/words, words, words)*
- Challenge:
 - pick out one way of speaking, one person you often speak to, which falls short of God's standard: *seek, with God's help, to avoid;*
 - pick out one person or situation where you can say something good, of value, of encouragement, of comfort: *say it, don't just think it* - lift the phone, call by someone's house on the way home!
- *Book: R T Kendall, "Your Words have Power"*