

Good Morning , I wanted to pay a little tribute to Pastor Jay this morning who always opened his sermon with funny stories .There was a mother who was making pancakes for her two sons Ryan age 5 and Kevin age three . They began arguing about who would have the first pancake .The mother saw this as an opportunity to teach the boys a moral lesson .. She said , Boys , if Jesus were here he would say ,” Let my brother have the first pancake , I can wait “.Ryan turned to his younger brother and said “okay Kevin you be Jesus “.

As followers of Jesus , we are each called to be Christlike .There was a time when there were bracelets with the initials WWJD that were very popular .The letters stood for the question “ What would Jesus do ? “. I reflected on this question as I thought about the power of our words . We have reached a time where we are bombarded with words and information that often lack civility . Sadly, we have spent nearly 11 months living with the fear , and uncertainty during the pandemic while quarantined in our homes . Polarizing divisions over the election only heightened the level of tensions .The answers to what would Jesus do are spoken throughout the bible. The importance of our words is vital to our living a spirit filled life . There is a scripture written by the apostle Paul in the book of Colossians 1:9 that says : We are asking God that you may see things as it were from His point of view by being given spiritual insight and understanding . We also pray that your

outward lives , which men see , may bring credit to your Master's name and that you may bring joy to His heart by bearing genuine Christian fruit , and that your knowledge of God may grow deeper yet.

In Galatians 5: 22 -23 But the fruit of the spirit is love ,joy ,peace ,patience , kindness , goodness , faithfulness, gentleness and self control .These are the character traits representing the types of lives that we should aspire to live. Our great challenge is to consider God's point of view and what would Jesus do in our daily faith journey .

Proverbs 18:21 says , "Death and life are in the power of the tongue .And those who love it and indulge it will eat its fruit and bear the consequences of their words . " The impact our words have on others cannot be overstated . One small comment or remark can make a difference between building a relationship up or tearing it down . We have the power to either encourage or destroy with our speech .

Proverbs 15:1 says "a soft answer turns away wrath but, a harsh word stirs up anger . "Who of us hasn't regretted angry words that can't be retracted ?

There is a story that illustrates what happens when we say things in anger . There once was a little boy who had a bad temper . One day , his father gave him a bag of nails and a hammer . The father then asked the son to hammer a nail into the back of the fence every time he lost

his temper going forward . The first day the boy had driven 37 nails into the fence . Over the next few weeks , as he learned to control his anger a bit , the number of nails hammered daily gradually started to dwindle down.Soon he discovered it was easier to hold his temper .than to drive those nails into the fence .Finally the day came when he didn't lose his temper . He was thrilled to tell his father about it . As he shared this achievement the father suggested that he go ahead and pullout one nail for each day that he was able to hold his temper .

The days passed and the young boy was finally able to remove all the nails from the fence . He was even more excited this time to share this new achievement with his father . As expected , the father was extremely pleased . He congratulated the son and told him how proud that he was for this achievement . However , the father ,slowly led the boy to the fence and said , "You have done well my son . I am very proud of you for what you have achieved today But look at the holes in the fence . The fence will never be the same . Similarly when you say things in anger they leave a scar just like this one .The boy now stood silent as he began to understand the value of the lesson his wise father tactfully taught him.

As I researched the topic , I found this powerful quote from Gary Chapman author of " Love as a Way of Life ". He said , "Our words are

either bullets or seeds . We use words as bullets when we speak harshly , criticize deeply , and spread lies .We plant seeds with words when we speak love , encourage and give grace .When we nurture relationships ,we grow people . We will eventually see good crops around us and we will be encouraged ourselves .

Our words can grow people or shoot people down .God is glorified when we scatter his message of love , not hate into the atmosphere around us . God is disrespected when we disrespect others .

There is a very helpful phrase that reminds us to think before you speak .In the acrostic , the first letters of the word think spell out the following questions , Is it True ? , Is it helpful ? , Is it inspiring ? Is it necessary ? Is it Kind ?

I wish that I had thought before I spoke many times . The topic is very personal to me . Last February before everything shutdown, I was a part of a political discussion at a bridge luncheon

that became heated . We were divided . My words and temperament did not reflect Christlike behavior that day . Because of covid, we have been unable to get together again . Although I apologized for my part , words can't be retracted . I certainly learned that I had fallen far short that day in manifesting self control , patience , peace , and kindness . As I prayed about how to heal the situation , God sent a

message to remind me of His standards and perspective . It came in the form of a devotional from Henri Nouwen following my prayer . It was as if God sent a personal letter to me.

“ Make God’s Love Unconditional “

“ Whenever contrary to the world’s vindictiveness , we love our enemy , we exhibit something of the perfect love of God , whose will is to bring all human beings together as children of one Father. Whenever we forgive instead of getting angry at one another , bless instead of cursing one another , tend one another’s wounds instead of rubbing salt into them , hearten instead of discouraging one another , give hope instead of driving one another to despair , hug instead of harassing one another , welcome instead of criticizing one another , praise instead of maligning one another . . . in short , whenever we opt for and not against one another , we make God’s unconditional love visible ; we are diminishing violence and giving birth to a new community .”

In Closing , let me remind you that our words do have the power to make God’s unconditional love visible and bring about hope and healing .