**FOR EVERY IDLE WORD (#2)**

*Your 7000 Words Today*

“*But I say to you that for every idle word men may speak, they will give account of it in the day of judgment. For by your words you will be justified, and by your words you will be condemned*.” (Matt. 12:36-37) – Jesus

If this pronouncement from our final Judge doesn’t scare you, nothing will.

The reason this sentence should terrify you is that our words pour forth from our mouth in droves, making the statistical odds very probable that we will speak “*idle words*” in the course of our day. In my vast research (in other words I did an internet search to the question: “how many words does the average person speak in a day?”) I found that we speak between 7,000 and 20,000 words each day. Even by taking the lower number we can assume that it would be rare indeed for a person to say that many words without slipping a few into the “*idle word*” category.

Jeff Ansell is a communication expert who studies what people actually say each day. He lumps our thousands of words into three categories.
1) Words we speak confidently out of conviction
2) Words we speak that make a difference to the listeners
3) Words we speak that make no difference at all (empty words)

Think about your own words yesterday, or today. If the average person speaks 7,000 words per day (Mr. Ansell’s conclusion), how many fell into each of those categories? When I thought deeply about my own words from yesterday I was humbled by what I learned. While chit-chat is not really the “*idle words*” Jesus was referring to, it did increase my Category #3 word count. Ugh. It also increased my desire to focus more on Categories 1 and 2. I want my words to make a difference, both for time and eternity. How did your word-count look?

The context of Matthew 12 helps us get to the real meaning of “*idle words*” that Jesus condemned. A demon-possessed blind mute was suddenly healed by Jesus. The crowds were astonished and declared, “*Could this be the Son of David*?” (i.e. the Messiah). The Pharisees were beside themselves with this praise for Christ. They immediately tried to thwart His popularity, not by denying the miracle (which was obvious to all witnesses), but by challenging His source of power. “*This fellow does not cast out demons except by Beelzebub, the ruler of the demons*!” In other words, Satan is the source of Jesus’ miracles.

After giving the obvious rebuttal that Satan would not work in contradiction to his own kingdom, Jesus turns on them with this frightening prospect: *“I say to you, every sin and blasphemy will be forgiven men, but the blasphemy against the Spirit will not be forgiven men. Anyone who speaks a word against the Son of Man, it will be forgiven him; but whoever speaks against the Holy Spirit, it will not be forgiven him, either in this age or in the age to come”* (Matt. 12:31-32).

Jesus introduces the dreaded “Unpardonable Sin” that has brought fear into the hearts of men for 2,000 years! The scary thought that we could commit a sin that could never be forgiven is paralyzing. These religious leaders were on the very brink of such a sin. But then Jesus follows that up with this warning which all of us should consider:

*“Brood of vipers! How can you, being evil, speak good things? For out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks. A good man out of the good treasure of his heart brings forth good things, and an evil man out of the evil treasure brings forth evil things.”* (Matt. 12:34-35)

He calls these “holy men” a nest of *poisonous snakes* and *evil* men. That likely got their undivided attention. Their tree was known by its fruit, and the fruit was rotten to the core! He then brought out his closing argument by warning them that “*for every idle word men may speak they will give account of it in the day of judgment*.” That judgment would lead to His verdict: “*by your words you will be condemned*!”

Paul’s “*works of the flesh*” list included not only the well-known “bad” sins of adultery, fornication, murder and drunkenness, but made hatred, contentions, jealousy, and outbursts of wrath an equal with them (Gal. 5:19-21). In other words our tongues can kill our souls as fast as our hands. Idle words are as deadly as sexual promiscuity and drug addiction. “*By your words you will be condemned*.” Let that phrase sink deep into your heart.

When Paul compared the “*Old Man*” of the world with the “*New Man*” in Christ (Eph. 4:17 – 5:7) he put lying and angry speech and corrupt words next to telling the truth, controlling your temper and speaking grace to the hearers so that everyone can see the difference between our BC & AC life (**B**efore **C**hrist vs. **A**fter **C**hrist). He commanded all of us to “*let all bitterness, wrath, anger, clamor, and evil speaking be put away from you, with all malice*” (4:31). Why? He explains: “*Neither filthiness, foolish talking, nor coarse jesting*” are fitting a child of God (5:4). The CEV translation says it this way: “*Don’t use dirty or foolish or filthy words*.” That’s plain enough, don’t you think?

“Sticks and stones may break my bones, but words will never hurt me.” As kids we likely repeated this old saying in order to shield ourselves on the playground from a bully who was calling us “chicken” or “sissy.” It might have been a good come-back to make us feel better as a kid but we all know as adults that words do indeed hurt us… deeply, painfully. It’s sad, but those who are hurt by words often retaliate by hurting others with our own words. We want to hurt them as badly as they hurt us. Don’t do it. It might be a temporary revenge, but it could lead to an eternal damnation.

Christ said, “*out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks.*” His very next words were “*for every idle word men may speak they will give account of it in the day of judgment. By your words you will be justified…or condemned*.”

How many words will you speak today? How many of them will edify (thus justify you)? How many of them will be idle (thus condemn you)? Speak wisely. – Rick