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Sermon Notes

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The Eternal Significance of Words

Matthew 12:30-37

I. A Modern Deluge of Words

A. The Oxford English Dictionary

1. The authoritative dictionary of the English language
2. Twenty volumes!!
3. Well over half a million words defined

B. Modern Deluge of Words

1. Avalanche of information
2. More means to communicate than any other time in history
3. Cell phones, internet, electronic media (e-magazines), cable and satellite TV
4. Never before in history have so many words been flung out on such a wide variety of topics

Question: If words are so plentiful, are they of any consequence? Are they of any value? Do our words have any significance at all?

This text answers this question: The state and destiny of your eternal soul will be revealed on Judgment Day by the catalogue of words you have spoken on earth.

This text today establishes words as of eternal significance. There are no insignificant words, no idle utterances. Each word you speak will come back to you again... replayed perfectly on Judgment Day.

Even more, Christ

C. A Great Gift from God

1. God Himself is a verbal God... communicating by word

- b. God said “Let there be light” and there was light
- c. by the power of God’s word the heavens and earth were formed

Psalm 33:6 By the word of the LORD were the heavens made, their starry host by the breath of his mouth.

- 2. Language given to Adam and Eve in the Garden as part of the image of God
- 3. The gift to humanity first demonstrated when God spoke to Adam and Eve:

“Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it.”

As He had earlier commanded Adam

And the LORD God commanded the man, "You are free to eat from any tree in the garden; but you must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for when you eat of it you will surely die."

- 4. The gift of language first employed by Adam when He named the animals
- 5. Adam’s first quoted words were a poem... when He first saw His wife

The man said, "This is now bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called 'woman, 'for she was taken out of man."

D. BUT with the Fall... this great gift of language became perverted

- 1. Words used to pierce and hurt, to crush and destroy
- 2. Words used to drive husbands and wives apart
- 3. Words used to boast and brag, as slaves of pride
- 4. Words used to make wicked plans, to lay traps, to plunder the innocent
- 5. Small wonder that Paul focused on human speech in his catalogue of sin in Romans 3

Romans 3:13-14 "Their throats are open graves; their tongues practice deceit." "The poison of vipers is on their lips." 14 "Their mouths are full of cursing and bitterness."

- 6. Or that James warned of the devastating power of the tongue as well

James 3:5-8 Likewise the tongue is a small part of the body, but it makes great boasts. Consider what a great forest is set on fire by a small spark. 6 The tongue also is a fire, a world of evil among the parts of the body. It corrupts the whole person, sets the whole course of his life on fire, and is itself set on fire by hell. 7 All kinds of animals, birds, reptiles and creatures of the sea are being tamed and have been tamed by man, 8 but no man can tame the tongue. It is a restless evil, full of deadly poison.

E. Context: Christ's Enemies on the Attack

1. After Christ healed on the Sabbath, the Pharisees met to plot Christ's murder

The great gift of speech given them by God, these Pharisees perverted... talking with each other about how best to murder the only perfect man who ever lived, the Incarnate Son of God

2. Here in this account, Christ heals again... and the Pharisees blasphemed greatly

Matthew 12:22-24 Then they brought him a demon-possessed man who was blind and mute, and Jesus healed him, so that he could both talk and see. 23 All the people were astonished and said, "Could this be the Son of David?" 24 But when the Pharisees heard this, they said, "It is only by Beelzebub, the prince of demons, that this fellow drives out demons."

They took their tongues, given them by God to speak His praise, and they used them to ascribe Jesus' miracles to Satan himself

These were not merely idle words... they revealed the very depths of the Pharisees hearts. The depths of rebellion against God and against His Christ. These words were spoken, and could not be retracted. Their words were etched with an iron stylus in the heavenly record and could never be erased. The words, and more importantly, the heart from which they were spoken, would condemn their eternal souls to hell. And they would never be forgiven... ever!

II. Words Reveal Relationship to Christ: With Him or Against Him (vs. 30)

vs. 30 "He who is not with me is against me, and he who does not gather with me scatters."

A. There No Gray Area: Everything IS Black and White

1. Post-modern era loves ambiguity and "gray area"
2. There is no absolute truth; everything is up for grabs
3. Syncretism: "one can be a Christian and a Muslim at the same time"

4. Christ rejects this way of thinking forever... He has come to divide the entire human race into two categories... with Him or against Him

Matthew 10:34-38 "Do not suppose that I have come to bring peace to the earth. I did not come to bring peace, but a sword. 35 For I have come to turn "'a man against his father, a daughter against her mother, a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law-- 36 a man's enemies will be the members of his own household.' 37 "Anyone who loves his father or mother more than me is not worthy of me; anyone who loves his son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me; 38 and anyone who does not take his cross and follow me is not worthy of me.

5. No gray area absolutely established by mirror statements Christ makes... this one here

vs. 30 "He who is not with me is against me, and he who does not gather with me scatters."

And another statement:

Luke 9:49-50 "Master," said John, "we saw a man driving out demons in your name and we tried to stop him, because he is not one of us." 50 "Do not stop him," Jesus said, "for whoever is not against you is for you."

B. Two Kingdoms at War

There is no gray area when it comes to Christ... you are either in His Kingdom and helping to advance His Kingdom... or you are in the devil's Kingdom, fighting against Christ

1. The devil has a kingdom... we saw very clearly last week

vs. 25-26 Jesus knew their thoughts and said to them, "Every kingdom divided against itself will be ruined, and every city or household divided against itself will not stand. 26 If Satan drives out Satan, he is divided against himself. How then can his kingdom stand?"

2. Christ has a Kingdom... it is the story of the entire Gospel of Matthew
3. Christ's Kingdom is advancing by conquest over Satan's evil empire
4. There are no neutrals in this war!!

Illus. WWII... Switzerland, Spain, and Sweden were neutral in the war against Nazi Germany; they sought only to defend their own territory and to stay out of the conflict

However, in the battle between Christ's Kingdom and Satan's, there are no neutrals

C. Christ's Mission: to Gather the Scattered People of God

1. "He who does not gather with me..." This is Christ's mission
2. Clear marching orders from Father

Luke 19:10 "For the Son of Man came to seek and to save what was lost."

3. His deepest desire... to gather what sin has scattered

Matthew 23:37 "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, you who kill the prophets and stone those sent to you, how often I have longed to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, but you were not willing."

- a. "scattering" a word powerful in Jewish mindset
- b. gathered into the Promised Land... they were scattered to the four winds by the Gentiles
- c. Isaiah has numerous prophecies of regathering

Isaiah 43:5-7 Do not be afraid, for I am with you; I will bring your children from the east and gather you from the west. 6 I will say to the north, 'Give them up!' and to the south, 'Do not hold them back.' Bring my sons from afar and my daughters from the ends of the earth-- 7 everyone who is called by my name, whom I created for my glory, whom I formed and made."

- d. stunningly, John ascribes these to Gentiles as well as Jews

John 11:49-52 Then one of them, named Caiaphas, who was high priest that year, spoke up, "You know nothing at all! 50 You do not realize that it is better for you that one man die for the people than that the whole nation perish." 51 He did not say this on his own, but as high priest that year he prophesied that Jesus would die for the Jewish nation, 52 and not only for that nation but also for the scattered children of God, to bring them together and make them one."

Christ's mission in the world is to gather together what Satan and sin has scattered. To restore order to the chaos of the universe by bringing back God's children under His good rule... back safely into His Kingdom

D. Your Diagnosis: Are You Gathering with Christ or Scattering with the Devil?

1. You can't gather with Christ unless you've been gathered by Christ... you have to be saved to gather!!

2. Evangelical = involved in the work of the Gospel... of saving lost sinners and bringing them into the Kingdom
3. Christ said plainly, "If you're not gathering with me, you're scattering!"
4. Scattering = centrifugal force of sin... flying away from the center, away from God... disarray and disorder
5. We have HUGE impact on each other... every unbeliever is a tool in the scattering hands of Satan to push people farther away from Christ
6. Not all of our actions gather... our sin always pushes people away from Christ
7. BUT if we are in His Kingdom, filled by His Spirit, obedient to His commands, we will seek and save the lost... we will gather with Christ

E. Context: Pharisees on the Wrong Side

1. They HATED Christ
2. They scattered away from Christ every chance they could get
3. And the whole time they thought they were serving God!!

III. Words Reveal Resistance to the Spirit (vs. 31-32)

Christ zeroes in now on the words the Pharisees spoke... they are immensely significant. Christ is about to speak one of the most terrifying statements He ever made.

vs. 31-32 And so I tell you, every sin and blasphemy will be forgiven men, but the blasphemy against the Spirit will not be forgiven. 32 Anyone who speaks a word against the Son of Man will be forgiven, but anyone who speaks against the Holy Spirit will not be forgiven, either in this age or in the age to come.

A. God's Wonderful Grace: Full Forgiveness of All Kinds of Sin

1. This is God's truest heart, and His deepest desire... He LOVES to forgive

Psalm 103:8-10 The LORD is compassionate and gracious, slow to anger, abounding in love. 9 He will not always accuse, nor will he harbor his anger forever; 10 he does not treat us as our sins deserve or repay us according to our iniquities.

Any sin truly repented of and renounced through faith in Christ, any sin can be forgiven

2. This was the hope of all sinners in the past

Abraham forgiven his lies

Moses forgiven his murder

David forgiven his adultery and bloodguilt in murdering Uriah

Manasseh even forgiven his idolatry in sacrificing his own son in the fire to Molech

Augustine forgiven his fornication

Luther forgiven his blasphemy in saying "I hate God!"

John Newton forgiven his slave trading and immoral lifestyle

Heaven is going to be full of repentant murderers, liars, adulterers, fornicators, thieves, homosexuals, swindlers

For repentance and faith in Christ cleanses from any and every sin

B. Specifically Blasphemy Against the Son of Man Forgiven

Peter forgiven even blasphemous words He spoke against Christ the night he denied him three times

Paul forgiven his blasphemy, cursing the name of Christ, and fighting against his Kingdom

1 Timothy 1:12-13 I thank Christ Jesus our Lord, who has given me strength, that he considered me faithful, appointing me to his service. 13 Even though I was once a blasphemer and a persecutor and a violent man, I was shown mercy because I acted in ignorance and unbelief.

John Bunyan was especially known for blasphemy... and when he began to be under conviction, the devil whispered into his ear that he was going to hell because he'd committed the unforgivable sin of blasphemy

Illus. Most non-Christians take the name of the Lord in vain

One Christian I know grew so weary of his blue-collar co-workers using Christ's name as a curse that he began the practice of saying "Praise His holy name!" whenever one of them spoke the words "Jesus" or "Christ"

I had a co-worker on the assembly line who constantly cursed, and blasphemed the name of Christ. Everyone in my company knew that I was an ordained minister, and so one day, he let one fly and then looked embarrassed at me and apologized.

I said "Don't apologize to me! I am a sinner just like you, and I am certainly not your judge. But you do have a Judge, and someday you'll have to give an account to Him for every careless word you have spoken!"

C. BUT: There is an Unforgivable Sin

1. Christ said to speak against the Spirit, to blaspheme the Spirit will never be forgiven
2. There is an eternal consequence to these words by the Pharisees
3. If there is even one unforgiven sin, they will spend eternity in hell apart from Christ

D. What is “Blasphemy Against the Spirit?”

1. Context interprets this
2. Issue: the Pharisees utterance

"It is only by Beelzebub, the prince of demons, that this fellow drives out demons."

3. Christ had been anointed with the Spirit at the outset of His ministry

Luke 4:18-19 "The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to release the oppressed, 19 to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor."

- a. every miracle He had done had been done by the power of the Holy Spirit
- b. every message He had proclaimed had been the direct empowering of the Holy Spirit
- c. the work of the Spirit in identifying Christ as the Messiah could only be twisted and perverted by a truly hardened heart, but the willful acts of self-righteous religious pride as demonstrated by these Pharisees
- d. it's to look the Spirit's work directly in the face and as an act of the will to turn away and ascribe it all to the devil

Blasphemy against the Spirit is to look in the face of all the clear evidence of the deity of Christ... all His miracles, all His amazing acts of compassion, all His astounding teachings... all that God gave Christ to prove He is the Son of God... and to conclude exactly the opposite: He is the devil himself

E. Why is it Unforgivable?

1. There is nothing left to do... no sermons left to preach, no evidence greater than what God has shown
2. The Pharisees had seen it all, and had hardened their hearts

Hendriksen: “For penitence, they substitute hardening, for confession, plotting. Thus by means of their own criminal and completely inexcusable callousness, they are dooming themselves. Their sin is unpardonable

because they are unwilling to tread the path that leads to pardon. For a thief, an adulterer, and a murderer there is hope. The message of the gospel may cause him to cry out ‘O God be merciful to me, the sinner.’ But when a man has become hardened, so that he has made up his mind not to pay attention to the Spirit, he has placed himself on the road that leads to perdition.”

Hebrews 10:26-27 If we deliberately keep on sinning after we have received the knowledge of the truth, no sacrifice for sins is left, but only a fearful expectation of judgment and of raging fire that will consume the enemies of God.

IV. Words Reveal True Character (vs. 33-35)

vs. 33-35 "Make a tree good and its fruit will be good, or make a tree bad and its fruit will be bad, for a tree is recognized by its fruit. 34 You brood of vipers, how can you who are evil say anything good? For out of the overflow of the heart the mouth speaks. 35 The good man brings good things out of the good stored up in him, and the evil man brings evil things out of the evil stored up in him.

A. Words Reveal True Character as a Fruit Reveals the Nature of the Tree

Illus. Once tree puts out buds and once buds grow into apples, you can see plainly that it is an apple tree and not a fig tree

So once you listen to how a person speaks in a variety of situations, you can tell their true nature

B. Jonathan Edward: Character Lies in the Affections... What You Love and What You Hate

C. You Store Up What You Love

1. Unbelievers LOVE this world and the things in this world
2. They feed their minds on worldly things
3. They treasure them up because they are treasure to them

Entertainment fills their minds... they store up movies, videos, TV programs, sports, games, worldly novels

Ambition fills their minds... they store up worldly business philosophies, tips for success, stock options

Lust fills their minds... they store up images and experiences of sexual immorality, building up a library

Self fills their minds... they marinate their minds all the time on themselves... what they like, what their opinion is, what their goals and plans are

D. You Speak Out of What You Store Up

vs. 34 *“You brood of vipers, how can you who are evil say anything good? For out of the overflow of the heart the mouth speaks.”*

1. Christ is saying that the Pharisees statement is perfectly in concert with their evil nature
2. They could not help themselves... but they are still accountable for it

It is actually IMPOSSIBLE for an evil man to say anything God accepts as good

Even a simple statement like “That was a great meal, thank you!” is not accepted as good, because it is said by a rebel against God, and not said by faith

3. Having an evil nature makes them drink in and store up certain things as treasures
4. Out of that they speak:

vs. 35 *The good man brings good things out of the good stored up in him, and the evil man brings evil things out of the evil stored up in him.*

E. God’s Special Work: “Make a Tree Good”

1. This is something only God can do
2. A bad tree cannot make himself good
3. Regeneration: God specializes in makes evil trees good

2 Corinthians 5:17 *Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come!*

- a. new creation by the power of the Spirit
 - b. we love what we used to hate
 - c. we hate what we used to love
4. A New Creation Speaks Faith to God the Father

Romans 10:8-13 *“The word is near you; it is in your mouth and in your heart,” that is, the word of faith we are proclaiming: 9 That if you confess with your mouth, “Jesus is Lord,” and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. 10 For it is with your heart that you believe and are justified, and it is with your mouth that you confess and are saved. 11 As the Scripture says, “Anyone who*

trusts in him will never be put to shame." 12 For there is no difference between Jew and Gentile-- the same Lord is Lord of all and richly blesses all who call on him, 13 for, "Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved."

The "sinners prayer" is evidence of a heart already made new by regeneration

Out of the fullness of a new heart, we cry out to God to save us

Also, now that we have a new heart, we begin to store up new things in our heart

5. A New Treasure Results in New Vocabulary

- a. we love God now and store Him up in our hearts
- b. we love Scripture now, and store it up in our hearts
- c. we love the Kingdom of Christ now and store it up in our hearts
- d. out of all that overflow, our mouth speaks... of God, of Scripture, of the Kingdom of God

V. Judgment Day Reveals Eternal Significance of Words (vs. 36-37)

vs. 36 But I tell you that men will have to give account on the day of judgment for every careless word they have spoken. 37 For by your words you will be acquitted, and by your words you will be condemned."

A. Judgment Day: A Day of Meticulous Careful Accounting

1. With the Lord a day is like a thousand years
2. Every slight inclination of the heart, every motive, every slight twitching of our muscles has been recorded and we are accountable
3. Terrifying day: everything will be laid bare... no secrets whatsoever

Hebrews 4:13 Nothing in all creation is hidden from God's sight Everything is uncovered and laid bare before the eyes of him to whom we must give account.

B. Every Single Word Written in God's Record Book in Heaven

vs. 36 But I tell you that men will have to give account on the day of judgment for every careless word they have spoken.

1. No word is insignificant

2. Every single word noted and written as with an iron stylus in a tablet of steel

Even the argument I had with my spouse last night?

Even the off-color joke I told last month?

Even the hurtful insult I hurled at my friend eleven years ago?

3. If words are noted and we must give an account, how much more our motives and actions?

Romans 2:6-7 But because of your stubbornness and your unrepentant heart, you are storing up wrath against yourself for the day of God's wrath, when his righteous judgment will be revealed. 6 God "will give to each person according to what he has done."

2 Corinthians 5:10 For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive what is due him for the things done while in the body, whether good or bad.

C. Words Alone Needed for Accurate Judgment

NOTE: here Christ makes it very personal... he addresses individual sinners, speaking in the second person singular

Why? Because each of us will stand alone accountable before Him

1. Christ is such a good judge of words, He can tell perfectly the state of our hearts by what we said
2. A regenerate person will speak many words of love for Christ and faith in Him... He will call on the name of the Lord from the moment of conversion on

“By your words you will be justified”

Greek is “justified” ... just like James... true justifying faith ALWAYS results in us speaking words of faith

3. A person who never spoke a word of faith in his entire life is not a Christian... he catalogue of words shows a clear pattern of worldliness and the mind of the flesh

“By your word you will be condemned.”

Clear unmistakable lesson: words have eternal significance, simply because they accurately reflect the nature of every person... their true character

The Pharisees did not merely hurl idle words that day... those words were etched in a steel tablet with an iron stylus. Someday, they would give an account for them.

VI. Application

A. Are You With Christ or Against Him?

1. Only two Kingdoms... the Kingdom of Christ and of the Devil
2. No neutrals in this war
3. Have you been rescued from Satan's evil kingdom of darkness and transferred to the Kingdom of Christ
4. Does your heart yearn to see Christ's glory with your own eyes, and to see Christ's Kingdom established in glory in this sin-cursed world?
5. Do you rejoice in the lavish forgiveness that Christ alone can give?

B. Are You Gathering With Christ or Scattering with the Devil?

1. No third option... either you are gathering lost people to Christ or you're doing the devil's work
2. When was the last time you spoke out of the overflow of your heart the gospel to an unbeliever
3. If you really love Christ, you can't help but speak for Him... to proclaim His name
4. Simple question: are you evangelistic? Are you engaged in the struggle to advance the Kingdom of Heaven? Do you care about missions? Do you care about lost people in your company, your neighborhood, your family, sitting next to you on the airplane?
5. Or does your lifestyle speak of scattering... of sin working disorder in you? Are you influencing others AWAY from Christ by the worldly way you live?

C. What Do Your Words Show About Your True Character?

1. If you read a transcript of the words you've spoken over the last month, what would that record show?
2. Do you speak more about sports, money, gossip, clothing, children, current events... than you do about the glories of Christ and of His Kingdom?
3. What are you feeding your mind? Your mouth will pour out what you treasure up in your heart!

4. Are your words filled with grace seasoned with salt? Do you speak what Christ would have you say, “a word that sustains the weary?” Is your mouth more full of praise/thanksgiving or of curses and complaining?

D. Ask God to Watch Your Mouth... Since He Is Anyway!

Psalm 141:3 Set a guard over my mouth, O LORD; keep watch over the door of my lips.

1. God is recording every careless word you are speaking every moment
2. Since He is watching anyway, ask Him to help you watch your mouth
3. Realize the issue is not your mouth... it what you treasure in your heart and what you store up there
4. Ask God to give you a deep love for Himself, His Word, His Kingdom, His purposes in this world
5. Then your daily conversation will be filled with praise for God’s attributes, stories of missionary heroes, favorite Scripture verses, thanksgiving for blessings from God, words of trust in the midst of trial.
6. Ask God to watch you mouth!

E. Get Ready for Judgment Day

1. Don’t commit the unforgiveable sin
2. Don’t waste even a single word