

## THE WAY OF WISDOM: WORDS #5 (Jill Weber)

- Where have you seen God at work in your life this week? (Share any brief examples and encouragements).
- Was there anything from Sunday's message which you found particularly inspiring or challenging?
- Was there anything else you particularly noticed?

### James 3:2-6 (NIVUK)

*We all stumble in many ways. Anyone who is never at fault in what they say is perfect, able to keep their whole body in check. When we put bits into the mouths of horses to make them obey us, we can turn the whole animal. Or take ships as an example. Although they are so large and are driven by strong winds, they are steered by a very small rudder wherever the pilot wants to go. 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. The tongue also is a fire, a world of evil among the parts of the body. It corrupts the whole body, sets the whole course of one's life on fire, and is itself set on fire by hell.*

Writing as Ruby Redfort, the 13 year-old hero of a series of Young Adult novels, Lauren Child turns around the meaning of a familiar rhyme,

Sticks and stones may break my bones, but words can also hurt me.  
 Stones and sticks break only skin, while words are ghosts that haunt me.  
 Slant and curved the word-swords fall, it pierces and sticks inside me.  
 Bats and bricks may ache through bones, but words can mortify me.  
 Pain from words has left its' scar, on mind and heart that's tender.  
 Cuts and bruises have not healed, it's words that I remember.

'Death and life are in the power of the tongue' writes the author of **Proverbs** (18:21)

- *What words have other people said to you which have scarred or haunted you? Do they still hurt?*
- *Are there words which you have spoken over your own life which have wounded or limited you?<sup>1</sup>*
- *Are there better words which God might want to speak to you now? How about 'beloved'?*

Native American alcohol and addiction recovery counsellor Don Coyhis writes, 'Words are important. If you want to care for something you call it a flower. If you want to kill it, you call it a weed.'

**Proverbs 12:18** 'The words of the reckless pierce like swords, but the tongue of the wise brings healing.'

**James 3:17-18** 'the wisdom that comes from heaven is first of all pure; then peace-loving, considerate, submissive, full of mercy and good fruit, impartial and sincere.'

- *How can we become wiser in the words we speak?*
- *Is there someone whose wise words and demeanour towards other people you particularly admire? What is it that you have particularly noticed about them?*
- *'In the beginning was the Word', writes John at the start of his Gospel as he echoes the creation narrative in Genesis 1. If we know that words can create worlds, then what kind of universe are we creating through our tongues... and thumbs (especially if we use social media)? How can we speak words that bring life to others?*

Jesus said in **Matthew 15:18-20 (MSG)**, 'what comes out of the mouth gets its start in the heart. It's from the heart that we vomit up evil arguments, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, lies, and cussing. That's what pollutes. Eating or not eating certain foods, washing or not washing your hands—that's neither here nor there.'

- *What might a Lent Fast from the things which come out of our mouths look like? (Or, perhaps it's just easier to stop eating chocolate than it is to give up criticism, complaining, and 'bitter banter'.)*

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<sup>1</sup> For example, think of the Amy Winehouse song, "You Know I'm No Good", where she sings, "I cheated myself / Like I knew I would / I told you I was trouble / You know that I'm no good"