

Text: Ephesians 4:29 - 5:2
Theme: Let Your Light Shine as You Speak to Others!
1. Avoid Angry Words
2. Speak Forgiving Words

This weekend we are bringing to a close our look at the 10 Commandments of our God. Since mid-September, we have been reviewing the Lord's will for our lives in our relationship with him and in our relationships with others. Today, we want to consider how we talk TO others; and how we talk ABOUT them. As a general theme for our look at the 10 Commandments, we have heard the encouragement: "Let your light shine!" Today you and I hear from God's Word to Let Your Light Shine as You Speak to Others. Let your light shine as you avoid angry words. Let your light shine as you speak forgiving words. The portion of God's Word for our discussion on the 8th Commandment is taken from Paul's letter to the Ephesians. We read beginning at verse 29 of chapter 4. If you would like to follow along as I read, the section of Scripture is printed out for you in the Worship Folder:

Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths, but only what is helpful for building others up according to their needs, that it may benefit those who listen. And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, with whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. Get rid of all bitterness, rage and anger, brawling and slander, along with every form of malice. Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you. Be imitators of God, therefore, as dearly loved children and live a life of love, just as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us as a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God.

It seems true for many people that their anger is one emotion that can easily get out of control. But when you and I allow our sinful anger to get the best of us, and speak to others with sinful, angry words, we not only make friends or family unhappy, but we also make the Holy Spirit unhappy. God's Word that we just read says: "Do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, with whom you were sealed for the day of redemption." Just as we don't like to sadden someone who is close to us, after all that the Holy Spirit has done and continues to do for you and for me, we don't like to sadden him. What has the Holy Spirit done for you and me? We read that by Him we were "sealed for the day of redemption." You and I have a "proof of purchase seal" that has been placed on our hearts. It is a seal that proves that the price has been paid in full for all of our sins so that we are part of God's family. The Holy Spirit, working through the Word and Sacraments, freely gives us that seal. The seal is faith. At our Baptism, God the Holy Spirit placed that seal on our hearts. Through the Lord's Supper, the Holy Spirit strengthens that seal. Since we now have this seal of faith, and the gift of full and free forgiveness of all our sins, we look forward to the "day of redemption"; that is, the day our Savior, Jesus, will return to take us to be with him forever in heaven.

It is God the Holy Spirit, and the powerful Word of our God, that gives you and me the strength to do what Paul encourages: "Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths, but only what is helpful for building others up according to their needs, that it may benefit those who listen. Get rid of all bitterness, rage and anger, brawling and slander, along with every form of malice." Some might say that the devil must avoid places where a group of Christians is gathered, such as us gathered here today. However, we can be sure that wherever a group of believers are gathered together, there Satan is working "overtime" to cause problems and division. Nothing would make the devil happier than to see us at St. Matthew's embrace "unwholesome talk" or "bitterness, rage and anger, brawling and slander, along with every form of malice."

But what God commands us to do in the 8th Commandment is difficult for us to do all the time. Why? In your heart and in my heart sin is alive and well. Because of this sinful nature, we do at times not only sin by how we talk TO people or by how we talk ABOUT them, but we also allow other sinful thoughts and desires to take control of our lives. Yet, because of Jesus Christ and what he accomplished for sinners like you and me, as we humbly come before the throne of our Father in heaven confessing our sins, the Good News that our Savior-God speaks to you and me is that we are forgiven for those times that we let our anger take control of us. Not only do we have forgiveness, but we have also been given the power to resist the temptation to let our anger, or any other sin, take control of us. As 1 Corinthians 10:13 reads: "No temptation has seized you except what is common to man. And God is faithful; he will not let you be tempted beyond what you can

bear. But when you are tempted, he will also provide a way out so that you can stand up under it.” With the help of God the Holy Spirit, you and I are able to let our light shine as we avoid angry words, and rather speak only those things that are “helpful for building others up according to their needs, that it may benefit those who listen.”

Often times, one of the most difficult things to do after speaking sinful, angry words to someone is patching things up. It is often difficult for us to admit we were wrong. It may even be more difficult for us to forgive someone who has hurt our feelings during an argument. Motivated by the love our Savior showers upon us, as Christians, we let our light shine as we speak forgiving words to others.

One of the greatest temptations we face is the thought that we will go to heaven simply because of the kind of life we have lived here on this earth. But the Law of our God is so clear. The Law speaks clearly and plainly to your heart and mine and tells us that because of the number of times we fail to follow our God’s will and turn our backs on him, we deserve to have him turn his back on us, and hand us over to Satan. Yet we read in God’s Word before us today the beautiful Gospel message that “in Christ God forgave you.” And again: “Christ loved us and gave himself up for us as a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God.” The Old Testament Children of Israel were reminded day after day of the sacrifice a holy and just God demanded for sins. As the smell of burning animal flesh filled the air, and gallon after gallon of blood was poured out on the altar, the people were constantly reminded of the price God demanded for sin. The great Gospel message is that the Lamb of God, Jesus Christ, offered himself as the sacrifice for the sins of all people. The Gospel proclaims to all of us the Good News that through the sacrifice Jesus made on our behalf, the almighty God in heaven will not give us the punishment our sins deserve, but rather he freely forgives all our sins.

What is our response to this great, forgiving love we have been shown by our Savior-God? In the portion of God’s Word we are encouraged to “forgive each other, just as in Christ God forgave you.” It was Jesus himself who taught us to pray: “Forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sins against us.” How easy is it for us to do what God encourages us to do in his Word today? How willing are we to speak forgiving words to someone who has sinned against the Lord in some way? But be careful not to misunderstand God’s Word at this point. Forgiving someone of their sin is not to be confused with tolerating their sinful lifestyle. We live in a day and age when proclaiming God’s Law, and showing others their sins, is not a popular thing to do. But we do well to remember that we are not out to win a popularity contest. The goal of St. Matthew’s Lutheran Church of Oconomowoc is not to be the most popular Church in the area by being the most politically correct. Rather, our goal is to speak and to share first with ourselves, and then with others, all of God’s Word – both his Law and Gospel.

After the Law of my God leads me to true sorrow and repentance for my sins, after the Gospel of my Lord assures me of my complete forgiveness through my Savior, Jesus Christ, now I am ready to let my light shine as I speak to others and share that same Word of Law and Gospel with them. The Law clearly teaches that we are all sinners who are guilty of sin upon sin every day and deserve only punishment and death for those sins. But, after God’s Law shows someone their sin, and leads them to repent of those sins, it is our privilege to share with that person the beautiful Gospel message: the Gospel message which says that Jesus Christ died on the cross, and shed his blood, for them and for each and every one of us; the Gospel message that tells us that through Jesus Christ alone all of our sins are forgiven and heaven is our own. Moved by this tremendous love our Savior-God has shown to us, let your light shine as you speak to others; as you share the Gospel with others, speaking forgiving words.

My final encouragement for all of us today is to go back to your homes this week, and open your Bibles to Ephesians. I would ask that you read the entire book for yourself, and especially concentrating on the verses we talked about today. As you reread this section from the end of chapter 4 and the beginning of chapter five, spend some time thinking about and praying about how you personally can **Let Your Light Shine as You Speak to Others!** With the blessing of our Savior-God, speak to others, avoiding angry words; speak to others, speaking forgiving words, just as in Christ, our gracious God in heaven forgives you. Amen.