

Sermon Title: Speaking Life – January 17, 2009 (Scripture is from ESV)

Scripture Reading: Proverbs 18:21

Introduction

Good afternoon church. My name is John-Michael Becker. I am one of the deacons of the church and I serve full time in the orphanage ministry.

Expectations of 2010

I am privileged to give this message so early in 2010. A lot of prophets and men and women of God have been hyping up this year a bit. Now usually when I hear words like, “God’s Spirit is going to be poured out like crazy!” or “Mighty blessings are coming!” I tend to be skeptical. I usually think to myself, “Don’t people say that every year?” If you know me, I’m not that easily excitable. In fact, I’m almost never excited. I’m phlegmatic. =)

But there is something about this year. I feel something special is coming. This is my fifth year now living in Korea. Before moving out here I felt God put on my heart a vision for my first five years here. But beyond the fifth year, I couldn’t see anything. It was a mystery to me. I sensed it would mark a new stage to my life. I sensed my fourth and fifth years would be years of preparation for whatever the next stage would be.

During my years here in Korea I’ve been attending this church. My first service here was January 1st, 2006. I was here when our original pastor, Pastor Dave, went to Kangnam to start up Jubilee. I was here when there were just 40 or 50 people here on Sundays and the church seemed lost. I joined the prayer team here in November 2006 and attended the Friday prayer meetings when it was only 10 or so people, basically the prayer team and the pastors and a couple extra members. And since then the prayer warriors of this church have been plowing and plowing and plowing the land, crying out for God’s Spirit to come and for revival to fill this church.

And now, year 2010, I feel all the build up of those first four years is about to reach its climax. Are we ready? Let’s be honest, we can never completely “be ready.” I don’t think anyone would have thought the disciples were ready for Pentecost. Just weeks earlier one of them had betrayed Jesus while the other 11 were arguing about who was the greatest. They still seemed just as dense as they were when Jesus first began discipling them. But they had God’s grace covering them. And they received the Holy Spirit. Three thousand new believers joined them in one day and they didn’t falter. By God’s Spirit and God’s grace they only continued to grow.

As a church I believe we are still waiting for that Pentecost. I honestly feel we’ve only experienced a small trickle of the flood He is going to pour out. There is so much more and we must hunger for it. We are like the disciples who gathered in the upper room, devoted to prayer and fellowship, and seeking and longing for the anointing of the Holy Spirit. As a church we are about to send ten members to do a church plant in Itaewon. There is a critical need in this hour for us to keep alert, to keep in prayer, and to continue to grow in love and fellowship with one another.

So with all this said, there is a word that I have desired to share with this church as we go into this year. I really believe it when I say that **this year is going to be the best year of our lives**. I’m telling you, watch out! Do you see how excited I am? I told you I’m

phlegmatic... if you hear my voice change tone then that means I'm really excited. I am excited!

Before I get into the message, let me say a prayer for us...

Pray Welcome the Holy Spirit. Ask for joy and peace.

Two Parts

This message has two parts. It's a message of good news, and it's a message of bad news. It's a message of encouragement, and it's a message of warning.

The good news is: **the very words you speak have great power to influence your life, the lives of those around you, and even nations.** Pretty cool, right? But on the other hand, the bad news is: the very words you speak have great power to influence your life, the lives of those around you, and even nations.

What was the Scripture reading for today? Please put it back up on the screen...

Proverbs 18:21 – Death and life are in the power of the tongue, and those who love it will eat its fruits.

Death and life.

Because I don't want to leave you all depressed at the close of this message, I'm going to start with the bad news before transitioning and ending with the good news. I'm going to start with the warnings before I share the encouragements. Are you all ready? If you are ready, repeat after me, "**Speak some life into me!**"

Danger of the Tongue for Yourself

Let's begin with the danger of the tongue for ourselves...

Have you ever heard someone say things like these: "I always get sick this time of year." "My body is so weak." "This always happens to me!"

Or even vows like: "I will never trust a man again." or "I will never get married."

What do you notice of such people? Usually their words end up true. The very things they speak over themselves become true in their lives. And if they keep speaking such words over themselves, usually their condition gets worse.

Please turn with me to Matthew chapter 12. We will read verses 36 and 37.

Matthew 12:36-37 – I tell you, on the day of judgment people will give account for every careless word they speak, for by your words you will be justified, and by your words you will be condemned.

Proverbs 6:2 – If you are snared in the words of your mouth, caught in the words of your mouth.

The words we speak over ourselves have GREAT power. God has given mankind authority over creation. He has set us above all the other animals. We are not meaningless beings who

will just live and die and be gone forever. We are God's creation, made in His image, whom demons attack and angels help defend. **If we think our words have no power, then we are seriously underestimating our standing before God and our responsibility here are on earth.**

As Christians, we know the Bible teaches very clearly about curses and blessings. When Jesus cursed the fig tree, it withered and died. When Isaac blessed Jacob, Jacob indeed became blessed. Neither the curse nor the blessing happened immediately, but they were indeed fulfilled in powerful ways. Sadly, many Christians leave such power to bless only the pastors or the "super anointed" of God. **They underestimate their ability to bless, so they rarely try to pray for others** and are surprised when there is an answer to their prayers. **Even worse, they underestimate their ability to curse**, and so gossip, slander, and even cursing aren't a big deal to them. Many Christians have no idea that the very blessings or curses they speak over themselves have power to truly alter their lives.

Israelites Words

After the Israelites left Egypt they followed Moses and God in the wilderness to the Promised Land. But after a report came from 12 spies about the dangers of the Promised Land, nearly all the people caused a riot. They cried out, "Wouldn't it be better if we had died here in the wilderness!?" and they expressed no faith in being able to enter the Promised Land. And how did God respond to them?

Numbers 14:28-29a – Say to them, 'As I live, declared the Lord, what you have said in my hearing I will do to you: your dead bodies shall fall in this wilderness.'

Wow. The Israelites, by their own words, cursed themselves. And indeed, all who spoke those curses over themselves died in the wilderness. This makes you think twice about the words you speak over yourself, doesn't it?

Thankfully, there is grace for us. The Israelites lived long before Jesus' death on the Cross. They died because of their sin. For us though, we have God's grace to be able to claim. If you have spoken words or vows in your life, **I want to encourage you to repent and renounce them.** Renouncing is forsaking, or completely separating oneself from something. An example of this would be, "Lord I repent of declaring that I'm not good enough to be used by you. I renounce the identity that I am not worthy. I declare that I am a son of God and sealed and anointed with Your Holy Spirit. I am worthy by Your grace and Your power at work within me. Amen!" If you need help with this, the prayer team and pastors would be glad to help you through in prayer.

Danger of the Tongue for Others

Sadly, the warning for our words doesn't end here. The words we speak don't just have power over ourselves, but over others as well. If you want evidence of this, you can visit my children's home. So many of the children have been told they are stupid or slow or not wanted. And how do these children feel? They feel stupid, slow, and not wanted.

People don't intuitively know the truth. We have to learn the truth. Let me say that again. People don't instinctively know the truth. We have to learn the truth. We have to be taught what is fact and what is fiction. Sadly, for many people, the "truths" they have been taught are actually lies. And these false truths plague them until someone comes consistently with the real truth and breaks through those lies.

Another example of this would be the caste system in India. In India, where you are born and what your lineage is determines what class you live in. For many people, from birth they are labeled as slaves or as being worth nothing. Some are told they are just objects, less than animals. Does this change as they grow older? Sadly, no. They live under these words until their death, unless someone comes with the Truth of God and reveals to them their true identity as creation of God.

In my experience serving in the healing and deliverance ministry, I have ministered to so many who have been shaped by the words of those around them. And for some of them, people did not even say anything to them, but Satan's condemning voice kept speaking the lies over and over to the point that they believed the lies as truth. Lies like, "I am unattractive. I am not accepted. I'm not good enough. I'm worthless. I'm a sinner. I'm dirty."

These words are poison, and if they aren't dealt with the poison soon begins to infect the person.

Please open your Bibles to James 3. We are going to read verses 5 – 6.

James 3:5-6 – So also the tongue is a small member, yet it boasts of great things. How great a forest is set ablaze by such a small fire! And the tongue is a fire, a world of unrighteousness. The tongue is set among our members, staining the whole body, setting on fire the entire course of life, and set on fire by hell.

Now skip down to verse 14 and 15 of the same chapter...

James 3:14-15 – But if you have bitter jealousy and selfish ambition in your hearts, do not boast and be false to the truth. This is not the wisdom that comes down from above, but is earthly, unspiritual, demonic.

These verses were written to Christians. This whole chapter is about the danger of the tongue and the power of our words. And **to Christians**, James writes that if we are not careful we can be carried into thinking and speaking words that are at first, earthly, then unspiritual, and then **even demonic**.

Examples of this? These prayers give me chills... "Lord, that leader in the church has so much pride. Humble him Lord. Humble him." That's not a blessing, that's a curse. Or how about this, "Judge him God. He has done wrong, bring justice God." Or even this, "God, this person is thinking about returning to America but I don't want him to. I pray you block his way and that you keep him here. Don't let him go, make him stay." That's domination and even manipulation. Or in other words, that's witchcraft, not prayer.

Derek Prince, a well known revivalist and teacher, shared that during a ministry trip in Europe he suddenly had severe pain to his lower abdomen. It was so much pain that he felt he might have to cancel his speaking engagements. He began praying and asking God for help. Immediately he had a vision of seeing two friends back in America. His two close friends had recently had a strong disagreement with Derek. In the vision he saw his two friends criticizing the decision Derek had made and that their negative words were causing the pain in his abdomen. Derek knew what he needed to do. He chose to forgive his friends who were speaking badly about him. Then he bound the work of the enemy at work against him as a result of their words and loosed himself from the pain. Within five minutes he was completely fine and the pain never returned. He was able to minister powerfully. When he

returned to America he met with the two friends and they were able to resolve their differences and they actually grew closer.

Your words have power. Words of criticism, of judgment, and even prayers out of our flesh and not out of our spirit all have power to influence.

You may not agree with everything done around you or with certain people in your life, but Matthew 7:1 clearly says, “Judge not, that you be not judged.” Romans 12:19 says, “**Beloved, never avenge yourselves, but leave it to (the wrath of) God.**” Rather than judging or speaking critically or even gossiping of others, we need to choose to bless them and speak grace over their lives. If they are indeed in wrong, we need to go to them face to face in love.

Imagine if on the Cross Jesus had said of those who were crucifying Him, “Father, judge them. Let there be justice for what they have done. They are an evil people.” Would He have been wrong to say such words? No, but there also wouldn’t be any grace for us. Rather, Jesus spoke, “**Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do**” (Luke 23:34).

Christ gave us the example of grace. Rather than speaking judgment and death over those around them, He chose to speak life.

Sweet Honeycomb

Speaking life. Finally, the transition from the bad news to the good news. Yes, the tongue has the power to bring death, but it also has the power to bring life.

Proverbs 16:24 – Gracious words are like a honeycomb, sweetness to the soul and health to the body.

Mmmh, that verse is so tasty. Let me read it again...

Proverbs 16:24 – Gracious words are like a honeycomb, sweetness to the soul and health to the body.

Please say to your neighbor, “I want some sweet honeycomb.”

I think with all the Scripture we have already studied, I’ve been able to show you that our words have great power. So let me share with you all some examples of the power of “speaking life.” I’ll start with the power of speaking life over yourself.

Happiest Day

One of my resolutions for 2009 was to grow in the joy of the Lord. I wanted to laugh more. I felt somewhat like the older brother of the prodigal son. I had been faithful in serving God and I had grown with Him a lot, but at times I felt like I was just doing my responsibilities and that there wasn’t much joy in my work. So I began asking God for greater joy.

Some time passed and I didn’t feel much change. I got a bit frustrated with the lack of progress and I expressed how I felt with God. And this is what I felt God speak into me, “Son, I want you to say each day, **‘Today is the happiest day of my life.’**”

I remember I paused in prayer and just stood there. “What!?” I thought it was the cheesiest thing I had ever heard. I told God, “God, I’m not going to lie and say that ‘Today is the

happiest day of my life.’ Today is not the happiest day of my life.” And then God asked me, “On what do you base your happiness? What brings you joy?”

I had to think about that. Having a good day with my kids, playing sports, being encouraged by friends, hugs, the Washington Redskins winning a football game... these things bring me joy. But I thought some more... all those things are conditional. If I rely on those things for my joy, I’m not going to be a happy person all the time. Especially with how poor the Redskins have been.

So I thought some more. And then I said to God with sincerity, “God, being in Your presence brings me the most joy. I am the most happy in Your presence.” And God gently whispered to me, “My presence is with you always.”

So I said, “Okay God, today really is the happiest day of my life, because you are with me. I will begin claiming this.” And so I did, as cheesy as I felt saying it, I kept claiming with each day, “Today is one of the happiest days of my life, because You are with me!” Little did I know it, but I was speaking life into myself every time I declared it. Life began to fill me. I began to see things like I hadn’t before. The sky looked bluer to me. The clouds and the sun became more beautiful to me. I began to find joy and appreciation in the littlest of things. I began to think more positively.

I remember driving with a friend last year who wasn’t in the best of moods. She was complaining about different things that I could see didn’t really even need her attention. As I was driving and listening, I noticed how beautiful things were around me. I said, “Wow, today is such a clear, beautiful day!” She responded negatively, “Yeah, you notice because it’s usually so polluted.” And then I said, “Wow, look at those buildings, the architecture is really cool!” And she responded, “Yeah, but the buildings are so dirty, they need to be cleaned.” “Look at the Han river today, the water is so blue.” And she said, “Yeah, but if you drink it you’ll probably die.” Suddenly she realized how she was acting and stopped complaining and was silent for a while. She too began to see how a lot of life is about perspective... that joy is a choice. Her mood soon began to lighten as well.

I think you all know this already, that when people speak complaints and critical words the air tends to get toxic and poisoned. **But when people speak grace, encouragement and gratefulness the air tends to get clean and healthy.** Our words have the ability to produce death, or to produce life.

Speaking Life to Others

Just as we have the ability to curse and hinder others through our negative words or manipulating prayers, we also have the ability bless and strengthen others through our positive words and gracious prayers.

A great example of this is in the book Song of Songs, also known as “The Book of Love.” If you have read this book, you will have noticed that the guy goes on and on about how beautiful his beloved is: “Your eyes... your lips... your cheeks... your neck...” and on and on and on. But he doesn’t just do this once in the short book, he goes on and on three different times! It wasn’t enough for him to speak life and love into her at the honeymoon, he keeps doing it throughout their relationship, even after a conflict and later when things seem simple and secure. He keeps speaking life. That is the way you love.

Deuteronomy 8:3b – Man does not live by bread alone, but man lives by every word that comes from the mouth of the Lord.

God's word gives us life. His words for us are loving, affirming, and gracious. When I hear someone has spoken a bad word over one of my kids at the children's home, I get so angry. I immediately tell the child that what the other person said is a lie and I affirm them and speak the truth into them.

This is God's heart for the broken. When the world speaks lies into them and Satan tries to discourage them, God is aching and longing to run to them and speak the truth and love into their lives. God is calling us as His body to be His hands and His feet. **We are called to speak His life and His word into others so that they can truly live.**

A great example of this is our friends Monica and Norberto, who recently had their first baby Sara. During the pregnancy Norberto was constantly speaking love to the baby. He would have Monica sit down and he would get down just in front of her stomach and sing praise songs and love songs over the baby. He kept speaking life over her as she was developing inside Monica. I knew that this baby was so loved and had so much life in her that she would probably come out the womb yawning peacefully. While that wasn't completely the case, the doctors there were still shocked at how quick and easy her delivery was. This little one is so secure and covered. There is no fear. She is secure and filled with life.

Just as Norberto has continued to speak life over her, God desires for us to continue to speak life over His people. While the world and Satan constantly try and point out the weaknesses and failures of those around us, God wants us to see their potential through His eyes. God wants us to love them as He loves them. He wants us to bless and encourage His people. He also wants us to speak life over ourselves.

God has a lot in store for 2010. We must be building ourselves up and building up those around us. **I want to encourage you church, speak life.** Ask God for more of His presence, more of His joy, and to take all complaining and negative thoughts away. Renounce any false words you've spoken over yourself and speak the promises of God over yourself.

Speak Life

Now, I'm not done yet, but I want you all to please go ahead and close your notebooks and Bibles and set them down. Ever since this message was put on my heart, I knew God didn't want me to just preach it, He wanted me to do it. So is it okay if, for just a moment, I speak some life over you?

God loves you all so much.

You are children of God. Sons and daughters of God. Made in His image and created for His glory.

Do you know your value? Do you know your worth in heaven?

Please close your eyes.

I want you to imagine the entrance to heaven. You are standing inside the entrance. All around you are multitudes of angels and of Christians who have gone up before you. There

are too many to count. You see trees and a river and beautiful creation all before you. And this whole multitude is around you.

Now reflect on this word...

Romans 8:19 – For the creation waits with eager longing for the revealing of the sons of God.

Creation waits with eager longing for... **you.**

They are watching for you. All creation, all the angels, the plants, the trees, the mountains, the sea, and all the creatures are longing for you. They cannot wait for you to come. They want to parade you. You are a child of the Most High. You are clothed in white. You are so valuable. You are so worthy. God says, “You are precious and honored in my sight and I love you (Isaiah 43:4).” God says, “You are fearfully and wonderfully made. Wonderful are you (Psalm 139:14).”

Every burden you felt, God was enduring with you. Every tear that you shed, He was shedding with you. He knows you inside and out. And He wants all your pain and all your burdens. He is saying, “Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest” (Matthew 11:28).

He doesn't care about your past, your sins, or your education. God says, “I have used fishermen, I have used shepherds, and I have used prostitutes. I have forgiven your sins and I remember them no more (Jeremiah 31:34). I created you with my own hands **and what I create is good.**” You are more than good enough. You were made by the hands of God.

God has plans to prosper you and not harm you; plans for a hope and a future. God is near you and He is mighty to save. He takes great delight in you and quiets you with His love. He rejoices over you with singing. He will wipe away every tear from your eye. He has loved you with an everlasting love. He draws you with loving kindness. (Jeremiah 29:11, Zephaniah 3:17, Revelation 21:4, Jeremiah 31:3).

Pray