



Message: ***The Meanest Member in Our Church*** | February 22, 2026 | Speaker: **Pastor Eddie Eddy**

TODAY'S SCRIPTURE: James 3:1-12 New Revised Standard Version (NRSV) **Taming the Tongue**

3 Not many of you should become teachers, my brothers and sisters, for you know that we who teach will be judged with greater strictness. **2** For all of us make many mistakes. Anyone who makes no mistakes in speaking is perfect, able to keep the whole body in check with a bridle. **3** If we put bits into the mouths of horses to make them obey us, we guide their whole bodies. **4** Or look at ships: though they are so large that it takes strong winds to drive them, yet they are guided by a very small rudder wherever the will of the pilot directs. **5** So also the tongue is a small member, yet it boasts of great exploits.

How great a forest is set ablaze by a small fire! **6** And the tongue is a fire. The tongue is placed among our members as a world of iniquity; it stains the whole body, sets on fire the cycle of nature, and is itself set on fire by hell. **7** For every species of beast and bird, of reptile and sea creature, can be tamed and has been tamed by the human species, **8** but no one can tame the tongue—a restless evil, full of deadly poison. **9** With it we bless the Lord and Father, and with it we curse those who are made in the likeness of God. **10** From the same mouth come blessing and cursing. My brothers and sisters, this ought not to be so. **11** Does a spring pour forth from the same opening both fresh and brackish water? **12** Can a fig tree, my brothers and sisters, yield olives, or a grapevine figs? No more can salt water yield fresh.

Leader: *This is the word of God for the people of God* **People: Thanks be to God**

THE MEANEST MEMBER IN OUR CHURCH

This morning I want to talk to us about The Meanest member in our Church. There are all kinds of members in any church. There are some members we talk about and say “OH AREN'T THEY NICE” ...and then there are others we talk about and say...“OH AREN'T THEY CUTE” ...and then there are those members in the church that when we speak of them, we say...“OH THEY just ARE SO SWEET.” I like to say that some of the members are so sweet that if you stand too close to them, you'll get a cavity.

But this morning... those members are not the ones that I want to shed some light upon. I want to talk about that other member...or members. We all know that there are probably a few that fall into **this** category.

You know who they are so don't try to put your head down now, I see some of you are already looking around the Sanctuary trying to identify just who is ...The Meanest member in our Church.

So...at this time, let's just go ahead and start the voting process. If you would please write down a name on your connection card.

I'm just kidding! Don't look around at one another – Don't start point fingers at the person next to you. Don't get nervous this morning and think about where you are going to transfer your membership. I can only imagine where your minds were running. Some of you are probably already thinking that if we were to cast ballots...how many votes would you get. Truth is...there would most likely be a couple ties!

PAUSE

If you are wondering who it is, I would like to assure you this morning, that this member...wins hand down, no tie. And not only in this congregation, but every congregation that exists today.

Let's revisit VS. 6 again - "and the tongue is a fire, a world of iniquity: the tongue... ***is placed among our members...***"

The tongue is the meanest member in our church. I want us to think this morning about the tongue...about our tongue. The meanest member of our church who resides in every mouth here today. I want us to think about ...and then own the fact that this passage is talking about you and me.

Your tongue...my tongue ...**it** is "The Meanest member in our Church"

PAUSE

James begins to tell us about this member...and early on in our text he provides a Disclaimer - "**no one** can tame the tongue." This meanest Member has:

- Brought Down Kingdoms
- Destroyed Careers
- Killed marriage after marriage
- Divided Family
- Caused Chaos in how many Local Churches
- and has even split many a church.

James...The writer of this book finds it amazing that we can tame all kinds of animals, but we have yet to subdue our own tongues. Just think about what mankind has been able to somewhat tame:

- We have Dancing Bears
- We have Seals that clap
- We have Talking Dolphins
- We have Charmed Snakes
- We have Dogs that do way more than roll over and play dead. They've been trained to detect bombs, monitor blood sugar, sniff out cancer, and comfort a sick person.
- We have even trained Killer Whales to perform on command
- We have elephants that paint
- We have Lions that are trained to open their mouths...and men who are dumb enough to put their heads in that mouth. I've done my share of dumb things...but even I have more sense than that.

All these creatures have been tamed and trained...yet the little bitty tongue in our mouth remains not only untamed...but appears to be untamable.

James introduces us to three factors in this text as it relates to our tongue. If we really pay attention and take to heart his Words of Wisdom, maybe...just maybe... next year... The Meanest member in our Church can win the Award for "The most repentant or the greatest Turn Around." There are a few things from James that I want to lift up this morning. So let's spend just a couple of hours exploring:

- The Influence of the Tongue

PAUSE

Back when I worked in the pie factory... each year at Christmas time we made a peppermint pie. It had a chocolate cake crust with a peppermint silk filling. One of the ingredients obviously was peppermint extract. Well...the extract we used came in a small brown glass bottle and had about 8 ounces of this highly concentrated peppermint oil in it. Right on the bottle it said, "handle with care". This little bottle...back in the early 90's...cost like \$3500 if I remember correctly. It was so powerful and expensive that they kept it under lock and key in the manager's office.

It only took like 2 drops to make a batch of this filling, and we only made it in December...so we only bought 2 bottles of this stuff in the 17 years I worked there. The reason we bought 2 bottles was because someone dropped the first bottle on the stairs at the south end of the factory.

When it broke...that little bottle contained enough potency that we had to evacuate the entire plant. That plant was about the size of three Walmart stores.

This little bottle that contained enough good flavor to serve thousands and thousands of people...while at the same time...had the strength to suffocate the 250+ people in the plant at that time. We had quite a few people end up in the hospital that night. It was a mess.

That's what James is saying about our tongues. The tongue, though it is very small, is very Powerful, and very influential, and therefore the Tongue should be "handled with care.:

The influence of the tongue can direct or destroy...it can delight as well as disappoint. The tongue is a very powerful being...and this text gives us the Sad Reality that no man can tame it!

- I have seen 5 Foot tall Mothers bring Their 6'5 sons to their knees.
- I have seen Fragile Grandfathers silence the whole Family Reunion...just so people would listen to what he had to say.
- I have seen small Toddlers speak their first words and even big biker grandpas...fall silent.

But...nothing commands more attention than the **Tongue** when it is out of control

Our tongues were never intended be destructive weapons used to hurt others...but we have a real problem as James states, "No man can tame the tongue." Just before he says this...he reminds us, "every species...has been tamed by the human race." We can control the animal kingdom, but we cannot control our tongues; what hope do we have? If the tongue cannot be controlled, are we doomed to failure and frustration? No human being can tame the tongue.

But...An I like big butts...There is One Who can tame our tongues, and Scripture distinctly tells us who He is - PROVERBS 16:1 "THE PREPARATIONS OF THE HEART IN MAN, AND THE ANSWER OF THE TONGUE, IS FROM THE LORD."

What is humanly impossible is no problem at all for God. The Holy Spirit not only can...but wants to tame our tongues

- You can't just stop Cussing on your own
- You can't just stop Gossiping on your own

- You can't just stop saying Hurtful Things on your own
- You can't just stop saying Mean things on your own

But the Holy Spirit can and longs to take control of our Tongue.

James illustrates this thought by giving us the example of a bit in a horse's mouth.

It has always amazed me, the only way to fully control these great creatures is by controlling their tongue. The Tongue is like a Bit in a Horse's Mouth. James calls to our attention...the only way to make this creature obey us is by placing a small bit in its mouth. With this tiny piece of metal, we can turn its whole body. Can you imagine by controlling this powerful beast's tongue...we harness all of its power and grace.

What is it that James is saying to us here? He wants us to understand this...just a small word, just a **bit** of a word — can sometimes control the destiny of a person. Sometimes that is all that it takes, just a small Word. The Holy Spirit works just like that Bit in the Horses mouth. If the Holy Spirit could just get a hold of our Tongue, He would be able to control and guide all aspects of our life.

- You are just fooling yourself if you think you can live Holy and can't control your Tongue
- You are just fooling yourself if you think you are a Blessing to the Kingdom and can't control your Tongue
- You are just fooling yourself if you think you are a respected leader in the Church and can't control your Tongue.
- I'm talking about "The Meanest member in our Church"

We find in PROVERBS 18:21 "DEATH AND LIFE ARE IN THE POWER OF THE TONGUE..."

Think of that kind of power...the tongue...like the rudder of a ship...can bring that ship, battered and tossed by the waves and winds, into a safe harbor. Or...the untamed tongue can direct the ship of life into the rocks and the reefs of disaster and destruction. James is saying, "Never underestimate the power of the tongue." Remember...It is so small, but so powerful.

Let's close with this last illustration...James says the tongue is like a SPARK IN DRY GRASS. Look at VS. 5 "So also the tongue is a small member, yet it boasts of great exploits. How great a forest is set ablaze by a small fire! ⁶And the tongue is a fire. The tongue is placed among our members as a world of iniquity; it stains the whole body, sets on fire the cycle of nature, and is itself set on fire by hell.

- Your tongue is like a Torch, It is Incendiary, and it only takes a small spark to start a raging fire. Look at the west coast.

Do you remember your History – how about the GREAT CHICAGO FIRE in 1871? We are told that a Mrs. O'Leary was milking her cow in a barn in Chicago. And, the cow kicked over Mrs. O'Leary lantern, and that lantern caught the hay on fire. Mrs. O'Leary was not able to put that small fire out. By the time that fire was finally controlled, 17,450 buildings in the city of Chicago were destroyed. One cow kicks over a single lantern, over 250 lives were lost and how many more lives were affected.

One can do more harm by his words...than good by his deeds! Just think about the great and terrible damage that has been done by the fire of words, rumors, gossip and sharp, cutting remarks...even when we didn't mean to hurt someone.

- Think about the Marriages that have been destroyed
- The Jobs that have been lost
- The Children who have been disturbed
- The Friendships that have been damaged
- The Reputations that have been ruined
- The Churches that have closed.

If we are ever to gain control of the tongue...we have to be able to restrain the words that we use, to hold back from speaking harshly while at the same time...we also have to be able to give direction...to speak for what is right and good. And the truth is...this is often easier said than done, because if we're honest with ourselves, we have all said things we shouldn't say:

- Times when we speak our minds and say just a bit too much
- Times when our anger gets the best of us and we spout off with our mouths
- Times when we know a juicy bit of info and we think we just have to share it.

Here is the answer for our tongues - When we let God sanctify our tongues and the Holy Spirit take control of the words we speak, your tongue and mine are divinely tamed. In our own human strength, we can't accomplish it...but the Holy Spirit has all the power we need to control this powerful muscle.

Allow the spirit to guide you . Think before you unleash the meanest member of the church. Here's an Acronym to help evaluate whether you are about to say something in a positive way. Ask the following questions: TRUTH

T - is it true?

H - is it helpful?

I - is it inspiring?

N - is it necessary?

K - is it kind?

- If what you are about to say does not pass this simple test, then don't say it.
- Think before you speak...otherwise be prepared to get a vote for being the meanest member in the church.

To God be the Glory, Amen.

Let us pray.

Gracious and Holy God,

We come before You at the close of this service deeply aware of the power You have placed within us—the power of our words. Today You have reminded us that the tongue, though small, can lift up or tear down... can bless or curse... can heal or can wound. Lord, we confess that too often our words have moved faster than our

hearts. Too often we have spoken without thinking, reacted without praying, and used the gift of speech in ways that did not honor You.

Holy God, Tame the meanest member in our lives. Take hold of our tongues the way a bit guides a mighty horse. Steer us, shape us, and sanctify us from the inside out. Let the words that leave our lips this week be words that speak life...words that encourage...words that restore...words that reflect Your grace.

And now, Father, we turn our hearts toward our offering.

We present these gifts to You...not out of obligation, not out of routine, but out of gratitude. Use what we return to You this morning to bless this church, to further Your mission along these Back Roads, to feed the hungry, to reach the lost, to strengthen families, and to share the hope of Jesus in every direction our ministry travels.

Bless the giver and the gift. Purify our motives, multiply our generosity, and guide Back Roads Church to be a place where both our words and our works testify to Your glory.

We ask all this in the name of Jesus—the One whose words bring life, the One whose truth sets us free, and the One who alone is worthy of our praise.

Amen.

Next Steps:

- I will ask God to help me tame my tongue
- I will read through the Lenten Reading List this Lenten season
- Sign me up for Growth Group: _____ (class code)