

Devotions – February 7-13, 2016

By Doris Kewley

Bethany Lutheran Church, Amasa, MI

Sunday, February 7, 2016

The women's Bible study group I belong to recently began a study on the tongue and the influence of the words we speak and how we speak them.

In the introduction to the study we read Proverbs 11:22; 12:5-8; 12:13-22; 22:6; 25:11; Numbers 22:24-31; Romans 5:6; Galatians 5:16-23; and, of course, James 3:2-6.

After our discussions of the verses we were told to share about a woman whose words made an impression upon us.

Mrs. Hill, my third grade teacher, immediately came to my mind. Older kids told stories about how mean she was and the horrid punishments she meted out. I was terrified of getting her and my name was on her list. I did not want to go in her room but had no choice. I was going to be in the mean teacher's room all year.

As soon as we were seated at our chosen desks, she welcomed us to her room and announced that if we were good all week she would read to us on Friday afternoon. If we were extra good she would give us Tootsie Roll suckers to suck on while she read. This was the mean teacher we heard about?

Mrs. Hill was strict and I liked that. I knew exactly where her boundaries were. I think others did too because she seldom had to discipline anyone.

We were "extra good" often enough to keep us trying but not so often that we expected the suckers. Years later I realized we were probably "extra good" when she received her pay and could buy Tootsie Roll suckers.

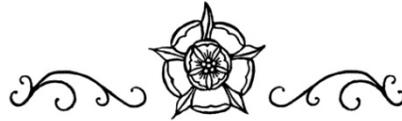
The influential words were spoken to my grandfather. She was working in her yard and as he was walking by she stopped him and told him I was a good student and behaved well in school. He was so proud when he told me what she said. I was doubly happy because I had pleased him.

The rest of the year and all my school years, though I wasn't the smartest student, I studied hard and got good grades because Mrs. Hill spoke kind words to my grandfather and through him to me. God used her to change a so-so student to better than average.

The nearest I came to repaying her was to read Psalms to her when she was in the county medical facility and could no longer read because of her failing eye sight. The words of the older kids brought fear to younger ones. Mrs. Hill's words brought kindness and hope to us. Yes, our

words can help or hurt, encourage or discourage others. James gives good advice – be careful how we use our tongues.

Let us pray: *Holy Spirit, help us to always use our tongues to encourage and acknowledge the best in others. Let our words be sincere and loving as Yours are to us. In Jesus's name we pray. Amen.*



Monday, February 8, 2016

Text: *Proverbs 12:18b*
“But the tongue of the wise promotes health.”

We now move ahead to when I am twelve and in the seventh grade. One day a Native American princess came to our school and talked to the junior high students about tuberculosis. That was the first time I heard about it. I knew about t.b. stamps and t.b. was a disease that could cause death. I didn't know t.b. was tuberculosis.

The princess ended her talk by telling us a bus with an x-ray unit would be coming to the school soon and we could get free x-rays taken.

About a month later the bus came and I wanted to find out what an x-ray was so when a woman came to the classroom door and invited anyone who wanted to get x-rayed to go down to the bus, I went.

Down in the entrance hall the school nurse was sitting at a table. She had me sit down and asked me four questions. My answer to each was “no”. She told me I didn't need an x-ray and to return to my room.

I started up the stairs. At the landing I looked down. The nurse was leaving and another woman was taking her place.

I went back down. She asked no questions, just gave me a postcard to address to myself. Then she told me to go to the room under the stairway, take off my blouse, put a gown on and go out to the bus.

In the bus was a machine with a black shiny surface. The man told me to stand in front of the surface, put my chin on top of it, my hands on my hips and my shoulders and chest against the screen. Then came instructions. “Take a deep breath, let it out. Take a deep breath, let it out. Take a deep breath, hold it, let it out. Okay, you may go.” That's an x-ray?

On November 30th the postcard came in the mail with the message I needed another x-ray. Since I never told my mother about the first, she was surprised and worried about a necessary second

one. Well, on December 3rd I entered Pinecrest Sanatorium and learned a bit more about x-rays and tuberculosis.

I was the youngest patient there at that time. The t.b. was discovered early so I didn't need treatments other than good food, fresh air and lots of rest. I did see my roommates when they came back from treatments and was glad I didn't need any.

Dr. Towey was a big man, a wise man, the authority in the sanatorium so when he told me, as he discharged me, "You will not smoke!" I believed him and I never did. His wisdom and words continue to be health to me. God has been so good in bringing the right people into my life at just the right time I must praise Him for His goodness and mercy.

Let us pray: *Dear Heavenly healing God, thank You for all the people You have led into healing ministries. Give them wisdom in treating the physically, mentally, emotionally and spiritually ill. Lead all of us to be wise in how we use our tongues to help bring healing to those in need. In Jesus' name we pray.* *Amen.*



Tuesday, February 9, 2016

Text: Ephesians 4:2

"Be completely humble and gentle and be patient, bearing with one another in love."

Gram, my mother-in-law, was an influence and an encourager without saying a word. Her actions spoke louder than words could have.

I was an inept housekeeper when my two older girls were babies and toddlers. Somehow I couldn't keep the house neat and clean. If the living room was straightened up the kitchen was a mess. If the kitchen was shiny clean the rest of the house was in shambles.

In the basement were piles of laundry to be washed and always clothes to be ironed. I just couldn't do it all.

Gram never indicated disapproval. She simply took care of the girls and visited with me while I finished some half done chore.

When she baby sat there was always a mess somewhere. When we got home the girls were bathed and sleeping and the house was transformed. What I hadn't been able to accomplish all day she did in less than four hours.

She never made a disparaging comment to me or about me to her daughters. Our conversations were about the children, what her daughters were doing, how her other granddaughter was progressing, news, plans for the future, any subject of interest to us. I was completely comfortable with her. My incompetence never seemed to bother her. That was such an

encouragement. I had value even if I couldn't manage housekeeping. Eventually I did, but she let me do it in my own time.

How I thank God for my memories of her for being humble, patient, kind and loving with me.

As my daughters grew they were given responsibilities and I expected them to be performed. As they moved on with their lives I tried to be like Gram and ignore whatever wasn't done and just enjoy being with them. I would offer to do some of the work. Sometimes the offer was accepted, sometimes it wasn't. Either way was okay and still is. They are more important than the condition of the house.

I thank God for teaching me an important lesson: love and friendship are more important than a clean house. Isn't that what Jesus taught Martha?

Let us pray: *Dear Lord, teach us when to keep our mouths shut and love people in spite of their weaknesses. Help us to remember we have weaknesses also and are loved anyhow. Help us to be humble, gentle, patient and loving with others as You are with us. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.*



Wednesday, February 10, 2016

Text: 2 Corinthians 13:11

"....agree with one another, live in peace, and the God of love and peace will be with you."

When my husband died I knew I was going back to Northern to earn a bachelor's degree and teaching certification. In a letter to my sister, I wrote about my plans to have our aunt and my mother-in-law each take the girls every other day and I would commute every day of the summer session.

She told her husband my plan and he told her to take the kids and come up for the summer and take care of the girls. They came and the eight of us lived together for most of the summer. She survived six cases of chicken pox and five of mumps. The sixth case of mumps occurred when they got home.

It was a hectic time but we got along well. Granted, I was away from 6:15 to 5:30 Monday through Friday except for July 4th. Even with one or two kids sick at a time my sister had supper when I got home. After supper we went to Runkle Lake so the well kids could splash or swim while the sick kids sat with us.

I've never heard of any serious trouble among the children. I believe God led us to live in peace through that stressful time. I praise Him for my sister's good humor through it all.

Let us pray: *Heavenly Father we believe it is joy to You when Your children live together in harmony. Guide us to live in peace and bring such joy to You and share it with each other so others will see it and say, "See how they love each other." We pray in Jesus' name. Amen.*



Thursday, February 11, 2016

Text: 1 Thessalonians 5:11

"Encourage one another and build each other up, just as in fact you are doing."

When my children and I moved to Harvey, before I could get into student housing, we began attending St. Mark's and were immediately adopted by the congregation.

People invited us for dinners after church, for Saturday activities and old fashioned visiting any day.

One woman knitted mittens for the girls the three winters we were there. Another gave me a winter coat. The pastor and his wife, with four children of their own, agreed to take my children in from Friday through Monday when I was in the college infirmary with the flu. Because I didn't have a typewriter, one woman typed all my class papers, double checking them so I wouldn't have points deducted for typing errors.

On graduation day some members celebrated the big day with a party for me. They met my father, stepmother and two aunts who came to the graduation ceremony.

My girls and I were built up and encouraged by a loving congregation for three unforgettable years. Some of you may be among those who were such a help to us. God bless you. Several have died and are being rewarded for carrying out Jesus' commission to love one another.

Let us pray: *Father, teach us to love as You love and be quick to show Your love to others by our words and actions. Lord, as You lift up Your countenance upon us, may our countenance be lifted up on those we meet today. May they see Your love and peace in us and may it flow through them. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen*



Friday, February 12, 2016

Text: Psalm 149:1

"Sing to the Lord a new song, and His praise in the assembly of saints."

Lily had requested that a Finnish hymn be sung at her funeral. Her granddaughter asked if I would sing a Finnish hymn. Encouraged by her faith in my ability I was pleased to fulfill Lily's wish. She was a pillar of Bethany all her life and was special to me. The hymn I sang was not a new song; it was an old favorite, "Siipeinssä Suojassa", "Blessed Assurance".

After the funeral I was surprised at the number of people who thanked me for singing. All of them, including her great-grandchildren, said they loved hearing the Finnish hymn.

There is something in us that resonates to the language of our ancestors even if we don't speak it. It is a cord that ties us to our heritage, nostalgia for a time and life we never knew but is somehow a part of our remembering. I thank Lily's granddaughter for making it possible to bring pleasure to Lily's family and friends.

Let us pray: Lord God, may we always be open to ministering to others in whatever ways You prepare for us. Teach us to hear You, to feel Your promptings, to see opportunities and respond appropriately to bring glory, honor and praise to You. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.



Saturday, February 13, 2016

Text: James 1:27

"Pure and undefiled religion before God and the Father is this: to visit orphans and widows in their trouble, and to keep oneself unspotted from the world."

After my second husband died my neighbors, friends, people from the Mission Bible Training Center and the Bethany congregation found ways to help me. A neighbor gave produce from their garden, women brought soup and meals when I was sick, men came and did jobs I couldn't and did more than I expected.

This is the fifth winter my neighbor and friend is plowing my yard because, "Isn't that our job -- to take care of widows?"

From the MBTC I've had people come to work on all sorts of projects. Four that show God's unquestionable care are:

1. I needed trees in the yard cut down. There was a professional lumber jack at the Mission. He and three helpers came and did the work. I now have a spruce cross in the yard because one of the guys asked how high a stump I wanted. Before I could answer he said, "TJ can make a cross for you."
2. When I wanted to have the exterior of the house stained, there was a professional painter at the Mission.

3. When I needed a carpenter, there was a professional at the Mission. He brought another fellow with him as his helper. While they were working I mentioned needing a plumber to do a big job.
4. Of course the helper was a plumber and he fixed the problem in a short time.

There have been many others who have encouraged me over the years. I praise and thank God for all of them, even those who did so unintentionally, because God can still “work all things together for good to those who love God and are called according to His purpose.” Romans 8:28

Let us pray: God, our Father, we thank You for all the ways You have encouraged us through people You have sent to us. We thank You for the times You have used us to knowingly or unknowingly encourage others. We ask, Holy Spirit, for Your guidance in using our tongues. May we use them to pronounce blessings on people and events. Lead us to care for orphans and widows and to keep us unspotted by the world. In Jesus’ name we pray. Amen.

