

Our text for meditation... as follows in Jesus' name:

[Jesus said,] "Either make the tree good and its fruit good, or make the tree bad and its fruit bad, for the tree is known by its fruit. You brood of vipers! How can you speak good, when you are evil? For out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks. The good person out of his good treasure brings forth good, and the evil person out of his evil treasure brings forth evil. 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."^(ESV)

*This is Your Word, heavenly Father; **sanctify us in the truth, Your Word is Truth.** Amen.* (John 17:17)

In Jesus' name. **Amen.**

Our text for meditation today gives us opportunity to consider what comes out of our mouths.

The words we speak are a window to what is in our hearts.

For, as Jesus says, out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks.

**The good person out of his good treasure brings forth good,
and the evil person out of his evil treasure brings forth evil.**

We see this play out in Jesus, don't we?

He is the one true GOOD Person.

He speaks only the truth and He speaks it in complete and perfect love for God and man.

He doesn't back down & slink away on account of the false accusations & teachings of His opponents.

He cannot allow their blasphemy to stand unchecked in the hearts and ears of those who hear
because the consequences are too great: **on the day of judgment people**

will give account for every careless [or worthless] word they speak,

for by your words you will be justified, and by your words you will be condemned.

These are pretty scary words, aren't they?

How often do careless or worthless words cross our lips?

Words that hurt people... spoken in anger, or leisure... the names or labels we flippantly call them,
the gossip or slander we spread...

Words spoken in envy... roused by our discontentment and their good fortune in God's distribution
of His gracious gifts...

Words that deceive... the careless little white lie, all the way to the whopper of a lie we tell
to try to avoid some greater consequence... and yet,

people will give account for every careless word... on the day of judgment.

What does this tell you about yourself, being that what Jesus says is true:

...the evil person out of his evil treasure brings forth evil.

For out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks?

To use an idiom, doesn't it tell you that "the apple doesn't fall far from the tree."

The lies that the devil told Eve in the garden,

the envious thoughts she had about wanting to be like God,

reasoning to herself, that it was able to make her wise...

and then speaking words of persuasion to her husband to eat of the forbidden fruit.

And what followed? The desire to avoid personal punishment,

prompting them both to try to pass the guilt on to someone else...

This is what we do, isn't it?

Who naturally desires to fess up to what wrong they have done...
especially if there is going to be eternal punishment waiting for you?

So Jesus is really correct when He calls His opponents, "**You brood of vipers!**

They were offspring of their spiritual father ... **that ancient serpent,
who is called the devil and Satan, the deceiver of the whole world...** Revelation 12:9
for he was a murderer from the beginning...

When he lies, he speaks out of his own character, for he is a liar and the father of lies, John 8:44

So what does that tell you when you speak lies,

...attempting self-preservation... or trumpeting for your own personal honor... or out of envy?
Whose child are you acting like when you say **careless** or worthless things?

Jesus' rhetorical question, then, hits hard: **How can you speak good, when you are evil?**

The obvious, expected answer is, "you can't."

So then, what are we to do?

Well, as Jesus said, **Either make the tree good and its fruit good,
or make the tree bad and its fruit bad, for the tree is known by its fruit.**

But this doesn't give anymore comfort because a tree can't make itself better, can it?

It can't grow against its nature.

So we can't just stop **speaking out of the abundance of our** [sinful] **hearts.**

Sure, we may be able to refrain from speaking overly much, as many wise men do,
but this does not get at the root of the problem.

It is against nature for something to become better all on its own.

We don't evolve naturally, gradually getting better and better on our own;

we only devolve, rot, getting worse and worse, and that very quickly when untended.

Just as we heard about Jesus' healing of the mute man in the appointed Gospel,

so you are to recognize that it is only with the work of the Lord that you can be made **good**.

...

In plant husbandry, where the farmer wants to improve his orchard,

he isn't able to go against nature, but he can use the nature of the plants to cultivate better crops.

One way to do this is called grafting:

Taking a branch of one plant and adding it to another of its kind so that it may receive the nutrients
from a different, better rootstock.

In his letter to the Romans^[1], St. Paul speaks in this imagery about wild and cultivated olive trees,

How the wild olives branches of the Gentiles have been grafted into the cultivated branches
of the holy Christian Church,

which itself is grafted on to the holy rootstock of our Lord Jesus Christ.

And so you have been grafted into Christ through your Baptism.

There, the Father took you from the rotten, evil, dead tree of sinful humanity
and gave you new spiritual life, binding you to His Son,

binding you to the wood of His cross, the new tree of life.
And from that tree, flows Jesus' blood to cleanse & purify & to **make good** what was **rotten/evil**.

In His Christian Church, He gives you good Words to hear and to speak, to confess...
that is, to say the same good and perfect thing as He does.

Instead of lies, He gives you His holy 10 Commandments.

Though unpleasant to hear initially, these serve you so that you may know your sin
and your need for a Savior.

They lead you to acknowledge that you are *by nature, sinful and unclean,*
and that you have sinned against Him in thought, WORD, and deed. ELH p. 61

The 2nd and 8th Commandments especially, speak about the words you use,
and would protect you against **carelessly**, *vainly*, using God's precious and holy *name*,
or, while bearing His name as His baptized children, *lie about, betray or slander your neighbor.*
His Commandments guide you in protecting your conscience and from offending your neighbor.

He gives you good Words to hear and to confess about Your Savior.

Instead of touting your own works, which are rotten and tainted with your natural evil,
you confess your Savior's works on your behalf and speak of His perfect and holy life and death.
You hear how His Words opened your ears to hear and receive His Words, "I forgive you,"
earned by the righteous fruit suspended on the cross as the full atonement for your sins.

Jesus said, **the tree is known by its fruit.**

The natural, good fruit of this news is for His Holy Spirit to loose your tongue
to confess, to speak the good and worthy praises of the Triune God of your salvation,
just as you do in reciting the Apostles, Nicene, and Athanasian Creeds.
just as we pray in our Lenten preface before receiving the Holy Communion,
"*...that even as Satan once overcame by a tree, likewise by a tree he was overcome,*
through the death of Jesus Christ, our Lord..." ELH p. 75

This is the Lord making a bad tree good and its fruit good.

This is His work of pruning back, or mortifying our sinful nature, The Meaning of Baptism
so that *our new man may daily come forth and arise, to live before God in righteousness and purity forever.*
He gives us His Word so that you *hear, read, mark, learn, and inwardly digest,*
that by the patience and comfort of His holy Word, we may embrace and ever hold fast
the blessed hope of everlasting life.

This means that by the sanctifying work of His Holy Spirit and His Word,
you don't need to fear the **day of judgment.**

As you continually hear Jesus and trust His work of salvation for you,
His good treasures will bring forth His good Words out of you.

And rather than the careless and rotten words that you have spoken, which are forgiven,
your heavenly Father will only hear the good words coming **out of the abundance of your heart**,
the perfect and holy words that justify you, that is, declare you righteous and holy forever.

In Jesus' name. **Amen.**

Soli Deo Gloria