

**Sermon Notes of
Pastor Craig Kuhlman's Sermon on September 12, 2021:**

**"Taming the Tongue – It Takes Heart
(James 3:1-18)"**

[In today's sermon, Pastor Craig Kuhlman, at church in the Y, shows us through these verses of James that our tongues are tamed as our hearts are being transformed by God.]

Introduction:

- An article caught Pastor Craig's attention this week and he's going to read it to us as a way to introduce today's message.
- The title of the article is: The Most Expensive Home in America Defaults on a 165 Million Dollar Debt and Heads for Sale.
- The home is located here in Southern California in Bel Air.

(CNBC) A Los Angeles megamansion once expected to list for \$500 million has gone into receivership after the owner defaulted on more than \$165 million in loans and debt, according to court filings.

The 105,000-square-foot Bel Air estate, known as "The One," was placed into receivership and is expected to be relisted at a lower price.

The receivership marks a stunning reversal for "The One" and its flashy developer, Nile Niami, who often touted the property as his "life mission."

The home stretches like an ultra-modern palace over eight acres on a hilltop overlooking LA. It has nine bedrooms, multiple kitchens, a nightclub, four-lane bowling alley, salon, gym, 50-seat theater, a running track and an underground garage for 50 cars, with two auto turntables.

Its seven water features include multiple pools, a Jacuzzi and a moat that surrounds the house. The master bedroom suite is 4,000 square feet. Every door in the house is electric, along with all the toilets. Niami had planned a "jellyfish room" and ice bar but both proved too costly.

"There's a lot of people out there with a lot of money — they want something no one else can have," Niami told CNBC in 2017. "This is it."

Over the past four years, Niami and his related LLC, Crestlloyd, have borrowed more than \$165 million to build and sell "The One," according to property documents.

"The One" also has over \$1 million in unpaid taxes and debts from concrete, air conditioning and tool companies.

- So, what does article have to do with taming the heart?

- Quite simply to build something and to envision something on such a grand scale takes heart.
- And to fail on such an epic scale also takes heart.
- Now, we're back to James today, who is not one of those comfortable writers.
- In fact, in the RCL, one of the commentators said, "James isn't typically a letter chosen for sermons."
- But, when it shows up on the RCL associated with a certain date, you have no choice.
- So, this is a message for each one of us.
- Pastor Craig then asked the members, "Why did I say – to tame the tongue, takes heart?"
- Answer: the heart is where it starts.
- How do we know that? Are there any scriptures that support this?

Luke 6:45 (NKJV), A good man out of the good treasure of his heart brings forth good; and an evil man out of the evil treasure of his heart brings forth evil. For out of the abundance of the heart his mouth speaks.

- So, this is not a tongue issue – this is a heart issue.

Matthew 15:10 (NASB), After Jesus called the crowd to Him, He said to them, "Hear and understand! 11) It is not what enters the mouth that defiles the person, but what comes out of the mouth, this defiles the person."

18) But the things that come out of the mouth come from the heart, and those things defile the person.

- The Greek word for "defile" is *koinoo* which means "common or ordinary or profane" as opposed to glorious or sacred.
- So, Jesus is telling us that the heart that motivates the tongue can actually defile us.
- Now, how many of us woke up this morning and said, "I wonder how many different ways I can defile myself today?"
- Now, none of us want to do that.
- This is a good message for us to take to heart because we don't want to be defiled, we don't want to be profane, but yet there's no stopping this.
- Pastor Craig wants to make it personal with every one of us – "By show of hands, who has ever said anything that they have regretted saying?"
- "So, everyone should have their hand up and now turn to the person next to you and acknowledge, we are all guilty of this thing."
- "Now, how many of you have had heart surgery? Has anyone had a heart transplant?"
- "Now, all of you should have had your hands raised, because our stony heart is being worked upon and is being transformed by God.
- "Does anyone know who the two top heart surgeons are? It's Dr. Holy Spirit and Doctor Jesus Christ."
- So, we need to understand that we are still left by the "way of our being" even though the "truth of our being" is being transformed into the "way of our being."

- Now, the heart we were born with still resides even though we are in the process of being transformed.
- Now, James is going to make some analogies which is relevant to each of us and also to the family because as a family we communicate with each other and exchange ideas and viewpoints, which are not always the same.
- We are not left with our own devices, because God has provided a way for us to become different, which is encouraging.
- As Pastor Craig mentioned last week, James didn't write this letter to an aberrant or snarky church, but was written to Jews who had fled Judea to various places after Stephen's martyrdom and became known as the diaspora.
- Interestingly, this letter is also written to our church today to remind us of what lies at the heart of our humanity and being aware of what our challenges are.
- Reality is our friend – we need not run from it but rather face it and acknowledge it.

James 3: (NASB), Do not become teachers in large numbers, my brothers, since you know that we who are teachers will incur a stricter judgment.

- So, what does this mean?
- If, you're going to speak for God, it means you are held to a level of higher responsibility.
- It means, if we're going to teach and preach the word of God, then we should be on our game.
- It doesn't mean we're going to first in line at the whipping post on that day in the future.

2) For we all stumble in many ways. If anyone does not stumble in what he says, he is a perfect man, able to rein in the whole body as well.

- James is emphasizing that not just a few of us stumble, but we ALL stumble in many ways.
- Now, even though this happens, God still loves us just as He ever could.
- God loves us just as much as He loves His Son Jesus despite our humanity, despite we stumble.
- So, we shouldn't kick ourselves for that unnecessarily nor we should live in a state of fear, shame, guilt or doubt.
- We need to just simply acknowledge reality of what our human heart can be and then to be cautious and to aware and to watch ourselves especially when we feel triggered.
- Now, we all have certain triggers and when they go off, we have an immediate knee jerk reaction that we can't control.
- So being aware of this and being cautious and more importantly asking and inviting God into our hearts to change and transform us is so important.
- The Holy Spirit doesn't force us to change, but we have to invite Him into our hearts to make our transformation so that day by day we're going from the truth of our being into the way of our being.
- James is also telling us that in the future, when we have a glorified body, we will no longer stumble and we will become a perfect man, just as Jesus was a perfect man.

- Now, even though we stumble today, in God's eyes we are that perfect man because we have been forgiven and made righteous through Jesus.
- Now, James is going to give us 6 similes as to what our tongue is like.
- They are the horses' bit, the ship's rudder, a fire, a dangerous animal, a fountain and living tree.

3) Now if we put the bits into the horses' mouths so that they will obey us, we direct their whole body as well. 4) Look at the ships too: though they are so large and are driven by strong winds, they are nevertheless directed by a very small rudder wherever the inclination of the pilot determines.

- Here James is making a contrast between something very small like a horses' bit and a ship's rudder with something much bigger.
- Now, our tongue is one of the smallest physical parts of our body, but it can cause huge impacts.

5) So also the tongue is a small part of the body, and yet it boasts of great things. See how great a forest is set aflame by such a small fire!

- Here in California and Oregon and other places, we know all about how a small fire can create unspeakable devastation.

6) And the tongue is a fire, the very world of unrighteousness; the tongue is set among our body's parts as that which defiles the whole body and sets on fire the course of our life and is set on fire by hell.

- James is asking us to take caution about what we say and be aware.

7) For every species of beasts and birds, of reptiles and creatures of the sea, is tamed and has been tamed by the human race. 8) But no one among mankind can tame the tongue;

- Here, James is saying that it's virtually impossible for us to tame our tongues.
- We have to rely upon the perfect one – Jesus and the Holy Spirit to transform our hearts so that when we are engaged with others, we reflect the heart of Jesus to them.
- We can't do this on our own – it's through a relationship with Jesus.

8b) it is a restless evil, full of deadly poison. 9) With it we bless our Lord and Father, and with it we curse people, who have been made in the likeness of God;

- James is saying that all of humanity was created in the likeness of God, therefore, be very cautious about how you communicate with others and how you talk.

10) from the same mouth come both blessing and cursing. My brothers and sisters, these things should not be this way.

- As a family, this shouldn't simply exist, but unfortunately it does exist at times.
- So, we have to acknowledge that we have to be on our knees in prayer and ask God to transform our heart so that our tongue speaks blessings, encouraging things, uplifting

things, edifying things that will build up the body, because there are so many things out there that tear us down.

- So, we here, as a family, come together to uplift and to edify and to love and to extend mercy and to show compassion and empathy on those who are struggling

11) Does a spring send out from the same opening both fresh and bitter water? 12) Can a fig tree, my brothers and sisters, bear olives, or a vine bear figs? Nor can salt water produce fresh. 13) Who among you is wise and understanding? Let him show by his good behavior his deeds in the gentleness of wisdom.

- So, it takes wisdom, it takes gentleness, it takes kindness, which is not always easy to do.
- When things set us off, we say some pretty nasty things.
- Pastor Craig gave an example of his reactions and what he said about a frustrating incident that he and another Y official experienced last week.

14) But if you have bitter jealousy and selfish ambition in your heart, do not be arrogant and so lie against the truth. 15) This wisdom is not that which comes down from above, but is earthly, natural, demonic.

- We need to realize that we don't want to be controlled by that kind of spirit and forces that are alien to us that James is talking about.
- But, it's so easy to react to these things unless we prepare ourselves by having that relationship with the Father, Son and Spirit through conversation, curiosity, and contemplation.

16) For where jealousy and selfish ambition exist, there is disorder and every evil thing.

- We need to ask ourselves, "Are there areas in my life that I'm jealous, are there areas in my life that I have selfish ambitions" and then to seek help from God to counteract them.

17) But the wisdom from above is first pure, then peace-loving, gentle, reasonable, full of mercy and good fruits, impartial, free of hypocrisy. 18) And the fruit of righteousness is sown in peace by those who make peace.

- So, this is our laundry list we can engage in to tame the tongue by taking it through the heart.
- How many of you heard of the "Survivor Tree"?
- Yesterday, we just commemorated another anniversary of 9-11.
- With the collapsing of the Twin Towers, there were 2977 deaths and 43,000 people are currently experiencing health issues because of what happened back in 2001.
- The first responders, digging through the rubble, came across what's called a cannery pear tree.
- It was burned, it's roots were twisted, it had leaves that were charred and it barely looked like it would continue to exist.
- And so the first responders took very good care to dig it out from the rubble and they transplanted it at a nursery.

- And for 10 years, they nurtured it and brought it back to life by putting it in rich soil, by watering it, and by feeding it whatever it needed.
- It came back to full life at the nursery and then they replanted it back at the site where the Twin Towers were there on ground zero.
- Now it stands as a monument and a testament that there was some life that came out of that tragedy.

- That tree sits there today as an example for us, because our hearts based on what happened in Genesis and the fall of mankind was like that survivor tree, twisted and burned, but Jesus and the Holy Spirit brought us back to life.
- He has planted us in new soil and given us the riches and the things to concentrate on that will allow us to participate in that transformation process, as the Holy Spirit changes our heart from that stony ground, from that twisted and burned out rubble to the kind of heart we need to reflect the love of our Creator.

- We are all Survivor Trees.
- And it's because we are Survivor Trees, we can tame the tongue.
- But that taming of the tongue comes from the heart.

Closing prayer: