FROM THE PASTOR: Watch Your Tongue

It is a familiar phrase, however perhaps what we are really saying is: "Watch your language." Words matter.

Truth is, we usually listen to language rather than watch it. But maybe that is just the point. In the Bible, when it comes to language, words are important. In fact, in the Hebrew language the word for *word* and the word for *thing* are the same: a word is a thing. So, to the Hebrew way of thinking, you almost can "Watch your language!"--See the things you say happen. "My word shall not return to me empty," the Lord said, "but it shall do what I sent it to do." The classic example of this in the Bible is the very first example in the Bible, Creation. "God said, 'Let there be light,' and there was light." It becomes a case of "Watch your language work!"

Pentecost is a good example of the fact that words accomplish something. Joel's prophecy was that when the Spirit was poured out, people would speak --young and old, men and women, boys and girls, even slaves--and things would happen.

And maybe at this point we should back up a moment and talk about language in general. What a blessing it is that we are able to communicate, that what we hear and what we utter mean something (and therefore can do something). Along with other scientists, anthropologists like to point out that the ability to speak is the major difference between us and the animals, and that it is major. "How is it that we hear?" the folks said on Pentecost, and you could stop the sentence right there for a moment. That was their first amazement. Language works!

The wonder we celebrate is not just that we can communicate with one another, but that God can communicate with us as well, and does; and when God does, something happens. Martin Luther's third article of the Creed teaches us that the way we become children of God and heirs of everlasting life is the way it happened at Pentecost: "The Holy Spirit has called me by the Gospel."

And, Jesus says to each of us, "You also will testify." "Watch your language!" In other words, "Watch your language do something, accomplish something." Because the Holy Spirit has testified to you about Jesus Christ, you now have something to say. We can tell others about Jesus. It sounds terribly basic, but it works--and it's the only thing that does. "Watch your language!" School kids can stand up for what they have been taught, even when the temptation is strong not to. People in the workplace can develop and maintain a reputation for the kinds of language they use (and don't use) and the kinds of actions they engage in (and don't)--what they tolerate and what they deplore. It happens by telling people so. "Watch your language!"

Pentecost teaches us, the language of the Holy Spirit has brought you to faith. And now it is your turn. Your language can accomplish something too (and will, whether you mean it to or not). It can mean the difference between joy and sorrow, between hope and despair, between action and apathy. "Watch your language!" "Watch your tongue!"

Easter, Pentecost Joy!! Share the good news!! *Pastor Karen*