

Speaking From The Heart

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[0:00] Okay, well, we'll look for a while tonight at the Book of James. Two chapters in the Book of James. We won't look at every verse in them. That would be a lot. But as I said, there's a lot said by James about speaking.

And so that's kind of going to be our theme, particularly speaking from the heart, who we are inside and what it is that motivates us.

Now, if you or somebody you know is ill, if you have a medical problem, you will go to a doctor and you will be diagnosed.

The doctor will tell you what are the things in your body that are wrong. And he or she will likely give you a prognosis, in other words, what this means for your life, what it looks like, maybe even, sadly, how long you've got.

You can get some very bad news, obviously. These chapters in James, in some ways, do the same thing about who we are. And what James does is he uses how we speak to diagnose our condition, what we're like as people.

[1:10] He, as I said, speaks quite a lot about the way that we speak, the words that we use, what comes out of us and how what comes out of us affects the people around about us.

And what that says about who we are gives us a diagnosis. Now, you'll notice that the diagnosis isn't particularly good, is it? It's not good news.

You may even have thought while we were reading this, well, that's pretty pessimistic. Examples, you turn to chapter 3, verse 2.

James gives the example, we all stumble in many ways. If anyone is never at fault in what he says, he's a perfect man able to keep his whole body in check. So, to James, what you say is pretty important.

And then look at this next verse, okay, in verse 8. No man, no woman, can tame the tongue. He's been using the example of how humans can harness the power of other animals. We can tame them.

[2:08] But we can't tame what we say. No man can tame the tongue. It is a restless evil full of deadly poison. Sounds depressing.

Sounds pretty negative, doesn't it? It's a pretty thorough statement about how what we say reflects who we are as people, and how he includes all of us really in this statement here and saying, well, it's pretty bad news.

Even for those of us who might think, I'm a nice person, I like to say nice things to people, to help people. Well, this is bad news. He says, no man, no woman, can tame the tongue.

Okay, so there's the challenge. There's the diagnosis right out there at the start. And this is a theme that kind of weaves in and out of James. I remember I was saying last week that James picks up certain themes and he keeps returning to them throughout the book.

You'll notice, let me just read a verse from chapter one. In chapter one, verse 26, if anyone considers himself religious and yet doesn't keep a tight rein on his tongue, he deceives himself and his religion is worthless.

[3:15] That's how important James says what you say is. And we return to it in the last chapter again. Let me just read one verse from chapter five. And this is more practical and it relates to how the Christians he's writing to speak to each other says in verse nine, don't grumble against each other, brothers, or you will be judged.

Again, serious, isn't it? Don't let your conversations between and amongst yourselves just be characterized by grumbling, negativity, complaining, arguing.

Okay, so there's a theme. Out of who we are inside comes what we speak and James says is bad news. Okay, now I want to look at some symptoms.

Again, if you're ill, there's certain things about the way your body reacts that tells you that you're ill. That tells you that something's not right here. That's usually how you know in the first place. Well, I need to go to the doctor because these things are happening to me and they're not good.

Well, what are the symptoms that James says that teach us that the way we speak isn't good? We've got four examples here as we get into chapter three and into chapter four.

[4 : 24] And again, we're just picking from the two different chapters here. Okay, so the first example, first symptom is in chapter three, verse nine. Check, verse nine with me there.

With the tongue, we praise our Lord and Father and with it we curse men who've been made in God's likeness. Okay, so he holds up an example of how we've got two ways of speaking in a kind of big way here.

These are to do with the way we speak towards God and the way we speak towards men. We can praise God and we can curse men. There's the first one.

Here's a second example. Second symptom, chapter four, verse two, verse one, sorry. And again, he's speaking in. Remember that he's speaking to Christians here.

He's not just throwing out ideas into the kind of atmosphere and thinking, oh, well, they might land somewhere and somebody might find them interesting. He's writing to people, so he's trying to be really specific to them.

[5 : 21] And look at what he says in chapter four, verse one. What causes fights and quarrels among you? Don't they come from your desires to battle within you? So one of the symptoms is just fighting.

Now, you might have had a fight today. You might have had a fight recently. Fighting, hopefully not physically, certainly verbally is something that we probably know quite well, isn't it?

Man, it's not nice. So there's another symptom. Third symptom, chapter four, verse 11. Look down at verse 11 with me. Brothers, do not slander one another.

And he kind of opens it up a wee bit more by going on in the verse. Anyone who speaks against his brother or judges him speaks against the law and judges it. So, slandering people sounds like, well, we would say, slagging them off, right?

Just having to go at somebody. But it kind of opens up as well as we go into the verse. The situation where somebody kind of puts themselves over somebody else. So you think, I have the right to speak down about this person, because I'm in a position of being above them.

[6 : 31] So there's another symptom of the way we can speak to people. Final one is in verse 13. And this really has to do with, and this is another theme that comes up quite often in James, this really has to do with boasting in ourselves as being our strength, rather than recognizing that God is our strength.

Okay? Let me read from verse 13. Now, listen to you who say, today or tomorrow we will go to this or that city, spend a year there, carry on business and make money.

Why you don't even know what tomorrow will bring. So people who basically go around with their lives saying, yeah, well, this is what I'm gonna do in my life, this is when I'm gonna do it, no problem. And I'm the person who's gonna decide I'm gonna do that, this is what I wanna do, and there's no reason why I shouldn't do it.

I will decide, I will decide the course of my life, and I have the strength to make that happen. So there are four symptoms.

Obviously that's not exhaustive. There are many ways we could probably think of tonight in terms of how we speak, the way we speak to other people. You might be feeling it tonight because you might have been spoken to.

[7 : 42] Some things somebody said to you this week or said about you or implied about you might be cutting deep, might be hurting you tonight. But what is the kind of underlying thing with each of these?

The underlying thing with each of these is, as I was saying last week, that we have, the way that we can use these, the way that we can speak these is because we have a view of ourselves as being centrally important rather than God.

So we say, well, I'm the fixed point in my life. If I have to make any decisions in my life, if I have to make any choices, it'll be according to just what I feel like, according to what my heart tells me I

want, rather than saying, rather than submitting ourselves to God and to His purposes for our life and to His strength and to His goodness and what He says about us.

For example, the first example that we looked at in verse 9 of chapter 3, with the tongue we praise our Lord and Father and with it we curse men. Now, let's just think about that for a little minute. Think about that idea of cursing men. Now, this isn't just like a kind of... Now, you may read that and think, well, this is just to do with voodoo cursing, weird stuff. I've got none to do with that. But when you speak towards somebody with bitterness, with anger, with hatred, when your view of somebody in your heart is that they have done something which you decide is out of order.

[9 : 08] Now, you may be justified, you may be kind of correct, but your attitude towards them is to curse them, is to snarl at them. Because look at how the verse goes on in verse 9 there.

With the tongue we praise our Lord and Father and with it we curse men who have been made in God's likeness. Now, let's just think about that for a minute. We have been shown mercy by God. If you're a Christian tonight, you've been shown mercy because of the love of Jesus Christ. And you are somebody who has made in God's image and yet went so far wrong in so many ways go away from the life in which God wants you to live.

In so many ways say to God, I want to go my way, not your way. And yet, he shows us mercy. And yet he speaks to us and says, my plan for you is to save you despite your sin and to give you peace because you know me.

And would we then curse others who have themselves been made in God's image? Who are just as needy of God's salvation and love as we are?

[10 : 16] Is there any better than them that we can kind of stand just to leave it above them and say, I'm a longer standing Christian or I'm a better model of how to live in society? This says, no, we've all been made in God's image.

We all equally need God's mercy. So who are you whom I to curse somebody else? Another example, we'll look at it just for a little minute more, a little bit more depth.

The third example we looked at from verse 11 there, brothers do not slander one another. Standing in judgment, you know that idea that we think we have the right to look down on another.

We got a classic example of this, sometimes the best examples are to look at the parables Jesus tells. If I just flick briefly to Luke chapter 18, Jesus tells a parable.

Jesus illustrates this with a story. We often find it easiest to think about the way people behave by kind of almost picturing what happens. So in Luke chapter 18 verse 11, we have the parable of the Pharisee and the tax collector.

[11 : 22] Two men both go to pray. One man can barely bring himself to look up to heaven. He's so conscious of all the sins in his heart that weigh him down.

He kneels and he just beats his breast before God because he's so conscious of his need. And yet we get this other example, with what the Pharisee says in verse 11, the Pharisee stood up and prayed about himself, God, I thank you that I am not like other men, robbers, evildoers, adulterers, or even like this tax collector.

We know that in Scottish popular culture with Holy Willie's prayer, if you read Robert Burns you may be familiar with the poem. The guy who thinks he's such a decent member of the church, everybody owes him and he's much better than everybody else.

And he prays that God should really recognize all the good things that he does and that he should really get all those other people who just aren't coming up to scratch. In many ways, muddle on the parable that Jesus has given us here.

We do really slander, look down on others around us if we're honest with ourselves about the state of our own hearts.

[12 : 34] And yet so often we can find ourselves doing that, can't we? The way we think about each other, the easiest thing for us sometimes is to think about ourselves in relation to other people.

I'm not doing so bad, because they really messed up that time. These passages from God's Word cut right through that and they teach us that we all have the same issue and when we look at ourselves, we're faced with the reality that the way we speak often shows up these symptoms that shows that something is not right.

Now, the question is, where does the root of this come from? Another thing you'll have in a medical situation, you have symptoms, you go to a doctor who'll give you a diagnosis and a prognosis, but what you really want to know is what's the root of the problem and can we do anything about it?

What's the cause of these symptoms? Well, James speaks quite a lot about this as well. What he says is, as the title of the sermon is, that it comes from the heart, not literally your beating heart. The Bible speaks about the heart as like the center of who you are. From the Old Testament through to the New Testament. What it means when it speaks about the heart and the way we're going to think about it tonight is, your heart, who you are, physically and spiritually and emotionally, what moves you, what it is about you that causes you, that motivates you, that moves you to make certain decisions.

[14:04] Now, what James says is our heart is the root of this. Chapter 3 verse 14.

Again, we're just going to look at three verses briefly here. So, chapter 3 verse 14. If you harbor bitter envy and selfish ambition in your hearts, do not boast about it or deny the truth.

You know, bitter envy and selfish ambition in your heart often leads to you speaking a certain way, doesn't it? So, what this is getting us into here is the issue of, where does this come from?

Well, don't harbor bitter envy and selfish ambition in the core of who you are. Chapter 4 verse 1.

Now, he's been talking about quarrels and fights.

It's like he was writing to St. Columbus tonight and he says, stop fighting. Hopefully there is no fighting amongst us. But even in a really subtle way, can there be quarrelling and fighting amongst us?

[15:05] Well, he says, stop fighting. But he doesn't just say, stop it. He takes them on from there and he says, what causes fights and quarrels? Don't they come from your desires, the battle within you?

It's not just random. You know, the way that you express yourself in bitterness, in antagonism and just that, when you lash out to somebody, it's not just random. Well, here's what he says.

It comes from your desires that battle within you. The tension goes on to say you want something, but you don't get it. You kill and cover it, but you can't have what you want.

Now, we don't have time to go into all this and apply it all. But you recognize that tension between sometimes the feeling of, even when you come up against somebody else, somebody else's opinion, somebody else's influence, that you maybe are jealous of, that you want.

James takes us deeper than just saying it's about surface things. It's not just about just saying stuff.

It just happens. Well, he asks us to consider what's going on inside. What is it that you want, and maybe that somebody else wants, that means that you react to them in this way?

[16:13] So, there's another example of the root being deep inside us. Final example in verse 3 of chapter 4. When you ask, you do not receive.

Now, this is speaking about when we go to God and we say, Lord, help me to have this thing. And if we go to the Lord and we say, help me to have this thing just because we want something in a selfish way, well, why would he answer us?

Why would he give us that? What it says in verse 3, you do not receive because you ask with wrong motives. It's about the inside. It's about your heart.

What you want, you want to have, what you want to do, that you may spend what you get on your pleasures. Big challenge to us tonight, isn't it?

Big challenge to every one of us, really, because I think it's true that every single one of us experiences at least conflict. Now, the easiest thing in the world when we have conflict is to say, well, I didn't cause that conflict.

[17:12] I mean, all I said was this. Really? Is it really the case that in every situation where we face conflict in our lives, it's never our fault? It's never because our hearts and the tension and the kind of grabbing nature that we can have is what is at fault?

And so we're faced tonight, as we started off, with quite a serious diagnosis of who we are as people. It's what puts many people off. It's uncomfortable.

You might want to reject that tonight and say, I don't accept that. I don't accept that about myself. And again, who is God to tell me this about myself in any case?

But I think it's something that people recognize in any case. There's so much tension in the world. There's so much fighting and scrabbling. I was thinking about a film which asks this question, where does this come from, this desire that we have inside of us?

To fight, even though we might be people who want peace. In theory, we might say, yeah, I'd love to live at peace. The classic three questions, how would you change the world? Oh, well, world peace, the first thing I'd like to have.

[18 : 24] Well, it's easy to say that, but what is it then about us that causes us at a national level or at an interpersonal level with the relationships that we have with each other to have so much tension or bitterness?

Even if it's not voiced, you know? Even if the way you feel or the way you want to speak to somebody, you don't say it, you think that's okay, but Jesus teaches us, doesn't he, that it's what's in our heart as well as what just comes out of our mouths or just what we do that is the root of the problem.

So this film I was watching is a film set in the Second World War. And the way the film works is it has sections of action, normal, where people just act out scenes.

And then it also has, it's a really reflective film, and it contrasts the beauty of the world with the destruction of war and all the hatred and all the killing and all the violence.

And what it does at times when it gives you these reflections is we have a voiceover of the main character just speaking because in his heart he's thinking, he's recognizing this tension, this bitterness, this tendency towards the fight, and he's thinking, what is going on here?

[19 : 38] Why are we doing this? And I looked up the dialogue from it yesterday. Just one line I want to read to you. This is his great question, and it really ties into what we're looking at tonight.

He says, this great evil, where is it coming from? How did it steal into the world? What seed, what's at the root of it? What root did it grow from?

Who's doing this? Anyone who recognizes that we're the ones that are doing it, we're the ones that have so many issues with our hearts and the way we speak to people, why are we doing it?

Well, James says, our hearts betray us. Our hearts lead us this way. He also speaks about the devil. You'll notice three times in the readings that we came through tonight, he mentions hell or the devil.

And so we're people who face the reality that the way that we speak betrays often the bitterness that's in our hearts. And yet, is that where we leave it?

[20 : 38] That we just have this fight on our hands and we just have to try better. In many ways, if we leave it there, if there's no other story, if there's no other message that comes from the Bible, but the message that says, look at your hearts, look at the way that you fight, then we don't have much more than despair, do we?

If all that we have is to be pointed out that we go wrong, in many ways it's something that we recognize anyway, you'll find well the battles that you have and the fights that you have, the fights that somebody's had with you.

What we have to recognize is that it's an alternative. Now, if you have a medical situation, it's not often the case that that can be completely alleviated, is it?

Maybe that you go to the doctor and you're diagnosed because you've recognized certain symptoms. But more often the case, even if we can deal with the illness that we have, it only delays because it's inevitable that at some point our bodies will fail and give up and we'll die.

And so what we're doing is postponing the inevitable. But what we have in the Bible, the good news for us, the good news of the Gospel, is that when we're faced with this diagnosis, when we're faced with the reality of what we're like, we have to be honest with ourselves, is that there is an alternative.

[21 : 56] There is an alternative. There's an alternative way of speaking because we see this. James says at a basic level, don't speak like that to each other, speak like this to each other.

But I want us to go a little bit deeper and look at, again, the person of Jesus. For our hope, we have to be honest with ourselves. For our hope and to see the way that this alternative works.

First of all, though, the alternative in the passages that we've read. What does it look like? Well, look at me, first of all, at James 3, verse 13.

Who is wise and understanding among you? Let me show it by his good life, by deeds done in the humility that comes from wisdom. And then you see the contrast in verse 14 there, but if you harbor bitter envy.

So there's the alternative. Not putting yourself up there on your bitter envy, but wisdom. Look at what it says. Now, remember, if you were here last week, you may not have been here, but we were looking at the way that we deal with when trials come to us.

[23 : 02] And what James is saying is that the wisdom that helps us to deal with trials is to know that we're not number one, and that we think life should or shouldn't go isn't the wisdom that we

need.

It's the wisdom that knows that God is our Lord, and that He knows the way that we should live, and He knows what we need. So we come back to this theme again. Who is wise and understanding among you?

Let him show it by his good life, by deeds done in the humility that comes from wisdom. The source of this is godly wisdom. And we'll come back to that again in just a minute.

But another verse to look at in terms of what the alternative looks at is James 3, verse 17. This just goes into a bit more detail, but the wisdom that comes from heaven is first of all pure, then peace-loving, considerate, submissive, full of mercy and good fruit, impartial and sincere.

There's the alternative for us. There's the alternative pointed out for us. Peace makers who so in peace raise a harvest of righteousness. So James is writing to these Christians.

[24 : 09] Now remember, these are people who are going through a lot of hard times, a lot of the times financially, they're scattered, they're not necessarily allowed to worship in the way that they want or feel comfortable. And he's encouraging them to be peacemakers who raise a harvest of righteousness.

So in other words, these are people who seek the good of others. They're not just people who seek the good of number one. They're not just people who look out for themselves. And they're people that see the long-term good.

They raise a harvest of righteousness. So they're not just dealing with life on a kind of immediate basis. So as soon as one thing happens, so that they don't just react in anger, because somebody's come up against them and spoiled what they want to do, they have a longer term view of life because they're seeking to be people who are peacemakers, who sow a harvest of righteousness.

I want us to look at an example of this, again, from the life of Jesus. Because, again, sometimes it helps us to think about a truth like this by reference to an example of how somebody lived. Because if we find that really hard, don't we?

That's the point. It can be easy to say, well, I'll be a peaceful person. I'll be considerate, or I'll be submissive.

[25 : 25] I'll be full of mercy. But it's another thing when you're faced with a situation where somebody comes into conflict with you. I want us to think about Jesus, particularly a time when he was on the cross.

And one line that he said, if you turn with me, we'll look just for a minute at Luke chapter 23. Luke chapter 23.

And this section is really around the time when Jesus is crucified. When, even though the rulers couldn't find anything that Jesus had done wrong, they took him and their guard, and they led him away to be killed.

Now, some of the examples of the way people spoke towards Jesus at this point, let's just get a sense of what it was like for Jesus going through this situation.

He's been through the garden of Gethsemane where you remember the story of how his heart was, he was in such turmoil, because this was such a hard thing for him to anticipate or to look forward to.

[26 : 36] And we see examples here, the way that people treat him. The rulers sneered at him. The soldiers mocked him. One of the criminals that says hurled insults at him.

Now, how do you respond when somebody even just comes in your way, let alone hurls an insult at you? I don't find that easy. Yet we have this situation.

Can you imagine what it's like for Jesus at this point? He's had people sneering at him, he's had people mocking him, and he's done nothing wrong. And what does he say?

What does he say on the cross? Two other men, both criminals, were led out with him. One hurls an insult at him. One recognizes his need, one recognizes that the direction of his life had been against God, rather than towards God, and he asks for forgiveness.

And Jesus says, Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing. Praying for the people around him at the foot of the cross, praying for the people around him who are being for his blood, and who want to kill him, and who've got no time for him, and who'd rather set a convicted criminal free than have anything to do with this person, Jesus.

[27 : 51] Father, forgive them. How can Jesus say those words? Please don't take that for granted. Please don't take for granted the way that Jesus speaks towards these people here, because he

speaks effectively this way towards us.

His will for us is that we're forgiven, that we're forgiven for all our sins. Well, if we're thinking about the way that what we say comes from our hearts, what can we say must be true about the heart if you can speak of the heart of Jesus at this point?

Who Jesus is, and what he wants for these people, is for them to experience forgiveness, is for them to experience a sense of the way that they're behaving, the whole direction of their hearts, the whole, you know, the way that they're viewing him, and all that they think of him is against him. And yet, you know, if ever anybody had the right to just hurl curses back on those people, was it not Jesus? And yet, what are these words?

Father, forgive them, because in Jesus, in who he is, is the desire that these people would come to see, yes, absolutely, come to see how wrong they are, and be convicted of their sin, like the thief was.

[29 : 14] But when the thief confesses, what does Jesus say? Today, you will be with me in paradise. Because I want to forgive you, because the words I want to speak to you are healing words.

I want you to recognize your sin, I want you to recognize the direction of your heart, because I want to heal you, because I want to change you. So we have to think about Jesus. You know, we have to think about the way that he spoke, the way that he lived, which was born out of what he wanted for people, which is born out of the way that he wanted to save them.

Again, when we were looking last week at the issue of how he deals with trials, Jesus doesn't think that undergoing suffering is kind of beneath him, does he? If ever anybody had the right to remain in heaven, it was Jesus, and yet he came to live amongst us, knowing that it would bring him through suffering for us.

And if anybody had the right not to have to put up with this kind of treatment, not to have to put up with this kind of slandering, it was Jesus, and yet he went through it for us, because his desire for us was to forgive us, was to speak words of peace to us and to do us good.

Now, that's our model, that's the alternative. That's why Jesus Christ is our model. That's why he's our savior, because these words of forgiveness are spoken to us tonight when we come to a point where we recognize the way in which our heart is so wrong, and he's also our model.

[30 : 47] And so we don't despair. We don't get to the point tonight where we just say, I keep getting into arguments, I can't control my temper, I can't control my friends, and the way they speak to me are the people at work who they keep putting me down.

They never recognize my worth. We know there's a longer term, view, because Jesus speaks into our situation and says, I forgive you, I want to speak words of peace to you, and I want you to do likewise.

Having been forgiven, having had the words of Jesus spoken into your life, he wants you to go and speak these words to others, to be peacemakers who look forward to sowing the harvest of righteousness.

So what do we do? Again, you may well have felt when we read through these passages, that's just pessimistic, that is. But what do we do, having looked at the example of Jesus and the alternative that we get?

Well, I think the first thing that we need to do is to be really honest, because again, the easiest thing in the world can just be to think, well, they're all wrong, right, and I'm right. I'm not the problem here, I'm the one who brings conflict or the problem into the situation.

[31 : 59] We have to ask God for help with this, because this requires, remember that the start of chapter 3 said that this was born out of godly wisdom, okay? It speaks about godly wisdom.

Now, you'll remember as well from James chapter 1, let me just read James chapter 1 verse 5, if any of you lacks wisdom, he should ask God. So we have to be honest and to recognize the state of our hearts, the way that we speak, the problems that we have, and then we have to say to God, I need you to help me, because often I just can't deal with this and I find it really hard.

Lord, give me wisdom. Give me wisdom, first of all, to be true about who I am, and then give me wisdom to be able to deal with this and to recognize how I should deal with this in the right way.

There's another thing that we should do, another thing that James speaks about, two more things, and then we're finished.

The first of which is in chapter 4 verse 7. Now, remember that the background to a lot of this is James is speaking against people who hold themselves up really high and who say, I'll say what other people are worth.

I'll say, I'll decide how I should speak to everybody around about me. And he says, no, you won't. Remember that all are made in the image of God. And look what he says in verse 7 of chapter 4, submit yourselves then to God.

[33 : 19] Humility is a word that crops up time and again, isn't it? You need humility and you need to submit yourself, resist the devil and he'll flee from you, come near to God and he will come near to you. And then he goes on to say, wash your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts.

He speaks about repenting. Turn away from the way that you live. Turn away from the anger and the bitterness. Turn away from thinking that it doesn't really matter how you speak to people. They should just have to deal with it. Just put it with it. This is just who I am. No, resist the devil and he will flee from you. So James does counsel us practically to repent.

But in order to do that, I have to. And I think, if we're honest, we have to keep the example of Jesus close to our hearts.

Every day, I will find it hard to speak peacefully to somebody and to think of the long-term good of seeking to speak peace to them, seeking to testify to Jesus' work so that a harvest of righteousness may be raised up if I don't remember what he has done for me and the words of peace that he has spoken.

[34 : 34] I don't deserve these words. And as I remember them, as I remember the way that despite all that was being thrown at him on the cross, he said, Father, forgive them.

I'm reminded of his grace. And hopefully, I'm helped to go out and to start a new day and to seek to speak peace to others.

So his words, Jesus' words and actions are for your good. The way that he wants to speak towards you is for your good. And that's what you, and that's what I remember, to help us when so much of life feels like a battle and so much of life feels like a conflict.

And it challenges us when we think that we are top of the pile and everybody else would better shape up or we'll not be happy with them. So we'll pray. I want to ask the Lord that he would help us to do this and help us to recognize his goodness to us.

Our Father, we are so thankful for two things. We're thankful for your honesty, the honesty of your word which exposes so often what we're like as people and it shows us the state of our hearts.

[35 : 49] Lord, please help us not to turn away from that tonight. We pray that your spirit would convict us of what we really like. But Lord, we thank you also. We praise you for the alternative.

We praise you that though we struggle so often, Jesus Christ came and spoke words of peace and offered forgiveness because he died to take the penalty for our sins.

Help us to trust in him and help us to look to him at all times as an example. So help us then to go out from here tonight to remember him, to be joyful, to be glad because of all that he's done for us and help us to want to speak towards others in a way that is fitting, in a way that characterizes those who have been forgiven so much.

We pray this in his name. Amen.