

“What Kingdom Rules Your Words?”

Luke 6:43–45

I want to start with an image. Imagine I have an apple tree in my backyard. Every year it produces dry, pulpy, brown, inedible apples. No matter how much I hope for good fruit, the tree just keeps giving me the same disappointment. So, I try to fix it. I take a ladder, branch cutters, a pneumatic nail gun, and three bushels of perfect Red Delicious apples. I carefully attach the apples all over the tree. From a distance, it looks magnificent. Beautiful. Like a horticultural miracle.

But here’s the problem: no matter how carefully I nail those apples onto the branches, they aren’t alive. They aren’t connected to the roots. They will rot. And the next year, what will that tree naturally produce? The same dry, pulpy, inedible apples it has always produced. Nothing has changed because the problem isn’t in the apples; the problem is in the tree.

Jesus uses this same picture in Luke 6:43–45. He says, “No good tree bears bad fruit, nor does a bad tree bear good fruit.” That’s as simple and as sharp as it gets. Jesus doesn’t say, “Try harder to look like a good tree.” He says, “Be one.”

He goes on: “Each tree is recognized by its own fruit. People do not pick figs from thornbushes, or grapes from briars. A good man brings good things out of the good stored up in his heart, and an evil man brings evil things out of the evil stored up in his heart. For the mouth speaks what the heart is full of.”

Jesus is making a simple yet profound point: word problems are heart problems. *If the apples are bad, the tree is bad. If the words are bad, the heart is the source.* The condition of our hearts is inseparable from what comes out of our mouths. There’s an organic consistency. *In the kingdom of God, the root and the fruit are always in harmony.* If the root is rotten, no amount of clever technique or surface fixes will produce good fruit.

This is a hard truth because most of us want to believe the problem is outside of us. We tell ourselves, “If only my kids would listen. If only my spouse understood me. If only my boss respected me.” But that’s dangerous

thinking. It's a heresy that lulls us into self-deception. *Jesus refuses to let us off that easily.* Your heart—not theirs—is the source of your words. What you say, how you respond, even the tone you use, is evidence of what's growing in your own soul.

Let me bring it closer to home. Picture a simple, everyday scene: it's late at night, and the children are supposed to be in bed. You go down the hallway, exhausted, maybe angry, and you burst into their room. The words fly: "Do you know what my day has been like? Why can't you just behave? I do so much for you, and this is how you act!"

Your children hear nothing that resembles love. They don't see grace. They see only the *kingdom of self* in action—the enforcement of your rules, your expectations, your will. And the fruit of that interaction? Fear, resentment, confusion. In Galatians 5:15, Paul warns: "If you bite and devour each other, watch out or you will be destroyed by one another."

Words carry power. They bear fruit. And when that fruit comes from a heart ruled by self—your own kingdom—it will damage people. It might not always be obvious, but it leaves a legacy of brokenness.

This is why Jesus points us back to the root. *He's not giving us speech therapy; he's giving us heart surgery.* What is growing in your heart? What kingdom rules there?

Because here's the reality: we all live under the sway of two kingdoms—the kingdom of self and the kingdom of God. The kingdom of self is antisocial. It's "I want, I want, I want." It's living inside a claustrophobic little world where my desires, my comforts, my needs, my agenda dominate. Sin does this to us. It makes us love ourselves more than anything else. It shrinks our life to the size of our wants and our control. And when we live there, our words reflect it. *We sound like the kingdom we belong to.*

Let me give you a practical example. I have this vision: I'm driving home after a long day. I've been dreaming about the roast my wife is preparing. I pull into the driveway, excited, only to find...a burnt roast. My first words are sharp. Frustration leaks out. I am serving the kingdom of self. My words

are punishing, demanding, unloving. They do nothing to build up, nothing to encourage, nothing to reflect God's kingdom. They only serve me and my preferences.

Now, imagine the same scenario with a heart ruled by the kingdom of God. I walk in, the roast is burnt, but I see my wife's care, her labor, her love for our family. I reach for her hand and say, "Don't apologize. You are a gift to me. I love you, and it's okay." The words are different because the heart is different. The fruit reflects the root. *A good man brings good things out of the good stored up in his heart.*

So, how do we cultivate that kingdom? How do we become people whose words are good, whose apples are healthy and alive? 1 John 4 gives us the answer:

"Beloved, let us love one another, for love is from God, and whoever loves has been born of God and knows God.... Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another."

Love is defined not by emotion, not by preference, not by what feels good or satisfies me. Love is defined by the cross. It is cruciform love: willing self-sacrifice for the redemptive good of another, without requiring reciprocation, without demanding that the person being loved deserves it. This is the love that took Christ to the cross for us. This is the love that, when it rules our hearts, produces words that are patient, kind, gracious, and healing.

And here's the good news: we don't have to manufacture this love on our own. God gives it. 2 Peter 1:3–4 says:

"His divine power has given us everything we need for life and godliness...so that through them you may participate in the divine nature, having escaped the corruption in the world caused by evil desires."

Everything we need to speak, to act, to love in God-honoring ways is already ours. God's forgiveness, empowerment, and ultimate deliverance give us the capacity to cultivate hearts that bear good fruit. *Jesus isn't asking you to staple good words onto a rotten heart. He's inviting you to be transformed from the roots up.*

So, let me ask you again: *What kingdom rules your words?* Are you still trying to control your family, your work, your circumstances according to your little kingdom of self? Or are your words flowing from a heart that has been captured by the big-sky, boundless, transforming love of God?

This is where change begins. Not with techniques. Not with rules. Not with clever communication tips. *Jesus says, "The mouth speaks what the heart is full of."* Change begins with a heart surrendered to Christ, filled with His love, and renewed by His grace. The tree must be healthy before the fruit can be good. The heart must be God's before the words can reflect His kingdom.

And here's the beautiful part: grace meets us where we are. We can confess our hearts, our selfish desires, our failures. We can claim God's forgiveness. We can rely on His Spirit to empower us. And day by day, moment by moment, our hearts are changed, and the fruit of our words begins to reflect that change.

So when you leave this place, think about the apples you've been producing. Think about the words you speak to your spouse, your children, your friends, your coworkers. *Ask yourself, "What does my fruit say about my root?"* And then, in humility and hope, turn your heart to the King of Kings. Let His love rule. Let His Spirit guide. Let the tree be transformed from the roots up.

Because friends, when the heart is changed, the mouth will follow. The fruit will be good. And the harvest will bring life, not rot. Let's pray together.

Three takeaways for your life this week:

1. **Check the root.** What's in your heart will come out in your words. Examine your motivations before you speak.
2. **Abide in God's love.** Let the cruciform, self-sacrificial love of Jesus transform your heart so your words bear good fruit.
3. **Trust God's grace.** You have everything you need to speak life, love, and encouragement—because the Spirit of God lives in you.

Friends, when the heart is changed, the mouth will follow. The fruit will be good. And the harvest will bring life, not rot. Let the kingdom of God rule your heart, and let your words reflect the boundless, transforming love of Christ.