Sermon: **No one has ever been able to tame the tongue** (James 3.8)

The history of humanity has been about taming creation – Trees chopped for firewood and for clearing, animals tamed, plants sown, pesticides & fertilisers to make the land more productive, macrocarpa hedges to provide cover from strong winds, dams to conserve water in droughts, levees and channels to reduce flooding, jetties and harbour walls to make sea travel easier, technology to create silicon chips, and so on. But humanity fails to tame itself, which is why the planet is ‘fighting back’ – climate change. We cannot tame the fighting impulse, family violence, the suspicion of others and their motives, prejudice of all kinds, and in particular, the tongue. TEXT.

*Sticks and stones may break my bones, but words will never hurt me.* We all know how untrue that saying is. We all know the pain of giving or receiving hurtful criticism. Words once said cannot be taken back, even if instantly regretted - the damage has been done. TEXT.

What a contrast with God. Never do God’s words come with *hurtful* criticism; any criticism is justified, well-meant & needed. In pain God speaks comfort, in doubt God speaks hope and in fear God speaks peace.

Genesis tells the story of creation, which began with God speaking. God’s words have a power to make happen what is said. It reminds me that if God says he will do something, it will be done. Like Abraham and Sarah who had given up hope of a child – God speaks his promise.

The start of John’s Gospel: **In the beginning was the Word; the Word was with God; the Word was God.** That Word became flesh in Jesus. Jesus is God’s Word, so looking at him, listening to him we see & hear God.

Think of Jesus’ good words – go and sin no more, love your enemies, I am the resurrection and the life.

TEXT – with the exception of Jesus alone.

We all know that words have the power to ruin a relationship or a church, probably more so than actions; sadly many of us have known that damaging power of words in our own relationship or church life. TEXT.

We will never ‘cure’ the tongue, but we can learn some restraint, and strength to exercise it. We will make mistakes, but God will forgive our words. That is why we turn for help to the beautiful, wonderful, powerful name of God.