

THE BARKER AND THE TALKER

I had my dog Daisy tied up on her leash in front of our house Friday morning while I was doing some chores outside. All of a sudden, I heard some barking and some talking out front. The only two that were out front were Daisy and the person who delivers our mail. It is not hard to figure out who was doing the barking and who was doing the talking. If Daisy was able to talk, I might be able to make some money off that reality. Personally, I am glad Daisy cannot talk because I would then have three people in my house complaining about my snoring.

When I heard the barking and the talking, I came out from the side of the house to check on things. It was wonderful to see this mail delivery person carrying on a conversation with Daisy while she was barking loudly. He put his own interpretations on what Daisy was conveying with each bark. It was quite refreshing and entertaining to see. Usually, I have to apologize for Daisy's behaviour whenever she barks excessively at the person delivering the mail. No apologies were needed this time. In fact, I noticed that this man's conversation had an interesting affect on Daisy. Usually, she keeps barking at the person delivering the mail until they are far enough down our street that she cannot see him or her. Because he carried on a conversation with her in a pleasant tone, Daisy stopped barking the minute he crossed our property and went to the next house. As soon as I watched this all transpire, I knew I had my next midweek message idea to share with you.

As I have shared with you previously, one of the things I have noticed more and more during the last two years is how people are barking at others rather than talking. I cannot count the number of times I have been in grocery stores hearing complete strangers getting into confrontations with one another, barking words of profanity and anger at one another. I also see it a lot more in parking lots and on the roads when a driver does something that the other person does not like or appreciate. I think a lot more of this behaviour and speech is going on in people's homes, workplaces, at kid's sporting events and so on.

The pandemic has resulted in many people becoming less patient with others and responding in a manner like my dog Daisy does with the person delivering the mail: barking in an aggressive nature. Have the frustrations and effects of these past two years made you become more of a barker than a talker? Do you find yourself losing your patience quicker with others in certain situations? Do you find yourself saying things or using words that come across as barking and angry toward others? If you have been noticing this about yourself perhaps you can find help to change this behaviour from two sources.

First, we need to consider how God views us when we bark at others rather than talk in kindness. God considers barking to be foolish on our part. When we truly think about it, how wise is it for us to bark words of anger and unkindness toward others. This kind of behaviour on our part just intensifies the situation and makes it very volatile and hurtful. God encourages us to seek His wisdom from above to avoid making this foolish mistake so that we can talk in a gentler, kinder manner instead. This advice is found in James 3:17-18:

But the wisdom from above is first of all pure. It is also peace loving, gentle at times, and willing to yield to others. It is full of mercy and good deeds. It shows no favoritism and is always sincere. And those who are peacemakers will plant seeds of peace and reap a harvest of righteousness.

This passage from James is a reminder to us that a person's true wisdom is measured by their character that is revealed by what they say and how they act or behave. Instead of barking and making a situation worse, God encourages us to seek His wisdom and talk with words that sow peace, love, and gentleness instead. This will be a much wiser reaction on our part that may not only plant seeds of peace into the situation but result in blessings. Whether we receive a blessing from the other person by talking rather than barking at them we will not know for sure until we try. What we do know for sure is God will bless us for doing so. We find this guarantee and promise in the Beatitudes:

God blesses those who work for peace, for they will be called children of God. (Matthew 5:9)

May God's perspective of the foolishness of barking and the blessings that come from talking be the first source of inspiration for us to make this change. May the second source for change come from what happened last Friday between Daisy and the person delivering the mail. By talking while Daisy was barking, he turned what could have been an unpleasant situation for him into something more pleasurable. He was smiling and laughing as he added his words of interpretation to each one of Daisy's barks. I am sure he runs into this situation quite often during the course of a day. Instead of becoming annoyed or irritated by these realities he has learned to embrace them and turn them into a source of pleasure. By following in his footsteps, imagine some of the situations we will turn into a source of joy, all because we chose to talk rather than bark back in return.

There was barking and talking going on in my front yard on Friday morning. I am glad that this person did not bark back at Daisy. If he did, I wonder whose bark would have been worse than their bite?

Keep safe, God bless, and no barking please.

Pastor Dean