



*So also the tongue is a small member, yet it boasts of great exploits. How great a forest is set ablaze by a small fire!*

**James 3 : 5**

Social media is a great thing. The ability to communicate and utilise the various media available to us has been absolutely vital over the last few months. I have no doubt that through the modern media lives and people's well-being, have been massively protected during an unprecedented time of crisis. I am so grateful for the fact that we have continued to enjoy worship and study and prayer and conversation with friends and family and community through communications media that were possible or available 100 years ago. Modern communication tools are a wonderful thing.

Unfortunately, as human, beings we have a tremendous ability to misuse as well as to reap the benefits of most things. The lack of personal filters that some show when writing on social media can be deeply wounding or threatening. Things haven't changed much in the 2000 years or so since James wrote the words of his letter in the Bible – it is a letter which really bears reading regularly.

We are fortunate to live in a world where freedom of speech is deemed to be a vital right, yet that freedom also extends to those who use it to abuse and vilify and incite hatred and violence.

Winston Churchill once wrote :

***"Some people's idea of free speech is that they are free to say what they like, but if anyone says anything back, that is an outrage."***

As we move from the depths of "lockdown" and into a new world of social distancing and shielding, the use of electronic media is likely to be ever more important and active. May we use it to benefit each other and avoid the pitfalls of thoughtless and hurtful words.

As we go forward, questioning what has happened, and considering how to become the new community and society, let us remember the exhortations of James and the Bible – that the words of the tongue reflect the person inside. Let us really think about what we say – and the way we say it.

With thoughts and prayers

***Clive Sedgewick***