

Stick out your tongue

The tongue is one of the strongest muscles and smallest.

As we heard in God's Word,

- It can be a means of great and eternal good.
- It is also a deadly weapon.

Like any weapon – **its use for good or for evil depends on the heart and attitude of the one using it.**

So why does God's Word have so much warning about the tongue?

We need warnings because when we let our tongues have free rein –be unfiltered-- our self-centered nature takes control.

--Neuroscience shows we have three brains

- basic reptilian,
- mammalian – emotions;
- human – rational thought

Reptilian brain – fight or flight – instinctive

- we speak to elevate or preserve ourselves in the face of insult,
 - the threat of superior ability,
 - or threat to our status

But the reptile does not save us from destruction in the long run.

For there is always a bigger and stronger reptile to come along.

Our natural instinct to look out only for ourselves gets us only as far as the grave.

If we are to live with greater purpose than survival and self-satisfaction, then our hearts and tongues need a bit and bridle

– a governor other than our own human nature.

We need the love of God to rule our hearts minds tongues.

This is why we pray “create in me a clean heart and renew a right spirit within me.” Psalm 51

Only when we consciously, intentionally,

**think and feel with the heart of our loving and gracious God
can we allow our tongues to express ourselves.**

For when we have put on the mind of Christ,

we cannot insult others, regard them as less valuable,

or speak ill of them.

When we have put on Christ, we can endure rejection and persecution from others as the cross we bear without complaint or revenge.

Guard the door of my lips, says Psalm 4, that my tongue might declare your praise.

When we wake each morning and put on our baptismal identity,

we no longer use our tongues to serve ourselves,
but to serve God with our praise
and to bless others.

It is here – in worship – that our tongues learn how to serve God.

The Holy Spirit gathers us into the holy conversation with God as confessed sinners.

Jesus invites us to share in the saving grace of his cross as he offers forgiveness.

Therefore, in worship, the first thing we we do is to use our tongues to praise and glorify God.

O for a thousand tongues to sing my great Redeemer's praise...

We sing praise in hymns and also in the liturgy.

So what is Liturgy?

Liturgy – another foreign word -- Greek meaning a public service, a formal ceremony

In our civil world, liturgies include inaugurations, inductions, and award ceremonies.

In the church, liturgy is the experience of God's salvation that we call worship

–God's service to us of grace and mercy and

Our service to God of praise and thanksgiving.

Like any formal ceremony, there is a structure, an order, and rules for liturgical worship.

Lutherans, Episcopalians, Roman Catholics and the Eastern Orthodox all worship with fixed order and words that connect us to Christians of every time and place.

The words we use are God's Words – from the Bible – and the order we use them in goes back to ancient times.

As we know from Acts 2, the earliest Christian worship began in the Jewish synagogue and then continued with sharing the Lord's Supper afterward.

So, to begin our liturgical worship with singing, Psalms, other scripture readings and prayers has its roots in the Jewish tradition.

When that tradition began to reflect the experience of Jesus as the promised Messiah,

- some of the Psalms were converted to the songs of the angels
–
- The Gloria in Excelsis – or Glory to God in the highest that the angels sang to the shepherds to announce Jesus' birth.
- Or "Worthy is Christ the Lamb who was slain" sung by the heavenly hosts in the Revelation of Jesus to John.

- Also, we sing with the cherubim and seraphim of Isaiah 6 and Revelation 4 “Holy, Holy, Holy, is the Lord God of hosts” – the Sanctus, Latin for Holy.

So, when we follow the historic liturgy of the church,
we are literally singing the Bible,
singing God's Word,
singing with the angels.

We are not making it up for ourselves– it is truly given to us by God.

There is a place for our own words to be expressed in worship.

The Holy Spirit assists our tongues to praise and glorify God in hymns,

- so we sing Psalms,
- hymns to open and close our worship, and during Communion.
- Hymns may be scriptural, but not always.
- Often they are prayers, the yearnings of our hearts and the hopes we share.

And we use our own words in prayers we offer to God.

But whenever our tongues are employed to glorify God,

the words we choose reflect the holy conversation God has with us.

The 2nd Commandment says that we are not to take the name of the Lord our God in vain.

Our catechism reminds us that we are to fear and love God
so that we do not use our tongues to speak the name of God
for cursing, swearing, practicing magic, lying, or deceiving
but rather we are to use our tongue to speak God's name in
prayer, praise, and thanksgiving.

It is the glory we give to God in our Sunday worship that helps us remember how to speak of God every day of the week in every circumstance.

So a quick recap:

We prepare for worship by acknowledging who we are as sinners before God –

- equally precious to God as beloved creatures,
- equally in need of forgiveness and grace for our eternal life.

We praise and glorify God in song, joining the heavenly hosts.

We hear God's speak to us personally in Scripture and preaching.

We act on that Word in thanksgiving and praise of God and love toward others, including prayer.

We accept our Lord's forgiveness and invitation to come to the table of his death and resurrection,

to eat and drink His Body and Blood and so share in his life beyond the grave (John 6).

And finally, Jesus sends us out as **renewed people to be his blessing in the world.**

Our tongues are the strongest muscles we can use to praise and thank him for our lives each and every day. Amen

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vAVJHVyUv-E>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WC8vQRpDYzs>

ESPECIALLY FOR CHILDREN:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=92YU4wCE5EM>