

## **Jesus has Touched Your Lips**

Isaiah 6:1-8

The Fifth Sunday after the Epiphany, February 7, 2010

Immanuel Lutheran Church, Broadlands

We use our mouths for a variety of purposes. We communicate with them. Even evolutionists acknowledge that our mouths are designed for speaking more than any other purpose. We breathe with them. We eat with them. We kiss with them. We use our lips for these same purposes. Our lips are unclean. We are a people of unclean lips.

We use our lips to curse our neighbor. Sometimes they are outright curses. We curse them in the heat of anger. We curse them because they took something from us. We curse them because they surprised us somehow. We curse them because they used us. We curse them because they stole from us. We curse them before God. God damn them! God damn him. God damn her. These curses come right across our lips.

Then we have the nerve to come into church and with those same lips sing God's praises. We acclaim Him. We tell Him how wonderful He is. We sing about all of the things that He has done for us. We sing about His glory. We sing about His mercy. We sing about His great grace.

We use His Name to do those things. We use His Name to tell Him how wonderful He is. We use His Name to tell Him how great He is. We use His Name to recount all of the things that He has done for us. We use His Name to recount His mercy. We use His Name to tell of His grace.

We use our lips to pray. We pray in His Name. We pray to the One who made us. We pray to the One who made us in His image. We pray to the One who made us in His image fully expecting that He will give us everything that we ask for because we deserve it.

We pray to the One who made us, using His Name. We curse our neighbor who is made in His image, using His Name. We are a people of unclean lips.

We use our lips to curse objects. This is just what God wants. Is the car that is stuck in the snow bank really so important as to use the Almighty, all Wonderful, all Powerful's Name to curse it? I mean really. Is the car really that important? God must think to Himself, "Oh great, here we go again. He expects Me to do something about His Toyota, which is odd because the thing that He is asking Me to do to the Toyota isn't really what he wants me to do to the Toyota."

I find myself cursing all kinds of objects. I curse the floor. I curse the vacuum cleaner. I curse the computer. I curse the website that won't load fast enough and when it does load it doesn't contain the simple information that I think it should contain. I curse the garage. I curse the shovel. I curse a lot of things. I curse situations that are embarrassing or that don't go my way. I curse things about which I am upset.

Then I take those cursing lips into church and sing God's praises with them. I have the nerve to use the same Name with which I curse my vehicle to praise the God who gave it to me. I have the nerve to pray to the God who made all things and doesn't have to entrust any of it to my care yet He does so anyway, this same God whose works I curse. It is even worse for me because I am up here using these unclean lips to preach the word of God to you.

We are a people of unclean lips.

Jesus will touch them. Jesus will touch our lips. Jesus will touch our unclean lips. When Jesus touches our unclean lips our guilt is taken away and our sin is atoned.

Jesus does not mess around. Jesus knows what defiles us. He knows that it is not what goes into our mouths that makes us unclean. Jesus knows that it is what comes out of our mouths that makes us unclean. Jesus knows this. He knows that not just the heart must be clean. The mouth must be cleansed also. It is not simply our heart that is filthy. Our lips are filthy also. They must be purified.

If we are to stand before the almighty and sing praises in His temple, then we must be purified. We must be purified. Jesus provides that purification. He does so when He touches your lips. He touches your lips and His touch purifies. His touch cleanses. His touch heals. When Jesus touches your lips your iniquity is taken away. Your sin is atoned.

We are proud with our mouth. The tongue is one of the smallest of our members, but it makes great boasts. It is just like the rudder on a ship. The rudder is small, but it turns the whole ship. The tongue is small, but it can change your life. It moves your life. Your life responds, it must respond, to what your lips say.

If you boast that you can do something, you're going to look pretty stupid if you can't do it. If you brag that you have something, you had better be able to produce it or you're going to look pretty stupid. Look at how many careers begin and end with the lips. Their lips got them the job. Their lips lost them the job. Our lips are boastful.

I just love it when people brag about their modesty. I just love it when Christians tell me that they believe what Jesus says when He says, "When you do your good deeds, do not announce them on trumpets so that people may know. If you do, you have received your reward in full. But when you give, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing so that your giving may be done in secret. Your Father who sees what is done in secret will reward you." Then they proceed to tell me how pleased they are that the church set up a book to record who gave what for which and how much rather than to put a plaque on it proclaiming who gave it. What kind of hypocrisy is this? He is telling me how happy he is that what he gave is in the book and not on a plaque, but he is telling me this! If he really wanted to keep his giving a secret, he should keep his mouth shut always.

We are this way. We direct a conversation subtly to make sure that what we did comes up in the conversation. If we are not patient enough to wait for what we did to come up in conversation we bring it up ourselves to make sure that people know what we did.

All we are trying to do is prove to others how good we are. All it means is that we doubt how good we are. If we really believed that we were good, we would let others praise us and not our own lips. We would, after all, have nothing to prove.

So all the while our lips are telling others and God how good we are, we are betraying the fact that we do not believe that we are good else we would not be using our lips to tell others and God how good we are. The more we brag the worse off we are. People know this about braggers. That is why most people don't like braggers. God certainly does not. He considers it an assault on His majesty. Who do you think you are to boast? Everything you have, I gave you. Everything you accomplished, I made possible. Why are you using your lips to praise yourself and not Me who gave it all to you?

We shame ourselves. We defile ourselves. We change our lives in ways that even we do not want them to be changed. We do this with our mouths. With our mouths we praise ourselves as if we were God and with our mouths we come in here and try to praise God.

We oppress with our mouths. When we think of oppression we think of one country invading another or we think of rich people taking money away from poor people or whatever. But our lips oppress people. With our lips we categorize people. "The people in that town, there is something wrong with them." We label races. We label populations. We label towns. We label states. We call them lazy. We

call them deadbeats. We call them selfish. We call them whiney. And when we label them we preclude from our hearts and minds the possibility that they may not be that way or that if they are that way, they may change. They are a bunch of drunks. They are rapists. They are stupid. And if they believe what we are saying about them it precludes from their own hearts the possibility that they may not be that way or the possibility that they may change. And then there is that worst of oppressive language. We use this in politics. We use these labels in The Lutheran Church – Missouri Synod. “He’s a liberal.” “He’s a conservative.” We say those words like it is the worst sin in the world is to be a liberal or a conservative. I challenge each and every one of you when you are talking religion or politics not to use the terms “liberal” and “conservative.” See if you can describe people’s positions behaviorally, rather than oppressing them with your speech.

We have unclean lips.

For purification, Jesus must touch our lips. He must or we will remain defiled.

When Jesus touches our lips our iniquity is taken away, our sin is atoned. It is all made good. All of our boasting is forgiven.

Jesus touches your lips the same way that He touched the lips of those He healed. He does so with His body. His body touches your lips. When His body touches your lips, Jesus is touching your lips. When Jesus touches your lips your iniquity is taken away. Your sin is atoned.

Only with you Jesus goes one step further than He did with those He healed of old. Not only does His body touch your lips, His blood does also. His blood atones. It has always atoned. Ever since Aaron began slaughtering lambs and bulls for atonement the blood of Jesus has made it all work. If it were not for the blood of Jesus the sacrifices of the Old Testament would have done nothing. After all, the blood of bulls and goats cannot take away sins. But since Jesus is slain from the foundation of the world, His blood counts for those sacrifices and for our sacraments.

Jesus touches you with His blood. He tells you to drink it. It is the blood that atones. It is the blood that forgives. It is the blood that covers all of your sins. It touches your lips and your sin is atoned. He touches your lips and you are purified.

With our lips we confess our faith. We lie sometimes, but sometimes we are honest. Sometimes our lips confess the truth about our faith before we even have a chance to stop them.

We confess some sin. It doesn’t matter what. The preacher tells us that our sins are forgiven and we make confession of our faith, “I hope so.” If we were speaking Greek that would be a great confession of faith, but we don’t speak Greek. We speak English where such words indicate that we aren’t really all that sure that our sins are forgiven.

We do this a lot. “I hope I get into heaven.” “I hope God lets me in.” “I hope that God receives me.” However it is that we say it, it means, “I doubt that I will get into heaven.” “I doubt that God lets me in.” “I doubt that God will receive me.” This is unbelief, pure and simple. It passes right across our lips. The same lips that come to church and say, “I believe in God the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth,” and all of the rest are the same lips that, when the rubber hits the road and our real sins are on the line, say, “I hope so.” Maybe I will. Maybe I won’t.

No wonder the Lord complains that even an ox knows who feeds it, but My people do not know. Even a donkey knows where its manger is, but My people are ignorant. Do you really think that any sin is beyond the capacity for Jesus to forgive? Do you really believe that Jesus suffered all of death and all of hell on the cross to atone for only a few of your sins? Do you really believe that Jesus rose again from the

dead, but does not have the power to forgive you? Do you really think that your sins are that important, in light of everyone else's sins and in light of what Jesus has done for you?

To doubt Jesus is to count our sins more powerful than He is. To do that is to deny that Jesus is God in the flesh.

Worse than all cursing, worse than all taking the Lord's name in vain, worse than all boasting, is the faithlessness that so easily passes across our lips. But I'll let you in on a little secret, my pointing out the problem this morning doesn't do anything to help solve the problem. Me telling you that you have this problem doesn't do anything to help you solve the problem. Me harassing you from the pulpit about your faithless and berating you about it doesn't do a darn bit of good in helping you or me to come to terms with the forgiveness of our sins. Telling you and me that we are selfish and that is why we doubt the absolution doesn't do anything to help us believe it.

If that is the case I had better stop preaching soon or talk about something else.

Look people, don't listen to me. Listen to Him! I am not the One who is touching your lips. He is the One who is touching your lips. He is not afraid to touch them. He touches our lips defiled by the worst thing with which they may be defiled: our unbelief.

Jesus was not afraid to touch the lepers. Lepers were deformed people. You could catch leprosy from them. Jesus is one of these guys who is not afraid to touch people with AIDS. He is not afraid to touch people with H1N1. He is not afraid to touch people who have communicable diseases. He fears nothing. He is not afraid of you. He is not afraid of your unbelief. Your unbelief does not make Him any less real or any less powerful. Your unbelief does not undo His cross. Your lips do not frighten Jesus. Jesus touched the lepers. He'll touch you.

Come up here! Let Him touch you! Taste and see that the Lord is good! Jesus presses Himself up against your lips. See your iniquity is taken away and your unbelief is atoned.

In the Name of Jesus. Amen.