

Thought for the Day 2nd October - John Reed

Read Ephesians 4:25-32

When we lived in Kenya in my childhood, my grandmother had a pet parrot. It lived in cage on her veranda, and it was a great talker. It did an incredible impression of my grandmother's distinctive laugh, that you could hear down at the end of the garden (and it was a big garden!). It would also repeat her favourite phrases, like: "botheration, blow the nation, hang the men!" – which was as close as she ever got to swearing.

This came flooding back to me when I read about the British wildlife park which has had to remove five African Grey parrots from public view because of their foul language.¹ Lincolnshire Wildlife Park adopted the parrots a few weeks ago, and discovered when the birds were in quarantine that they shared a disturbing ability to swear up a storm.

One can only imagine where and how the parrots learned such language. But I am fairly certain that they didn't make it up for themselves. Presumably either someone taught them as a joke, or they simply absorbed it by osmosis from the environment they lived in – in the same way as sometimes you hear a young child in public repeat a word or phrase they've clearly heard at home, leaving the parents looking mortified.

Which brings me to this passage, which reminds us of the importance of what comes out of our mouths. As God's children we are to put off our old selves and put on a new self, moulded by and modelled on Christ (see verses 17-24). And the way we speak is a big part of that. We are to put away falsehood and speak the truth to one another (v. 25). And we are to let no corrupting talk come out of our mouths, but only such as is good for building up, giving grace to those who hear (v. 29). This is all part of being kind and tender to one another, reflecting the mercy that God has shown to us (v. 32).

My question is this ... If you had a parrot that repeated everything you said to anyone and everyone around, would that be embarrassing? Or would it put a smile on the hearers' faces, as they hear the love and grace of God reflected in your speech?

¹ https://www.huffingtonpost.com.au/entry/cursing-parrots-lincolnshire-wildlife-park_n_5f73a420c5b6374c5585beeb?ri18n=true&guccounter=1&guce_referrer=aHR0cHM6Ly93d3cuaHVmZnBvc3QuY29tL3NIY3Rpb24vd2VpcmQtbmV3cz9ndWNjb3VudGVyPTEmZ3VjZV9yZWZlcnJlcj1hSFwY0hNNkx5OTNkM2N1WjI5dloyeGxMbU52YIM4Jmd1Y2VfcmVmZXJyZXJfc2lnPUFRQUFBTUt2dDgONkplZ2ExRGdRWRZZWFMNS1KS1ZDcWVGbFI2OHBUNHc2eElhcVRzT2hqN3pNSWt5M00tSjZnRXFKT0ctNOZDSHg1Z2RkaHNfZWIRdkdpNGpvY2NWd2tSWjFSbFpoVmtJY0JUemxLbENMaXhjSmtvSzIxdlNNZUNvMIN4aGl1TFZHWFIxTnI1VXFjcmFzLXhteWdXOXRPmUh1VEJDNWxBR2Y4TTVY&guce_referrer_sig=AQAAAGOXtdlsz0OcXvIMvFQzsn74-1_E-A-1GV8bb96kEi1FNrTOf5q0G-G2BaER5T04TehhXye61fuG8rITJU2hol6zMO6BpFLwcYRUVEpiqsoiHgatqCTu201ht2IZO_Bj0gzfxEaPazV8d0kTar5TxxDORRCm8tX67XTJVv4wrgGD