

(1.10) Being Too Talkative.



*After sending the crowds away he went up into the hills by himself to pray.*¹ No doubt the people, with good intentions, wanted to continue listening to Jesus, but he needed spiritual renewal through quiet prayer, and this reminds us that there are times when the words of others are best left behind. Even kind words can sometimes prey upon our vanity and mislead us.

How many times have I realized that it would have been better to have remained silent, noticing my conscience has been disturbed by the worldly interaction. *A flood of words is never without fault; whoever controls the lips is wise.*²

We talk of those things we love best or of those we think are against us, and in such a way we seek to console one another, hoping to refresh our hearts which are often worried and sometimes even overwhelmed by worldly problems. But so often this is in vain because the outward comfort passes quickly and hinders the kind of inward consolation that only comes through the spirit.

When the opportunity to speak arises, talk to your neighbor of those things which edify the both of you. *Deep waters, such are human words: a gushing stream, the utterance of wisdom.*³

Our bad habits and neglect of a sound spiritual life are the main causes for careless tongues. *Be in no hurry to speak; do not hastily declare yourself before God; for God is in heaven, you on earth. Be sparing, then, of speech.*⁴

Yet when devout people of like mind, gather in His name, there can be worthwhile spiritual progress. *The calm words of the wise make themselves heard above the shouts of someone commanding an army of fools.*⁵

This article is based on Book 1, Chapter 10 of Thomas of Kempis' writing, "Imitation of Christ." It is not a translation, and there are many of those, but a personal (layperson's) reflection on his writing; if any of it helps give credit to Thomas of Kempis; if any of it fails the responsibility is mine. (rfm)

¹ Matt 14:23

² Proverbs 10:19

³ Proverbs 18:4

⁴ Ecclesiastes 5:1

⁵ Ecclesiastes 9:17