

**Prayer of the Day:**

O God, You rule over all things in wisdom and kindness. Take away everything that may be harmful and give us whatever is good; through Your Son, Jesus Christ, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God now and forever. Amen.

**Exodus 20:7**

“You shall not misuse the name of the LORD your God, for the LORD will not hold anyone guiltless who misuses his name.”

**Verse of the Day:**

Alleluia. Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light for my path. Alleluia. (NIV Psalm 119:105)

**Sermon Text:**

*“You shall not misuse the name of the LORD your God, for the LORD will not hold anyone guiltless who misuses his name.”* So reads the words of Exodus chapter 20 verse seven which give us the Second Commandment.

Do you know what gets the most conversation going in confirmation class when it comes to this commandment? It's “witchcraft”. I mean I get it. Hollywood has sensationalized it to such a degree that we are either terrified after movies about possessions or cheering on the good witches instead of the bad. We have questions and never enough time to answer them. Is Harry Potter sinful? Can you rightly acknowledge that this is a work of fiction, read like James and the Giant Peach, then no. Do you struggle with that and want to do these things and be these people, then maybe some caution is needed. What about Palm readers, Zodiac signs in the paper, and Ouija boards. Well, these are purely pagan practices that have often served as the gateway drug to deeper association with the occult and even demon possession. They are clearly spoken against in Scripture and we should stay away. It's a good discussion, and while paganism and all kinds of occult practices are once again on the rise in our world today, I don't think, I sincerely hope none of you are trying to cast spells and play host to Satan. At least in the church, I think get this. It's a good reminder, stay away from it! But it's preaching to the choir this morning when it comes to commandment number two in our series.

More insidious is perhaps the fact that more often than not we choose not to consider our use of God's name at all and perhaps even when we do, we think of it more like we do Harry Potter. “Nice book and all but ultimately that's about it. No reason to take it too seriously.” So when I'm shocked, three little letters speak volumes about how seriously I take this commandment. Oh but pastor, OMG just means “wow!” When He addresses swearing, not four-letter words (that's probably more fitting for the 6<sup>th</sup> commandment) but using God's name to make the four-inch fish four feet when I regale my friends, what did Jesus say? Simply let your “yes” be “yes” and your “no” be “no” (cf. Matthew 5:37). In other words, just say “wow” then. And how come, “it just means”, somehow changes when the words are “gosh” or “jeez” or when the whole word comes out loud and clear in frustration. Oh, and what of the poor hammer that gets condemned, or cursed to use Luther's language, to the very bowels of hell (even though hammers can't go there) in the silent or sometimes not so silent prayers uttered after inaccurate swings result in throbbing thumbs? How do we view it all? “I mean, I get it! We aren't supposed to talk like that but who does it really hurt, right?” Why so serious?

Ah, but God does take His name seriously! Seriously enough that it gets a Commandment. Seriously enough that we heard those words which became our lesson this morning, *“You shall not misuse the name of the LORD your God, for the LORD will not hold anyone guiltless who misuses his name.”* And regardless of how we might view it or how trivial we might consider it. It isn’t.

Let’s take a step back. Perhaps to see the seriousness of all of this we should first ask what God’s name is. After all, He has a ton of them. Yahweh, Jehovah, Adonai, Father, Son, Holy Spirit, Jesus: that’s just a small sampling. Dear friends, a name is simply the title we recall a person or thing by. So when you hear Michael Kampman, what comes to mind? Hopefully, nothing hurtful and offensive though “sinner” is a word I would certainly use in conjunction with the man. For some, maybe pastor, for others our church, for a select few “dad”, and for only one “husband”. Ultimately, however, all that I am and do, in a respect, becomes my name (more on that in the 8<sup>th</sup> commandment). In that light, all that God reveals about Himself is His holy Name or His Word. So Luther says the vilest of offenses against this commandment becomes false teaching and false teachers who would attempt to place God’s stamp of approval on the twisting of His Word.

And Why has God given his name to us? We actually heard it last week, *“So they will put my name on the Israelites, and I will bless them. (Numbers 6:27)”* Or perhaps John says it well when he speaks of the Bible and announces, *“But these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name. (John 20:31)”*

God doesn’t want the world or any of us to think His name is for sending hammers to hell or even in expressing our intense joy over a great sale at a department store. He wants that Name to save to be used by His people in trial and in joy.

And so dear friends, He used that name for you. For so many of us it first happened as water splashed upon our foreheads and God’s name was placed upon us, in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. You were marked for the world to hopefully see as God’s child, an heir of heaven connected to the work of the Son who in the fullness of time took on another name for you. Jesus was perfect for this sinner that His righteousness might be my own, paid for my sin in the brutality of the cross through the faith given by the Spirit I might yearn for an eternity in heaven assured because Jesus is there and so one day I will follow. That name opens worship for there is no other way I could stand before Him and closes it so that I might find strength to walk out into the world and announce it to others. I can call out that name, yes, in frustration and in joy not as a throwaway word but as prayer, rightly offered to the only One who can help to the great giver of everything. That name will one day be spoken over the lifeless body even as the soul surveys the majesty of its owner, finally with its own eyes.

Is it any wonder dear friends, that God would not have us sully this Name? That He would protect it even with the seriousness of His words and commands? Why would we want the world to think of it as something trivial, as something pointless when it holds the very power to save?

You shall not misuse the name of the LORD your God.

*What does this mean?*

We should fear and love God that we do not use his name to curse, swear, lie or deceive, or use witchcraft, but call upon God's name in every trouble, pray, praise, and give thanks.

God grant it! Amen!!