

“You Shall Not Take The Lord’s Name in Vain”

Pastor Jacob Hanson

10/11/2020

Opening Prayer

Good Morning Beloved, I hope today finds you well. I am Pastor Jacob Hanson, and as always it is a joy to be your minister here for our two churches. God has been very good to us, and I am thankful to be able to report that my wife is feeling better by the day. As each day proceeds we seem to be getting closer to normal, whatever normal may be with a new little one anyways. Currently we are in our fourth week of looking at the Ten Commandments here in our churches. While we will be focusing upon the third of the ten, “You shall not use the Lord’s name in vain,” it is good as always to have a little background before we get into the meat of the sermon.

The Ten Commandments are given in the form we most easily recognize them twice in scripture. Once in Exodus 20, and another time in Deuteronomy 5. They also of course show up in other places in part, most notably Leviticus 19, but Exodus 20 and Deuteronomy 5 are what we tend to recognize. These commandments, given to the Israelites after they had been rescued from slavery in Egypt by the Lord, lay out the basic rules of morality as defined by our Creator. As we all know there are many other things that come into play when we talk about right living, but if you were to boil them all down it comes down to these ten laws. The Ten Commandments, written on two tablets, are themselves split into two parts. The first tablet contained the first four commandments, which have to do with our relationship with God. The second tablet contained the second six commandments, which have to do with our relationships with each other. As Christians, these ten laws still today determine what proper action looks like and should be a guide to us in how we are to act. As we have spoken about before, in studying the Ten Commandments it is very probable that each of us will be convicted in a couple, if not all, of these rules. If you are convicted as we study these, then it means that you are an honest individual who is paying attention. If in our studying of the Ten Commandments you never feel convicted in your actions, then you are either not paying attention or you are deceiving yourself. The only one who could rightly state that He adhered to the Ten Commandments fully was Jesus... and He of course was fully God and fully man. Today perhaps more than any other is one of those days, because if we are honest most of us understand God’s third commandment, but we choose to ignore it. The commandment of course is to not use the Lord’s name in vain. I hope and pray that as we look at this that you wouldn’t turn a blind eye to it. God placed this commandment here for a reason, it brings honor and glory to His name... and it also shows our hearts if we are honest.

Exodus 20:7 is our main verse and it is where we find this commandment in scripture. “You shall not take the name of the Lord your God in vain, for the Lord will not leave him unpunished who takes His name in vain.” The Jews who received this commandment understood it very

well that the Lord took seriously how they used His name. The Lord only gives out His name in detail a couple of times in scripture, most notably when Moses hears Him say “I AM has sent you” and when Jesus states “Behold even before Abraham was, I AM.” If ever you read your Bible and you see the words “I AM” all in capital letters, it gives you the clue that it is God’s name being used. The Jews, who did not take lightly the warning that those who violated His name would be punished, would go so far as to never speak the Lord’s name. Instead they would use words that describe Him such as “Adonai” (meaning Lord or master), or they would talk about “The Father.” To use His name in a manner that was not dripping with honor was to them in fact a curse, a sin. Even in their writings they would not write out His whole name, but shorten it and leave out the vowels thereby signifying to all who read them that they were coming across the Lord’s name.

In Leviticus 19:12 we see this command slightly elaborated upon further. “You shall not swear falsely by My name, so as to profane the name of your God; I am the Lord.” To swear by His name was to be bound to your oath or otherwise to bring dishonor to it. Jesus’s response when the Pharisees talked about oaths was simple, “Let your yes be yes, and your no be no.” In other words just speak the truth no matter what. The point in this great reverence for His name was simple, it is by His name that we know who He is. A name is personal, a name conveys meaning. In many cultures a name not only is used for identification, but it also conveys a meaning about the person. In our culture that is not usually the case, but we still value our names. As an example, Jacob actually means “He who grasps the heel” or “the deceiver” from Jacob’s actions in scripture. (I don’t think that is what mama Hanson meant when she named me that.) No one is honored by being called “you” or “that person” or “hey kid” or something like that. Our names are personal, and they identify us. They convey a relationship when we use them, and our use of God’s name should do the same. To flippantly use God’s name when something exasperates you (oh God) or when you are angry (God damnit) or when you hit your hand with a hammer (Jesus) is to use His name in a way that is completely out of character. Even if you do not mean to bring about dishonor to the Lord when you speak in such a manner, it certainly conveys a lack of care about His name. Beloved, if we are honest, many of us do not honor His name by the way we speak. Not only does this have the effect of distancing us from our Creator (find for me a Billy Graham or a John Wesley that devalued God’s name like this), but it also shows our friends and family and neighbors that we do not value His name as we should. You may think this is a reach, or that I am being too harsh about something so trivial, but the truth is that you are trivializing one of God’s commandments by not taking it seriously. We do the opposite of what our reading in Deuteronomy calls us to do. “Then watch yourself, that you do not forget the Lord who brought you up from the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery.” When we trivialize any part of His word, when we make light of one of God’s commandments, we forget that it is by Him that we have our salvation. We do not honor the name of the One who goes to the cross in our place, the One who breathes us into existence, the One who earnestly desires our hearts and watches over us. Our language speaks whether or not we value His name and our relationship to Him.

There is another aspect to right language, by the way, in scripture that we often neglect. One that even more of us have difficulty with and has the same effect as using the Lord's name in vain, at least in part. In parallel, the call to not use course language is too often ignored by us, and when it is ignored it also conveys that we do not take seriously the call from the Lord to be holy and righteous in all of our actions.

Ephesians 4:29-32 is a passage that you may have heard before, but honestly most of us pass it by in our everyday speech. "Let no unwholesome word proceed from your mouth, but only such a word as is good for edification according to the need of the moment, so that it will give grace to those who hear. Do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you, along with all malice. Be kind to one another, tender-hearted, forgiving each other, just as God in Christ also has forgiven you." We will touch on this scripture again in a few weeks when we focus on the commandment to not bear false witness (which includes gossiping...), but for now we should see that our Lord wants our language to be as pure as our hearts. Beloved, it is so important for us to understand that our cursing, our course jokes, our foul language in all its forms has no place in the mouths of a believer. It is corrupting, and it belies either a lack of confidence or a lack of intelligence. At the very least it gives off an air of such things, and no one sounds more Godly when they incorporate harsh, course, and foul language. I don't need to tell you this, you already know it. If you were to find me cursing out my lawnmower when it wasn't working, or sharing a foul joke with my neighbor, or using the Lord's name in a dishonorable manner, you would rightly pause when it comes to my leadership in the church. Beloved, we have to all have that same standard applied to us and instead of giving in to those desires to treat the Lord's name with nonchalance or to join in with foul language. We are called, commanded, told to "Let no unwholesome word proceed from your mouth, but only such a word as is good for edification..." Long story short Beloved, stop using language you know is bad, and stop treating the Lord's name as though it wasn't HIS NAME. It will benefit your faith and the faith of those around you!

One final point for us before we leave this commandment behind, and that is on how we get to have pure language. For many of us it is actually difficult to not swear, to not use the Lord's name in an evil manner, and to speak in a way that is always edifying. It is frankly very difficult, and sometimes it seems to just come out of us. Growing up in the middle of nowhere Wisconsin, I can assure you that this is something that I too deal with regularly. I think every example I have used so far about how not to speak, at some point (probably fairly recently) I have done it. Many of my friends and family speak in such a way, so it of course was natural to pick it up... same as most of you. But Beloved we can change, and stop sinning in the way we speak just as we can fight any other sin in our lives through discipline and prayer. The more time we spend in prayer over a sin, turning it over to God, the more we work on that part of our lives. If you have never prayed over your language, then you don't care enough about it. The

more time we spend in scripture, in right living, in service to others, in service to our Creator, then the more we naturally fight the sins within our lives. Beloved, let us endeavor to have discipline in the way we speak, both in regards to our Creator and in general. We are, after all, commanded to do so. Let us pray.

Closing Prayer