

"The Name of the Lord Your God"

Text: Ephesians 1:1-14

"You shall not take the Name of the LORD your God in vain."

The Second Commandment - Sydow Catechism

God grant to each of you a love and reverence for his name – every Word that he has preserved down through the ages and delivered to us intact and inerrant in his Holy Bible. Amen.

Dear Fellow Christians:

What feeling, what emotion or attitude is typically created in your mind when you hear the words that form this morning's sermon theme: "*The Name of the Lord Your God*"? Most, I would suspect, get a sense of something stern and austere, something rather cold, harsh, and unforgiving. We tend to see Mt. Sinai rather than the cross; something unapproachable rather than something warm and inviting.

That's a shame, of course, and grossly unfair. We come by such an attitude honestly, I suppose, since those words are most often tied in our minds to the Second Commandment, which we undertake to study this morning. The Commandments, by their very nature, are unrelenting and accusatory, but only because we have made them so. Clearly there is not much that is warm and cuddly about "***This do or thou shalt die***" – but, again, only because we have failed the first part, the "***This do.***" There was nothing at all wrong with God's law. The problem was our failure to keep it. Adam and Eve didn't hide from God until they had acted contrary to that law.

We need to remind ourselves that God did not give his commandments with the intent that man should die. He didn't even give them just to regulate society and thereby improve our quality of life on earth. God gave his Commandments in large part so that man might live – not *by* them, but in part *because of them*. They were and are an essential tool used to dismantle "self," along with all hope of earning God's favor or our passage into God's heaven through our actions. God had to lay out for all mankind a path that *obviously* no man was capable of following, all for the express purpose of teaching sinful human beings the futility of trying to repay their sin-debt through their own works. God's law, if we read and apply it honestly, leaves no doubt whatsoever that we don't need someone to show us how to keep the Commandments (we can't) we need someone to actually keep them for us.

This is, of course, true with every Commandment, but this morning keep that fact in mind as we focus in particular on the Second. The text that will guide our study this morning is found recorded in Paul's Letter to the Ephesians, the 1st Chapter:

ESV ***Ephesians 1:1-14 Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places, ⁴ even as he chose us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before him. In love ⁵ he predestined us for adoption as sons through Jesus Christ, according to the purpose of his will, ⁶ to the praise of his glorious grace, with which he has blessed us in the Beloved. ⁷ In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of his grace, ⁸ which he lavished upon us, in all wisdom and insight ⁹ making known to us the mystery of his will, according to his purpose, which he set forth in Christ ¹⁰ as a plan for the fullness of time, to unite all things in him, things in heaven and things on earth. ¹¹ In him we have obtained an inheritance, having been predestined according to the purpose of him who works all things according to the counsel of his will, ¹² so that we who were the first to hope in Christ might be to the praise of his glory. ¹³ In him you also, when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, and believed in him, were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit, ¹⁴ who is the guarantee of our inheritance until we acquire possession of it, to the praise of his glory.***

These are the words of our God – his very words! Confident that with his very words forming the basis of our meditation the Lord will keep his promise to richly bless us, so we pray: "***Sanctify us by Your truth, O Lord. Your word is truth!***" Amen.

In my experience, the Second Commandment is arguably the most misunderstood of the Ten, and it starts with the misunderstanding of the word "name" – "*You shall not take the name of the Lord your God in vain.*" What do you understand by "*the name of the Lord*"? As with nearly every commandment, even Christians tend to dumb this command down to the simplest, most easily fulfilled explanation and assume it means that we aren't supposed to use any name or title of our Triune God frivolously. While that is a part of what God is saying here, it is by no means all.

You may remember from Confirmation Class that the "***name of God***" refers to absolutely everything that God reveals about himself. Think of

it this way. If you hear someone's name – George Washington, for example – no one thinks just of the words "George" and "Washington," nor of the letters that make up that name. You think about the person that that name identifies, along with everything that you know about that person. If you say something critical or derogatory about George Washington, you are not disrespecting the words but the person identified by those words or that name.

The same is true of the Second Commandment and *God's* name. We break that commandment every time we fail to give proper respect to *any* aspect of our God, including *anything* that our God has told us in his Word. Obviously that includes using his titles carelessly or **"in vain"** ("Oh my God," etc.) but it also includes using God's Word as the basis for (or object of) jokes, swearing falsely or frivolously by God's name, or even simply ignoring or rejecting what our God has told us in his Word. We also sin in this Commandment not only by doing the wrong thing but by *failing* to do the right thing – by failing to use God's name as we should. In the words of the Explanation to the Commandment, we also sin whenever we fail to *"call upon God's name in every trouble, pray, praise, and give thanks."*

In a sense then it is altogether fitting and right that we react as we do to any mention of *"the name of the Lord your God."* We clearly don't show proper respect to God's name. We use it as we should not and we fail to use it as we should.

Yet this remains the harsh, cold aspect of the Commandment, and we never want to leave out the other functions of God's law. That law also is intended to lead us to despair of "self" – to force us to stop fooling ourselves that we have any hope whatsoever of earning our way into heaven based on our own goodness, worthiness, or obedience to God's commands.

To put it another way, if a human being could learn to control his tongue; that is, if he could learn to never utter a word that in any way disrespects his God or his God's Word, he would still remain a lost and condemned sinner *apart from Jesus Christ*. We've said it before but it bears repeating: *God did not send his Son into the world to enact behavior modification. He sent Jesus to pay the penalty for all those times when human beings failed to live up to God's holy standard.* Whenever man begins to feel as though he has kept or is keeping God's law, Jesus Christ tends to become that much less important to him. That's when we begin to imagine that heaven's door is like a nuclear launch facility in that it must be opened by two keys simultaneously – one that Jesus provided and one that we ourselves must provide. Satan would love for us to imagine that our

keeping of God's law is that which man adds to God's plan for our salvation. Christians need to learn to dispel every such notion with the simple mantra of the cherished hymn: *"Nothing in my hand I bring. Simply to Thy cross I cling."*

And there is more here. Much more. Picture yourself as part of the 7th Cavalry that rode out from Fort Abraham Lincoln back in the days of the Indian Wars. You were trained to react to the sound of the bugle. You knew by heart and instantly obeyed the different calls – charge, retreat, reveille, assembly, etc. Now imagine that in the heat of battle the company bugler mixed up "charge" and "retreat" and played both at the same time. How would you react? How would you possibly know what your commander wanted you to do?

How much more then when God's own trumpeters – his spokesmen and spokeswomen – give mixed and contradictory messages about the one path to eternal life through faith alone in Jesus Christ? How does that happen? It happens whenever God's Ambassadors break the Second Commandment. The Apostle James put it this way in our second Scripture reading for this morning: ***"From the same mouth come blessing and cursing. My brothers, these things ought not to be so."*** (James 3:10)

Do you see how the landscape shifts dramatically when we view this Commandment from that perspective? Can you get a sense of how or why the Psalmist could look at God's holy, unyielding law and still say: ***"I will also speak of your testimonies before kings and shall not be put to shame, ⁴⁷ for I find my delight in your commandments, which I love."***? (Psalm 119:46-47)

Our text also helps us here. Obviously there are many truths to be learned from any section of God's Word, including also this one. This morning we zero in on just one. In verses 13-14 we read: ***"In him you also, when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, and believed in him, were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit, ¹⁴ who is the guarantee of our inheritance until we acquire possession of it, to the praise of his glory."***

God gave us words to communicate. If you've ever tried to communicate with someone who speaks a different language you will quickly come to appreciate what a blessing understood speech really is. Yet it also remains true that God does not just want us to communicate; he wants us to communicate what is good, right, and necessary. Obviously nothing is more important is this regard than sin

and grace, law and gospel. That's the communication that alone can lead to eternal life.

Do you get then the problem with "mixed messages" whenever we break the Second Commandment and disrespect God's name? That's exactly what James was getting at when he said: **"From the same mouth come blessing and cursing. My brothers, these things ought not to be so."** (James 3:10) Whenever a Christian sins against God's name, it is roughly the equivalent of a bugler playing both "charge" and "retreat" at the same time. Compare here also what Paul wrote to the Corinthians, who were speaking unintelligible words in their church services: **"And if the bugle gives an indistinct sound, who will get ready for battle? ⁹ So with yourselves, if with your tongue you utter speech that is not intelligible, how will anyone know what is said? For you will be speaking into the air. ¹⁰ There are doubtless many different languages in the world, and none is without meaning, ¹¹ but if I do not know the meaning of the language, I will be a foreigner to the speaker and the speaker a foreigner to me."** (1 Corinthians 14:8-11) If what Paul wrote here is true of *unintelligible* speech, how much more does it apply to *contradictory* words. How confused, at best, would the people of Ephesus have been had they heard Paul both keep and break the Second Commandment? How could they have learned the path to eternal life if Paul through his words had both respected and disrespected God's holy name? How could the people of Ephesus (or any city that heard Paul for that matter) have been brought to revere and believe in a God that Paul now honored and now insulted?

It's really no different with you and me today. Whenever we break the Second Commandment, we not only break trust with our God, we break trust with the very souls we are called to reach with the gospel. When our God says to us, *"Don't use my name in vain,"* he is giving us a command that has infinitely broader ramifications than just cleaning up the speech of an individual. Carry what Paul said in Romans 10 one step further: **"Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved. ¹⁴ ¶ How then will they call on him in whom they have not believed? And how are they to believe in him of whom they have never heard? And how are they to hear without someone preaching?"** Again, carry this truth one step further: *"How will they believe if the one preaching to them gives an unclear, confusing message by breaking the Second Commandment?"* Whenever that happens, those who hear are in danger of being robbed of all the great things Paul described in our text. Words that only confuse, rather than save, will not leave them **"holy and blameless before him,"** they will no longer offer **"redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of trespasses."** Those who hear will no longer be assured that in Christ they have **"obtained an inheritance"** and that they therefore

"enjoy the riches of his grace." This is obviously unacceptable to the God who **"wants all men to be saved, and to come to a knowledge of the truth."** It ought then to be unacceptable to you and me as well.

Our words matter – profoundly so. Souls hang in the balance. Thank God then for his Commandments, this morning especially the Second. Honor your God and show true love to your neighbor by keeping it. Amen.

Scripture Readings

^{ESV} **Amos 7:7-9,12-15** This is what he showed me: behold, the Lord was standing beside a wall built with a plumb line, with a plumb line in his hand. ⁸ And the LORD said to me, "Amos, what do you see?" And I said, "A plumb line." Then the Lord said, "Behold, I am setting a plumb line in the midst of my people Israel; I will never again pass by them; ⁹ the high places of Isaac shall be made desolate, and the sanctuaries of Israel shall be laid waste, and I will rise against the house of Jeroboam with the sword." ¹² And Amaziah said to Amos, "O seer, go, flee away to the land of Judah, and eat bread there, and prophesy there, ¹³ but never again prophesy at Bethel, for it is the king's sanctuary, and it is a temple of the kingdom." ¹⁴ ¶ Then Amos answered and said to Amaziah, "I was no prophet, nor a prophet's son, but I was a herdsman and a dresser of sycamore figs. ¹⁵ But the LORD took me from following the flock, and the LORD said to me, 'Go, prophesy to my people Israel.'

^{ESV} **James 3:1-10** Not many of you should become teachers, my brothers, for you know that we who teach will be judged with greater strictness. ² For we all stumble in many ways. And if anyone does not stumble in what he says, he is a perfect man, able also to bridle his whole body. ³ If we put bits into the mouths of horses so that they obey us, we guide their whole bodies as well. ⁴ Look at the ships also: though they are so large and are driven by strong winds, they are guided by a very small rudder wherever the will of the pilot directs. ⁵ So also the tongue is a small member, yet it boasts of great things. How great a forest is set ablaze by such a small fire! ⁶ ¶ And the tongue is a fire, a world of unrighteousness. The tongue is set among our members, staining the whole body, setting on fire the entire course of life, and set on fire by hell. ⁷ For every kind of beast and bird, of reptile and sea creature, can be tamed and has been tamed by mankind, ⁸ but no human being can tame the tongue. It is a restless evil, full of deadly poison. ⁹ With it we bless our Lord and Father, and with it we curse people who are made in the likeness of God. ¹⁰ From the same mouth come blessing and cursing. My brothers, these things ought not to be so.

ST. PAUL EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH

2510 E. Divide Ave. Bismarck, ND 58501

Parsonage and Office: (701) 223-4885 Cell: (701) 425-5483

Website: www.bismarcklutheran.org

Michael McEnroe, President

Eileen McEnroe, Organist

Michael Roehl, Pastor

Suzannah Miller, Organist

The Seventh Sunday after Pentecost – July 12, 2015

The Opening Prayer by the Pastor

The Opening Hymn - 222 (Red Hymnal)

"Look Ye Saints, the Sight Is Glorious"

The Order of Service – Supplement page 12ff. (Brown Hymnal)

The Scripture Lessons: (Printed on the back page of this bulletin)

The First Lesson: (Amos 7:7-9,12-15) Our two lessons this morning teach us, among other things, that words have consequences. In our first reading we learn of Amos, who was a sheep breeder and a tender of fig trees prior to his calling by the Lord. Note that his answer and his defense to those who rejected the *words* of his prophecy was that he was called by the Lord God to speak those very words against which the people were rebelling.

The Psalm of the Day – Psalm 100 (Page 36)

The Second Lesson: (James 3:1-10) Our second reading looks at words from the perspective of the damage they can cause. Like all of our senses and all of our gifts, God gave us words (and the ability to speak words) to glorify him in all things. As perhaps more now than ever before, words are used to tear down and to harm. Christians are certainly not immune, as we tend to adopt the bad language of those around us. The Holy Spirit through the pen of James here puts the whole topic in its proper perspective.

The Confession of Faith -

The Nicene Creed – page 5. (Brown Hymnal)

The Pre-Sermon Hymn – 285 (Red Hymnal)

"How Precious Is the Book Divine"

The Sermon – Text: Ephesians 1:1-14 (Printed on the back page of this bulletin)

"The Name of the Lord Your God"

The Offertory – (Supplement page 16 insert)

The Offering followed by the Prayers

The Pre-Communion Hymn -311 (Verses 1-4) (Red Hymnal)

"Jesus Christ Our Blessed Savior"

The Preparation for Holy Communion (Brown Hymnal page 17)

The Distribution -Hymns 755 & 312- (Brown and Red Hymnals)

The Nunc Dimittis and Thanksgiving (Brown Hymnal page 20)

The Benediction

The Closing Hymn -767 (Verses 1-2) (Brown Hymnal)

"Church of God, Elect and Glorious"

Silent Prayer

Welcome! - We warmly welcome any visitors worshipping with us this morning and invite you to join us each Sunday at this time. We are glad you are here! **To our Visitors seeking an altar at which to commune** – Since we desire to follow the words of our Savior, we practice "Close Communion" – a practice that is not new to confessional Lutherans. This practice stresses both our concern for others, not wanting them to receive the sacrament to their harm (1 Cor. 11:27-30) and the importance of unity in confession and faith (1 Cor. 10:16-17). For this reason we ask that anyone who has not established this unity through membership in a CLC congregation please first meet with the pastor to discuss this Scriptural doctrine before communing. This is a practice that we follow out of love and concern for you, and out of obedience to God's Word.

Attendance - Last Sunday (41) Average (52)

This Week at St. Paul:

Today	-10:00 a.m.	– Worship Service w/communion
	-11:15 a.m.	– Coffee/Fellowship Time
Next Sunday	-10:00 a.m.	– Sunday Worship
	-11:00 a.m.	– Coffee/Fellowship Time

CLC News – Michael Schierenbeck has accepted the call to Faith of Markesan, WI.

Immanuel Clothing – A CLC member in Eau Claire, Andy Buck, is offering CLC members ILC-related apparel online. Many different choices are available, including shirts, shorts, jackets, hats, etc. These items are available for ordering until July 31 and can be shipped or picked up in Eau Claire. Go to: www.cv-sports.com/Promotions.aspx, find the "Immanuel Lutheran" line, and click on "Go." Contact Andy for questions andy.buck@cv-sports.com (715.836.6840).

Vacation Bible School – A reminder that this summer's VBS has been scheduled for July 30-31. Be encouraged to invite friends and relatives – especially of course those who do not have a church home. Please also let the Pastor know if others will be attending so that we can have material for them.