

"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

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 to a certain extent 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. 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. Nor did he 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.

Yet there is so much more to "The Name of the Lord your God" than just the Second Commandment. The text that will guide our study this morning and broaden our understanding of, and appreciation for, God's Name 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.

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 or sinfully. 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 about himself in his Word. We also break the Second 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 obviously 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 Name of the Lord*. It is God's Name as it relates only to the law. That law 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 to persuade us 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."*

Yet there is much more to *"the Name of the Lord your God"* than just the harsh demands of the law. Did you notice, for example, that our text for this morning doesn't even mention the Word "name?" Yet these words speak to *"the Name of the Lord your God"* because they teach us something about our God. Remember, "God's Name" includes everything he has told us about himself, not just his various titles. While the law certainly tells us about God's will for our lives, it is the gospel that tells us about his heart, his mercy, his love for fallen mankind. In fact we break the Second Commandment whenever we fail to speak the whole counsel of God's Word, including both law and gospel. That's how our **"bugle gives an uncertain sound."**

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, which is through faith alone in Jesus Christ? That happens not only whenever God's Ambassadors break or ignore the Second Commandment, it happens whenever we present the keeping of the law as God's salvation plan. In our second Scripture reading for this morning the Apostle James put it this way: **"From the same mouth come blessing and cursing. My brothers, these things ought not to be so."** (James 3:10) Obviously there's accusation and condemnation there, but the Psalmist also says: **"I will also speak of your testimonies before kings and shall not be put to shame, for I find my delight in your commandments, which I love."**? (Psalm 119:46-47)

The point here is that there is more to *"the Name of the Lord your God"* than just law. Our text helps us here. 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, 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. Yet he does not just want us to communicate, he wants us to communicate the *whole* of his "Name" – all that is true, right, and good about our God. Obviously that includes both sin *and* grace, both law *and* gospel. God's Name includes both, and clearly communicating both is how souls are saved.

We therefore send a "mixed message" not only when we break the Second Commandment and disrespect God's name, but when we give the impression that we earn God's forgiveness by keeping the Commandments. Whenever a Christian sins against God's Name (by disrespecting God's Name or by confusing law and gospel) it is roughly the equivalent of a bugler playing both "charge" and "retreat" at the same time. Paul's words in our text offered no such confusion to the people of Ephesus. It is God's will that we honor and respect every aspect or facet of our God, but we can and do take such pleasure in his law because we have been assured that Jesus kept that law perfectly as our substitute. The most grievous breaking of the Second Commandment is, in fact, the rejection of that aspect of our God we know as *grace*. To use one of God's titles frivolously is bad, but to ignore or reject his undeserved love, demonstrated most clearly in the sacrifice of his own Son, is catastrophic. It would be difficult, if not impossible, to thrill to "*the Name of the Lord your God*" if that Name involved only demands and condemnation. It does not, as he himself made clear through the words of Paul in our text for this morning:

"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, even as he chose us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before him... In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of his grace, which he lavished upon us... 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... 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."

Our words matter – profoundly so. Souls hang in the balance. God grant truth and clarity to our words and actions. We can now *thank* God for his Commandments *because we know that our Savior, Jesus Christ, has kept them perfectly for us*. He has thereby removed the curse that they contained. By bringing us to faith in this gospel truth, he has changed our hearts, enabling us to overcome fear and to love what he commands. In fact we can love everything about our God – which is the definition of "his Name." The highest honor that we can now pay our God is to communicate, as clearly as possible, this unique aspect of our God: his undeserved love for sinners. 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.

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The 8th Sunday after Pentecost – July 15, 2018

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 8 (Page 27)

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 Post-Sermon Hymn – 26 (Stanzas 1-4, 6) (Red Hymnal)

"Praise the Almighty, My Soul, Adore Him"

The Prayer followed by the Lord's Prayer

The Benediction

The Closing Hymn -15 (Red Hymnal)

"From All that Dwell below the Skies"

Silent Prayer

Welcome! - We warmly welcome any visitors who might be with us this morning and invite you to join us every Sunday at this time. St. Paul is a congregation in fellowship with the Church of the Lutheran Confession (CLC) – a conservative Lutheran synod with churches and missions throughout the United States, as well as Canada, India, and Africa. We are glad you are here. Thank you for letting us share the Word of God with you. Please record your visit in our Guest Book, and come again!

Attendance – Sunday (30) Ave (41)

This Week at St. Paul:

Today	-10:00 a.m.	– Worship Service
	-11:30 a.m.	– Annual Church Picnic
Next Sunday	-10:00 a.m.	– Worship Service w/Holy Communion
	-11:15 a.m.	– Fellowship Hour

CLC News – Pastor Rob Sauers has accepted the call to Luther Memorial of Fond du Lac, WI. Pastor Wayne Eichstadt has returned the call to Berea of Inver Grove Heights, MN.

Church Picnic – Our Annual Church Picnic is scheduled for today following the service. The location is Hillside Park, Pavilion 1 (same as last year). All are invited. See Cindy Ollenburger if you have questions or need directions.

Convention Report – Copies of the Convention Summary are available on the entry table near the guest register. Please take a copy with you if you didn't get one last week.

VBS – 16 young people attended our annual summer Vacation Bible School this past week. Thanks to those who gave of their time and talents to make this such a positive experience.

Outreach Committee – Please check your mailbox for a letter from Phil Pfennig, our new Outreach Committee Chairman. We are looking for volunteers to serve on this committee, which will be tasked with identifying and implementing outreach in our community. Given our life's work of "making disciples of all nations," this is certainly something in which we should all take an active interest. Please see Mr. Pfennig if you have any questions.

Hecla Harvest Festival – The annual Harvest Festival in Hecla is scheduled for Sunday, August 5. A 4pm service is planned, with a fellowship meal to follow. See the Pastor for more details.