

No Misuse of the Lord's Name + Praise His Name

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Please consider donating to this work in the San Francisco Bay Area online at Christchurcheastbay.org. Good morning.

I'm Samantha Pipkin and I'm part of the Christchurch Youth Group and the Sunday Evening Community Group for Families. Today's scripture reading is from the book of Exodus chapter 20 verse 1 to 7 as printed in the liturgy.

A reading from the book of Exodus. And God spoke all these words. I am the Lord your God who brought you out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery. You shall have no other gods before me. You shall not make yourself an image in the form of anything in heaven above or on the earth beneath or in the waters below. You shall not bow down to them or worship them.

[1:04] For I, the Lord your God, am a jealous God, punishing the children of the sins of the parents to the third and fourth generation. Of those who hate me and showing love to a thousand generations.

Of those who love me and keep my commandments. You shall not misuse the name of the Lord your God. For the Lord will hold anyone guiltless who misuses his name.

The grass withers and the flowers fall. But the word of our God stands forever. Thank you, Samantha, for that scripture reading. Good morning.

My name is Jonathan. I'm one of the pastors here. And we're continuing today in this sermon series on the Ten Commandments. And I would say a driving question of this series is, you know, what is the good life?

What's the life that's full of blessing? What is the life of flourishing? What's the life of fruitfulness? If you open the prayer book of the Bible, the hymnal right at the heart of the Bible is the Psalms.

[2:09] And the very first Psalm describes this tree that is deeply rooted and that's firmly planted by this ever-flowing stream. This unceasing source of life and vitality so that its leaves do not wither in the heat and the drought.

It's always green. It never fails to bear fruit. And what's the secret of that tree? What's the secret of becoming like that tree that's just bursting with life and blessing?

That's just flourishing and fruitful? And Psalm 1 says that such a person is one who delights in what? In the law of the Lord.

And this person meditates on God's law day and night. If you keep sort of working through those prayers and those songs at the heart of the Bible, you come to Psalm 19.

And Psalm 19 describes an attitude. It describes the attitude of this person that's flourishing and that's fruitful and rooted by this living water. And here's the attitude in Psalm 19.

[3:17] It says, The law of the Lord is perfect, refreshing the soul. The statutes of the Lord are trustworthy, making wise the simple. The precepts of the Lord are right, giving joy to the heart.

The commands of the Lord are radiant, giving light to the eyes. The fear of the Lord is pure, enduring forever. The decrees of the Lord are firm and all of them are righteous.

They are more precious than gold, than much pure gold. They are sweeter than honey, than honey from the honeycomb. And I think it's important to begin there because what we're talking about is really the opposite of modern secular culture.

Modern secular culture operates according to various stories and myths about things like identity and freedom and morality and happiness.

That say, you know, the way to flourishing, the way to fruitfulness is for me to be true to myself. And what I have to do is construct what's right and wrong for me.

[4:20] And then I've got to do what it is that makes me happy no matter what. I can't let anybody get in the way of me being happy. And Psalm 19 says, no, the way to have my soul refreshed, the way to become wise, the way to have my heart filled with joy and for my eyes to be filled with light is for me to meditate on something other than myself.

It's to meditate on and to trust in and to live by the law of the Lord. That, the psalmist says, is worth more than piles of pure gold.

It's worth, it's more pleasurable than jar after jar of the finest honey. And so I hope that as we kind of move through this series, we can address some of these cultural stories, these cultural myths that say the way to be refreshed is to live for myself.

And what we want to do is encourage you and foster an attitude like the Psalms and say, no, you know, God's life-giving law, his freedom-protecting law, that is, you know, summarized in the Ten Commandments, that's our delight.

That is the focus of our meditation. And so we're just, we're in this extended meditation. And we've now worked our way through the first commandment and the second commandment.

[5:51] And now today we come to the third commandment, which, you know, is much deeper than it appears on the surface of things. And what I want you to do, we didn't print this, but I want you to take your pew Bible, if you have one close to you or in front of you.

And we're going to turn in a moment to Exodus chapter 34. So second book of the Bible, the book of Exodus chapter 34.

And you can just hold your finger there and keep it open. And what I want to sort of walk you through over the next little bit, it's just, we want to talk about the glorious name, the glorious name. And then we want to talk about misusing the name. And we want to talk about praising the name. But we want to begin here with the glorious name. We started this sermon series in Exodus chapter 3 at the burning bush.

God calls Moses and he says to Moses, I am the God of your fathers. I'm the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. And when he says, I am God, he's using that word from the very first page of the Bible, the very first book in Genesis.

[6:57] In the beginning was God. In the beginning was Elohim. And that name Elohim means that he is the majestic and mighty and absolute and transcendent maker of heaven and earth and the all-powerful creator of the cosmos.

That's his name, Elohim. And when Elohim comes to the burning bush and he says, I am the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

And he says, Moses, I'm sending you to Egypt. Moses says, well, you know, when they ask me who sent me, what name should I give them?

And do you remember God's answer in Exodus 3? It's one of the most important verses in the whole Bible. He says, my name is, I am who I am.

Which in Hebrew is Yahweh or the Lord. My name is, I am who I am. And when you say that in Hebrew, it sounds like I am here.

[8:04] And I am with you. And I am for you. And I want you to tell them that I am coming down to rescue them. I'm coming to liberate them.

I'm coming to bring you out of this land of slavery. Tell them Elohim, the creator God, and Yahweh, the redeemer God, is coming for them. And what's really cool is that over the course of this book, God unpacks the meaning of that name.

And that's what brings us to Exodus 34. Last week we talked about the golden calf tragedy. It's sort of this debacle at Mount Sinai. And Moses is up on the mountain there and he's praying on behalf of God's people.

And he says, God, show me and show us your glory. And then in Exodus 34, verses 6 to 7, we come to the very center point of the Torah.

This is the high point of the first five books of the Bible. The most precious books of the Bible for Jewish people is right here in verses 6 and 7. God says to Moses, I'm going to proclaim to you and to all of Israel the glory of my name.

[9:19] And then what does he say? He says in verse 6, I am the Lord, the Lord, compassionate and gracious God, slow to anger, abounding in love and faithfulness, maintaining love to

thousands, forgiving wickedness, rebellion, and sin.

Yet I do not leave the guilty unpunished, but I punish the children for the sins of the parents to the third and fourth generation. Moses, you asked me to show you the glory of my name.

That is my name. Did you know that's God's name? It's an incredible name. And if you don't know what portion of the Bible to, you know, focus on, meditate on, even memorize, I would just start you there in those first two, in those two verses.

And you know what Moses did when he heard that name? If you look there, it says the moment he heard the full content, the full meaning of the Lord's name, it says Moses bowed down to the ground at once.

And what did he do? He worshiped. He worshiped. God's self-revelation, his exposition of his own name, says to us, this is my core identity.

[10:39] This is my fundamental essence. This is the nature and the character of who I am. These are my attributes. And in giving us this name, he shows us his desire to be accessible to us.

He shows us that, you know, I'm giving you my name because I want to be in a personal relationship with you, a relationship of intimacy and trust and communication and closeness.

Exodus 34 is frequently quoted throughout the rest of the scriptures and really sets the pattern for Israel's relationship to God.

Many of the psalms that are prayed are based on these verses that say God is compassionate and gracious. The priority in his name is given to God's most magnanimous qualities, that he has a compassionate heart for you, that he graciously favors you as he deals with you.

And then it says that he's slow to anger, meaning he's incredibly patient with you, that he's forbearing and he's long-suffering with you.

[11:57] And then it says he's abounding in love and faithfulness, which means that of all the people that you could ever have a relationship with, he is more committed to you, more loyal to you, more trustworthy, more reliable, more dependable.

He's somebody that you can count on. And then it says maintaining love to thousands, forgiving wickedness, rebellion, and sin.

And that means that he extends his undeserved mercy to us continuously, pardoning our offenses, canceling our moral and spiritual debts.

And here's the kicker of his name. It says, yet he does not leave the guilty unpunished. He punishes the children and their children for the sins of the parents of the third and fourth generation.

And what that means is that the name of God contains a paradox. It's a mystery and it's a paradox right in the heart of God's name that he is both forgiving and he's punishing.

[13:07] Right? He's too just to let anyone off the hook. But he's too merciful to let anyone perish. And notice that in right there within his name, there's not a, it's not like a balanced scale between the justice of God and the mercy of God.

Rather, it says he extends his mercy to thousands, but he limits his justice to four. Look, look at, look at his name.

It says that there's loving kindness to a thousand generations on the one hand, and yet there is just punishment to three or four generations on the other hand.

That's a significant imbalance. That's a huge disparity between thousands and four. And one scholar commenting on this text, he says, God's wrath can only be discussed in glaring a symmetry to his love.

Or as Jesus' brother James put it in James chapter two, mercy triumphs over judgment. And so I ask you, do you know the name of God?

[14:29] And does, what does his name mean to you? Have you opened your heart to the infinite and undeserved mercy at the heart of his name?

Have you, have you experienced the unstinting loving kindness that God has for you? To know his name, to be the people who are the bearers of that name, of his self-revelation, to be in a covenant relationship with this God, whose name encapsulates and summarizes these attributes, is the most precious thing in the world.

It's better than anything else you could ever imagine having or doing or experiencing. And for Israel, they'd say, you know, who, who in the, who in their right mind would neglect this name?

Or who would ever think to drag this name through, through the mud? And here's what's fascinating to me. After Mount Sinai, after God gives the 10 commandments here, do you know what the final

15 chapters of the book of Exodus is all about?

Exodus chapter 25 through chapter 40, God is showing his people how to construct this tabernacle where the name of God and the glory of God is to dwell right there at the very center of the Israelite camp.

[16:03] And in that tabernacle, there, there are no other gods, which is commandment number one, no other gods before me. In that tabernacle, there are no images of the one true living God.

That's commandment number two. But in the heart of that tabernacle, in the holy of holies, there's, there's the ark of the covenant. And within that ark of the covenant, there are these 10 commandments. And what's written all over the 10 commandments?

I am the Lord, your God. I am Yahweh, your God. I am Yahweh, Elohim. And that is to be right at the heart.

And right at the center of the life and the worship and the reality of the people of God. Even as God's transitioning his people from this wilderness tabernacle to a more permanent temple in Jerusalem, God says in Deuteronomy 12, first Kings eight, he says, I'm going to cause my holy name to dwell in my holy temple at the heart of my holy people.

That's what holds the whole Bible together. The whole Old Testament. It's about the name of God.

And Jesus has the audacity to come along and to take that divine name upon himself.

[17:18] He says in the gospel of John chapter eight, he says, truly, truly, I tell you before Abraham was, I am. And then in John chapter 13, Jesus says, you call me Lord.

You call me the name that God gave you. You call me Lord. And he says, and rightly so, for that is what I am. And then in John 17, he prays, holy father, protect them by the power of your name, the name that you gave to me.

At the name of Jesus in the gospels, at his name, diseases are healed. Sins are forgiven. Prayers are answered. Demons flee. Lives are transformed.

The world is turned upside down by his name. And at the very end of the gospels, Jesus, the resurrected Jesus, sends his disciples out. And he sends them out with God's full name.

He says, I want you to go out and make disciples and baptize them in the name of what? The father, the son, and the Holy Spirit. That's the glorious name of our triune God.

[18:26] And we have an even greater privilege than Moses had on the mountain in Exodus 34. Because we get to call on the name of the Lord and use the fullest revelation of his name.

Father, son, Holy Spirit. It is a glorious name. It's a glorious name. And we really can't talk about the misuse of the name until we understand how wonderful it is.

So now that we've know what the name is and know what the name means, I want to begin to explore the way that God's name is often misused.

Right? Now that we understand its beauty and its glory, I want to talk about how it can be used well and used poorly. How it can be used to honor God. How it can be used to dishonor God.

And it's really be easy to focus on kind of the world out there and how other people are using the name. But I want to do the harder thing and just focus on the church in here and how we use the name.

[19:30] And my goal here is to, in this whole series really, is to deepen our repentance. And it's to increase our sense of our need for a savior.

And it is also to enlarge our view of what holiness and obedience in the Christian life actually means. And so I want to start with the most obvious thing.

Okay? The Hebrew word kavod, which we translate glory, that word kavod means something weighty, something heavy, something of substance and worth.

And if something is kavod, you know, you speak about that, that thing or that person with a sobriety and a seriousness, you, you speak about it with reverence and with awe.

And one of the older translation of this third commandment says, you shall not take the Lord's name in vain. And vanity is the opposite of kavod. Kavod is heavy. Vanity is light.

[20:39] To, to take something in vain is to, is, it's to give it insubstantiality. It's to cause it to be empty, cause it to be worthless. And what this command says is, you're not to treat something weighty as if it's light.

You're to receive and to employ God's name with humility, with, with sincerity, with reverence, with seriousness. You're to use it with gravitas and with honor.

And in a worthy manner, you're to lift it up in ways that are appropriate to the character that we just described. And so perhaps some of us have become, you know, too lax, right?

We, we send in the text, OMG. And we say, oh my God, oh Lord, Jesus. Jesus. And when you do that, you're doing something that's not befitting with the, the level of the majesty of this name.

Psalms chapter eight says, oh Lord, our Lord, how excellent. And how majestic is your name in all the earth. And, and godly people who fear and respect this name, you know, they, they sigh deeply when they hear it used lightly because it's violating reverence for the weightiness and the sacredness and the holiness of the name of God.

[22:05] But that, I'm just starting there because that's surface level stuff. And that's really like the easiest thing. But I want to go a lot deeper than that. The Hebrew says, you will not carry the name of the Lord, your God in vain.

You won't carry it in vain. Now when the high priest would go into the tabernacle, he would carry the names of the 12 tribes of Israel on a breastplate over his heart.

He was carrying their names on his heart. And those names had been attached to his person. In a similar way, God has done an extremely risky thing by attaching his holy name to you and to us.

So that we carry his name wherever we go and whatever we do. God has attached his name to you for a purpose. To represent him like the high priest was representing the people.

You're to carry the name of the Lord faithfully. You're to represent his character and his story with your whole life and your whole being. And understanding it that way, the question is, do you say his name with your lips, but your life says something totally different that contradicts or confuses his name for other people?

[23:29] I was reading yesterday, my regular scripture reading plan took me through Ezekiel chapter 36 yesterday. The prophet Ezekiel says this in Ezekiel 36.

The people of Israel defiled their land by their conduct and their actions. They profaned my holy name. See, they profaned their name, his name by their conduct and by their actions.

We can carry God's holy name with our lips, but we can damage his reputation with our lives. And so the apostle Paul in Romans 2, he quotes the prophet Isaiah.

He says, as it is written, the name of God is blasphemed among the Gentiles because of you. If you identify as a Christian, you carry the name of Christ.

Christian means little Christ. That's what that word means. Christian is little Christ. The name Christ is associated with everything you do.

[24:26] And so your reputation reflects his reputation. And when we fail to carry the name of Christ in an honorable way, we, we damage his reputation because there's a misalignment between our lips and our lives, between our creed and our character and our conduct.

But here's an even like deeper layer to this command. Jesus gave us that amazing prayer, right? In the sermon on the Mount, he said, when you pray, pray this way.

And this is the first and most important thing that I want you to pray. Pray this way. Our father in heaven, what? Hallowed be your name. May your name be glorified in me, in my thoughts, in my mind, in my heart, in my desires, in my will, and in my decisions.

May your name be hallowed in my marriage and in my kids and our family relationships. May your name be hallowed in this church and this brother in Christ and this sister in Christ.

May your name be hallowed in my neighborhood. May your name be hallowed in my workplace.

May your name be hallowed in the city and in this nation. May your name be hallowed. And so what we see here is that prayerlessness is a violation of the third commandment.

[25:49] It's functional atheism to not be calling on the name of the Lord and to not be praying the main thing that Jesus told us to pray.

And that's the question is, do you, do you spend time every day asking father, let your heavenly name, let your glorious name be hallowed. Parents, do you take time with your kids after a meal or before bed and show them how to pray this way, pray this way with your kids and with your youth father, hallowed be your name.

It's so important, but there's another layer and it's a deeper layer. I would say even than that, because in the gospel of Matthew chapter 15, Jesus is critiquing the Pharisees and he says to the Pharisees, you hypocrites, Isaiah was right when he prophesied about you.

These people honor me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me. They worship me in vain.

There's that word again. They worship me in an empty way because their hearts are far from me.

The Jesus is saying the proper use of God's holy name is a sincere heart level engagement in worship. And I don't know if you're like me, you ever feel like sometimes you're just going through the motions in worship on a Sunday morning.

[27 : 10] Jesus is warning us about that, about indifference and thoughtlessness and worship where we, we come and we have the triune God's name on our lips. It's in our ears.

It's before our eyes, but your heart just isn't there. Your heart is not engaged with the name of the one that you're talking to.

Think about singing when we sing God's name. Do you come and robustly sing with a full heart? Or do you kind of quietly sing with a half heart?

Because Psalm 66 says, shout for joy to God, all the earth, sing the glory. There it is. Sing the weightiness of his name. Make his praise glorious.

Do you sing the glory of God's name with shouts of joy? Ephesians 5. The apostle Paul says, sing psalms and hymns and songs from the spirit, making music from your heart to the Lord.

[28 : 17] When you come, is your heart engaged at that level where you're making melody to his name? You're so excited about the meaning and the beauty of his name, the weightiness of his name.

When we read and proclaim God's word about his name, when we pray in his name and for the glory of his name, do you let your thoughts wander so that the name is being used in vain?

Consider how you prepare yourself on a Saturday night. If you knew that you were meeting a person of grand renown and worldwide importance, how would you get yourself ready for that encounter so that when you come, you're not just a drone with words on your lips, but your heart is there with that person.

I'm going to go to another level. You ready? There's so many levels. Deuteronomy 18 says, a prophet who presumes to speak in my name anything I have not commanded.

I'm against that kind of prophet, God says. And that means, have you ever used God's name to communicate doctrine or ethics other than what God has revealed in his word?

[29 : 29] Have you ever sanctified your own passion, your own agenda with his name? Have you ever claimed divine endorsement for your own personal desires or your political agenda?

Have you ever caught yourself saying, you know, God told me, or this one's worse, God told me to tell you, and then you put God's name on your plans?

Have you ever used God's name to get your way and to manipulate a situation? That is to misuse the name of God. It's to use his name in vain.

We pollute God's name when we blatantly use it in service of our own name, our own selfishness, and our own power, and pride, and personal advantage.

But I want to say one like final level that was convicting to me when I was thinking about this this week. The proper use of God's name is to make a vow and to make a promise that you keep.

[30 : 38] And if you're married and you got married in a Christian service, you took a vow in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit that you would love and cherish this person, right?

For better, for worse, until you die. If you're a parent and you had your child baptized, when you had them baptized, you took a vow that you would bring them up in the faith and the loving discipline of the Lord.

If you became a member of this church, you took a vow in that name to live as becomes a follower of Christ, to support and to serve the ministry, to work for the unity and purity and peace of the church here in Berkeley.

And, you know, when we fail to cherish our spouse or when we fail to engage with our kids about the things of God, when we fail to forgive a fellow church member and to serve them in Jesus' name, what we're doing, it's not just a sin against your beloved spouse or your precious children or these people that God loves so much.

It's a sin against God himself because you've taken his name and you've made a promise, you've made a vow, but now you're taking it lightly and trivially and making it empty, making it worthless.

[32 : 04] And I want to shift our attention to, you know, thinking not just, not only about the glorious name and what it is and what it means or, you know, the negative kind of misuses of the name, but I want to finally turn to what's the right way to use the name?

What's the good and pleasing and honorable way to use the name? And it's just simply to say, praising the name. That's what, that's why you exist as a human being is to praise this name.

It's the, it's the main reason you're here to praise the name. And again, our goal is to deepen our repentance, to increase our sense of how much we need a savior and to enlarge our vision of holiness and obedience in the Christian life.

And this is the point at which I'd like to urge you to put your faith and to put your hope in Jesus as we think about this command because he perfectly keeps all these commands and he pays the penalty for those who break them.

Jesus in the gospel of John, again, he's praying there in the upper room John 17 and he prays to the father. He says, father, I have manifested your name to the people whom you gave me out of this world.

[33 : 34] He's the perfect manifestation, the perfect revelation of the name of the Lord. And he's perfectly kept commandment number three for us. And I want you to consider this beloved text from the apostle Paul in Colossians, in Philippians chapter two.

Paul says this, he says, God, and this was a hymn that the early Christians would sing, Philippians two. God exalted Jesus to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow and every tongue acknowledge that Jesus Christ is Lord.

Now why does Paul say that Jesus now has the highest name, the loftiest name, the most exalted name in the universe? Because commandment number three says that God will not hold anyone guiltless who misuses his name.

And we've all misused the name grievously just in the past 48 hours, much less our whole lives. We've neglected the name.

We've ignored the name. We put the name below our name. So what do we need? We need a savior. We need a redeemer.

[34 : 57] We need someone who can come and take that guilt that's on us away. Jesus, Paul says, he now has the name that it's above every name for this reason and this reason alone.

And here's what he says in Philippians 2. He, Jesus, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be used to his own advantage.

Rather, he made himself nothing by taking the very nature of a servant and being made in human likeness, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to death, even death on a cross.

The commandment says that we will not be held guiltless because we've broken the command, but the cross says that because of the final sacrifice and substitution of Jesus, our savior, he's paid for every single way that we've broken that command with his blood, with his life.

Why are all the knees going to bow? Why is every tongue going to confess that this Jesus so high and exalted yet so humbled and humiliated on his cross, why is everyone going to do that?

[36 : 25] Because our only hope when faced with the breadth and the depth of these commandments that we break is to believe in his name.

The apostle Peter says in Acts chapter 4, he says, there's no other name under heaven given to mankind by which we must be saved. And that's why in the church this name is so precious to us. We believe in his name. We are baptized in his name. We pray in his name. We say, bless you in his name because his name is our only hope.

And we say with the psalmist, Psalm 103, praise the Lord my soul, all my inmost being, praise his holy name, the name of Jesus.

Friends, do you see how big our sin actually is? and do you see how gracious, even more gracious our savior is?

[37 : 41] And do you also see how powerful God's spirit is that he can come give you a new nature, give you a new life and enable you by grace to obey these commands, to use the name, to praise the name in a way that brings honor and glory to the only one who's worthy, the only one who's weighty enough and of such substance and such depth and such beauty that we would praise his name.

Friends, let's come to Jesus at this table and let's come to this table with a view to be empowered to go out and live these commands as God made us to live his life-giving law of love.

In the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, Amen. Amen.