

# God AND SON, INC.

Sermon, July 31, 2022

Texts: Exodus 20:1-7; Luke 2:41-50, 11:2

I've found over the years that probably the most frequently forgotten and/or ignored of the Ten Commandments is the third. Exodus 20:7 *"You shall not take the name of the LORD in vain, for the LORD will not hold anyone guiltless who takes His name in vain."* Or, as our pew Bibles have it: *"You shall not misuse the name of the LORD your God, for the LORD will not hold anyone guiltless who misuses His name."* The Hebrew phrase translated "misuse" and "in vain" can be literally translated as "for unreality." God's "name" is associated with something **very** real; in fact, it can be said that the name of God is associated with the ultimate base of all Reality itself. It should never be used as if it meant nothing! When Jesus taught His disciples to pray, what was the first petition in that prayer? *"Hallowed be Thy name."* Or, to put it in more common language: *"May Your name be kept and regarded and treated as holy."* To "hallow" God's name is to take it seriously, to use it reverently, to treat it and all with which it is associated with the utmost respect, honor and reverence.

Years ago a letter was received by the Christ Lutheran Church in Austin, Texas (*At least I think it was Austin; I failed to write down my source; it was reprinted in the Lutheran Magazine*), a letter that was obviously spit out of some computer somewhere. The letter to the Christ Lutheran Church began: *"Dear Mr. Christ."*

*Dear Mr. Christ,*

*Are you stuck in a dead end job? Is your daily work routine something you dread? Are you hassled by the demands and expectations of others? Are you unable to enjoy the good things in life because of the demands of your work? Send today for our free catalogue of courses that will put you ahead of the competition. Mr. Christ, with your own business you can be the boss. You can be in charge. You won't have to answer to anyone but yourself! Mr. Christ, you can be as successful as you want to be. There's a world of enjoyment and personal satisfaction awaiting you, so why not order our catalogue today?*

You can be the boss, Mr. Christ. You can be in charge! Well, um, "Mr. Christ" is already in charge. In fact, all authority in heaven and on earth has been given unto Him, as we cite from Matthew 28 in our worship bulletin each week under the heading "Our Mission."

On a related note, about thirty years ago I came across a business card that read: *"God and Son Inc, Doing Business With Folks Like You For Over 2,000 years."* If memory serves, the card was featured at a religious book store near my home town. God and Son Inc. is in the business of salvation, saving, salvaging, restoration and redemption of folks like us. And God the Father has given all *"authority, power and dominion"* to His only "heir," His only begotten Son. One might say God handed over the Family business to His Son, all the while maintaining a controlling interest! It is God the Father's business, controlled by the God the Son, with on-location training and management carried out by God the Holy Spirit. Friends, welcome to Greenwood Community Church, the local franchise of **God and Son, Inc.** This church is unabashedly a house of business; we have a mandate to be about the holy business of our triune God in ALL that we do and say and represent, all we do here is to be done in the name of the Father through the cooperation, assistance and power of God the Holy Spirit, and it is our conviction Jesus Christ is the One ultimately "minding the store."

This Gospel reading (Luke 2:41-50) is the account of how the adolescent Jesus, unbeknownst to his parents, stayed behind in Jerusalem after they had journeyed there for the Passover. A day or so into the journey back to Nazareth, Mary and Joseph realized Jesus was not with them, so they hurry back to Jerusalem. Two days later they find their twelve-year-old in the temple in deep discussion with the priests and temple officials. Jesus says to his earthly parents: *"Why did you seek me?"* he asked. *"Did you not know I must be about my Father's business?"* As if to intimate, *"Why would you be looking all over town? This should have been the first place for you to look for Me."* Luke tells us Mary and Joseph didn't quite know what He was talking about at the time, but the adolescent Jesus says two important things: (1) He refers to God as HIS Father ...thus making His first recorded claim to His unique status as the Son of God (*and using a title for God that has not heretofore been used to address God*) (2) And as God's son, He must be about His Father's business.

As a brief but significant aside (*and this is why I had us read Luke 11:2, part of our reading last week that I hoped to address in the sermon, but had to edit it out*), I'm sure the disciples marveled that when they asked Jesus to teach them how to pray, Jesus instructed them to address God as Father! This addressing God as Father just had not been done before, it had not been recorded in all the paggers of Scripture and/or historic Jewish tradition until now! I'm sure they're thinking, *"You mean, we can call God our Father, just like You?"* This is a sermon in itself, but in Jesus Christ, the only Son of God, His disciples are by faith adopted into the Family. And as adopted sons and daughters of God through our Lord Jesus Christ, we, too, are to be about our Father's business.

"Mr. Christ" often used business analogies in His teaching and parables. He talked about investment, He talked about borrowing, investing and selling, He talked about inheritances, estates, custodial ownership, and so on. I think using some business terminology might help us understand the fuller meaning of the third commandment and this first petition of the Lord's prayer. Think of God's name as trademarked property. **God and Son, Inc.** hold the "patent" on God's name, if you will. This divine corporation holds all rights to the usage of the name of God. God graciously licenses the use of His name to anyone who will use it **according to His written instructions**. Those written instructions, of course, are contained in His "Systems" Manual, which we know as the Bible. In order to gain wider distribution for this wonderful Manual, capture greater market share for God's authorized franchise -- the church -- and for the greater end of bringing more and more workers, stockholders and eventual heirs into the Family business, **God and Son, Inc.** has licensed or authorized the use of His name to anyone who will use it according to the "company's" specific, written instructions ... spelled out in the pages of Holy Scripture.

It is to be understood, however, that God's name has not been released into the public domain. God retains legal control over His name and threatens serious penalties against the unauthorized use, or misuse, of this Name. All "trademark violations," all misuses, misrepresentations, abuses as well as any misleading applications of this Name will be prosecuted to the fullest extent of the Law. The prosecutor, judge, jury and enforcer of the Law is God Himself. As explicitly asserted in Exodus 20:7, He will not hold anyone guiltless who misuses His name. The gist of the third commandment and the first petition of the Lord's Prayer is simply "Don't misuse God's name!" Doing evil in God's name, and/or attaching God's name to endorse what He has called evil or false or immoral, are some ways God's name is misused.

It should go without saying that His name is never to be used flippantly or casually, or as an expression of disgust or surprise. Using God's name in any of these ways is a *profane* act; it is a violation of something holy. Yet many ... and, sad to say, even many within the church ... misuse the name of God casually, flippantly, even blithely, without a second thought. I honestly believe it's like a fingernail scraping across God's divine "eardrum" whenever He hears "*Oh, God*" as a casual exclamation, flippant expression of surprise or disgust, or in any way other than intentionally addressing Him with respect and reverence, in prayer and/or through worship. Of all people, Christians should be most sensitive to using the name of God with honor, respect, deference and reverence. In the broader sense of this commandment, God commands us to take Him and all He stands for, all associated with His name, seriously. With "reality." Don't take God or the things of God lightly. Respect His name, and all that is associated with that name.

I preached on this 'way back in 1999, I still vividly remember the following week hearing someone waiting in the greeting line at the door telling someone else about how much she really liked last week's sermon. With great animation and enthusiasm in her voice, she blurted out loud and clear, "*God, I didn't know it was wrong to say G-- ... oops.*" While on the subject, the same goes when one mutters or sputters, "*Oh, Jesus Christ.*" Two things: (1) Christ isn't Jesus' last name. Jesus is the name; Christ is the title. The meaning of the title "Christ" is the Anointed One, which is the Greek equivalent of the Hebrew word "Messiah." In fact, whenever one says Jesus Christ, he or she is making a theological assertion, whether he or she recognizes it or not! By saying Jesus Christ, one is asserting Jesus IS the Christ, the Messiah, the Anointed One of God. Next time you hear someone curse or mutter, "Oh, Jesus Christ," try responding, "*Amen! That's RIGHT! I couldn't agree more! So GLAD to hear you confess that Jesus is indeed the Christ, the Messiah!*" See what kind of reaction you get. And (2) I can imagine Jesus saying in such situations, "*If you're going to curse, use your own name.*"

Although it involves our language, this command has such a wider application. Remember the KJV and RSV translations: "*You shall not TAKE the name of the Lord in vain.*" I would like to remind all of us there is a very *literal* sense in which we take God's name. When I married my wife, she *took on* my name. Now, not all follow this custom today, but buried deep in the Western tradition of this taking of the man's family name is a reflection of this spiritual truth: When one enters the family of God, that person takes on the "family" name of the Father. He/she becomes part of the Christian family, he/she should live to honor and bring honor to that Family name, he/she becomes a co-worker in the Family business, as well as an eventual co-heir. When we baptize "*in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit,*" we are not just reciting an incantation. The Sacrament of Baptism is a *naming* rite in which the "*family name*" of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit is given. We publicly take or claim God's family name as our own, or, as in the case of infant children, we "solemnly engage" them to be the Lord's and thereafter treat them as part of the Family.

Let us realize the *privilege* we are given to be able to call God Father, to be co-workers and eventual co-heirs in the family business; we are given the responsibility to hallow and bring honor to the family name ... through our words, actions, behavior and our very lives. Don't take His name lightly, don't misuse the name of God, hallow His holy name ... and let us lovingly mind the family business with diligence and honor.