

“3rd Commandment”
For Our Good Always
Downtown
September 26, 2021

Good morning, if we haven't met, my name is Allen and I am one of the pastors here at Midtown. My wife and I have been here from the beginning of Midtown as one of the founding pastors. As for my role, I am what many people would call one of our executive elders giving oversight to our church and specifically I work with and oversee lots of non-sunday things like LifeGroups, Care, Mission, etc.

Today as we continue in our series For Our Good Always, we are going to be looking at the 3rd Commandment.

Deut 5:11

11 “You shall not take the name of the Lord your God in vain, for the Lord will not hold him guiltless who takes his name in vain.

I think this command might be the most foreign command to us. Or it feels like it shouldn't make the top 10 list. Like why is this a big deal and how does this impact my life. The reason this command is the most inaccessible is because we have little category for **sanctity**. If you've been following along with the book and series, you'll notice that this command strikes the sanctity foundation--the idea that some things are to be holy, set apart, reverent, approached differently.

When we violate the sanctity moral it has a visceral effect on you, it makes you shudder. Something you see or hear is so disrespectful, degrading, or shocking that it makes you shudder. Racial slur - it is unsettling, insulting the imago dei of a human.

A little lighter in tone, but do y'all remember back in middle school, when “Yo mamma” jokes were all the rage. Immediately, you better watch your mouth when you talk about my mom. As a 12 year old I know my mom had some type of gravitas that merited respect and you don't get to disrespect my mom. To a far lesser degree, maybe this applies to certain figures or celebrities. For any basketball fans of the 90s, you better watch your mouth when you talk about Michael Jordan, you better put some respect on his name.

This conversation happens all the time in my house. Pick a kid, it doesn't matter which one because I say it to all of them. “I am not your sister, I am not your brother, nor am I your friend. I am your dad and you must be careful how you talk to me.

We often disconnect this idea from God because we can't see or perceive the negative effect. Our care/harm moral doesn't register. I don't know that we shudder at the thought of God being

spoken of or treated in ways that demean Him. Somehow that doesn't quite connect or strike the same. That's an issue because when the Bible talks about God's name and the way He should be approached and spoken about, there is gravitas galore.

Back to **Deut 5:11**

11 “You shall not take the name of the Lord your God in vain, for the Lord will not hold him guiltless who takes his name in vain.

Vain means “empty, nothing, worthless, or to no good purpose.

We are commanded not to take the name of God in a manner that is wicked, worthless, or for wrong purposes. So I would argue that carelessly or flippantly using God's name certainly would qualify as a vain usage. His name should be spoken of with great care, caution, and weight. But I believe there are even more applications for us here.

Take - to bear or to carry the weight of. So taking the Lord's name in vain also includes “bearing” the name of God in false, flippant, or unworthy ways. Bearing His name in ways that do not represent Him well. Like a knight that carries the flag of his King. We bear the name of the Lord.

Since “take” can be translated into “bear” for the rest of the sermon we will be using “bear” when referring to the 3rd Commandment. You shall not bear the name of the Lord your God in vain. The word ‘bear’ gives more insight into the full implications of this command.

I grew up in a small town, Fountain Inn, right outside of Greenville. Lived right in the middle of town, my house was across the street from City Hall. My family has been part of this town for generations upon generations. I can show you where 2 of my great, great grandparents lived. All that to say. People know us. It's a small town and I am related to half of the people there. Our family has a reputation to uphold, a name that carries weight.

Well, my older sister and I also have pretty rebellious hearts. So growing up, especially those teenage years, there were some shenanigans. And I must admit not all of them were entirely legal. I distinctly remember my mom having a conversation with us.

I will never forget what she said to me. She looked us in our eyes and I could tell she was serious and she meant it. She said "we...are Tippings. And Tippings don't act like that. With your name you represent more than yourselves. (repeat) With your name you represent more than yourself.

See, to bear the name is to represent that name. I bear the name Tipping so I should uphold what that name means, what that name stands for, what it represents. ...and this is what the third

commandment is driving at. We who bear the name of Jesus, we who represent God, the name of God, are to uphold what that name means and not "take God's name in vain."

So, for clarity, here are some examples of how a person might take the Lord's name in vain..."

- High schooler says to his new employer, "I am a Christian and I prefer not to be scheduled to work on a Sunday." - meanwhile I was (wait a minute these are hypothetical) meanwhile he parties just as hard with coworkers on Saturday night. Vain
- "God told me to break up with you" - meanwhile you are just annoyed with her and can't imagine this relationship going anywhere and because of your comfort idol, you just want to take the easy way out and blame God. Vain
- Instagram post "Blessed and highly favored, look what God has done with this new car" - meanwhile, you don't give to the mission of God through the local church and have never lived a lifestyle of generosity. Vain
- "The Lord has answered my prayer with this new relationship" - meanwhile he isn't a Christian and y'all been sleeping together since week 2. Vain
- "A pastor telling people, God called me to serve at this new church" - it just so happens to be in a better city, making lots more money, with a congregation double the size and exponentially builds my personal platform. Vain.

We bear his name and God doesn't want to be a pawn in anyone's agenda. He is not interested in being misrepresenting and his name being attached to things that miss represent his character. God's character, his reputation is wrapped up in his name. When we bear the name of Jesus we represent or misrepresent his character to those around us. The 3rd commandment is not just about avoiding saying certain catchphrases, although they probably should be avoided. It's much more than that. It is about protecting the name, the reputation of God.

Remember back to **Exodus 3** where God speaks to Moses from the burning bush.

13 Then Moses said to God, "If I come to the people of Israel and say to them, 'The God of your fathers has sent me to you,' and they ask me, 'What is his name?' what shall I say to them?"¹⁴ God said to Moses, "I AM WHO I AM." And he said, "Say this to the people of Israel: 'I AM has sent me to you.'"¹⁵ God also said to Moses, "Say this to the people of Israel: 'The LORD, the God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, has sent me to you.' This is my name forever, and thus I am to be remembered throughout all generations.

God's name is **Yahweh**, Jehovah and it means "I am." God is making a proclamation not just about his name but about who he is. It is both a description and a title. "I am."

- I am. God is saying he is eternal. He has no limits. No beginning and no end. We only think in a linear timetable, start to finish. God is always. Always has and always will.
- I am. God is saying he is other. Not like anything you can comprehend or fully understand.

- I am. God is saying he is self-sufficient. He has no need, he is lacking in anything. He doesn't tire, and he doesn't sleep. He doesn't require help and he has no equal.

Like anyone or anything else, God's name, Yahweh, is the representation of His being. So His name is to be respected and revered in a way that is appropriate for the most powerful, holy, self-existent being in the universe.

To bear the name of God is like seeing a person in uniform and expecting them to act to the standard of that uniform. For example, if I see someone with a red shirt on, black pants, and a C logo on their shirt I expect them to say 'my pleasure.' I expect them to be kind and courteous. To bear the logo with honor is to follow the standards and guidelines that make a Chic-fil-a employee a Chic-fil-a employee.

You shall not bear the name of the Lord your God in vain because his name represents his character and his person.

Isaiah 48:11

For my own sake, for my own sake, I do it,
for how should my name be profaned?
My glory I will not give to another.

God makes it clear that his name shall not be profaned. His actions are often motivated by keeping the representation of His name and the actual substance of Himself in line. He will not allow His name to be confused with lesser, unholy things. He won't stand for His name being profaned by being attached to things that are not of Him. God's name is sacred and holy. It shall not be degraded or debased.

Ezekial 20:9

⁹ But I acted for the sake of my name, that it should not be profaned in the sight of the nations among whom they lived, in whose sight I made myself known to them in bringing them out of the land of Egypt.

Repeated 4 times in Ezekial 20 as a mantra for why God showed favor toward the rebellious Israelite people whom He just rescued from the oppressive hand of Egypt. His name and reputation motivated his graciousness.

So this all lands with some weight for us who are Christians. To bear the name of Jesus with honor is to follow in his way. To be a Christian means to be a little Christ. To represent him appropriately. To proclaim his goodness and glory both in word and in action

This is why it causes so much damage when people who claim to be Christians don't actually follow Christ. They claim the title or status but then act in demonstrably unChristian ways. And

it makes those around them go, “Well, I’m not sure what to think about God now, because these people say one thing but then just do whatever they want.”

You can’t claim Christ and then do whatever you want. That makes you a liar who harms the witness of God’s church. You are bearing the name of God in vain and causing severe damage.

God cares about the sanctity of His name. He wants other people to see Him for who He truly is and be saved. So He cares about the purity of His church, those who are called by His name. We cannot bear His name flippantly.

If I had one thing I’d really like to press us on today in light of this command, it would simply be this: You always bear the name. And this is something to take very seriously.

Let me help you see it more.

We misrepresent God, we bear his name in vain when we attach him to something he isn’t attached to, oftentimes our own agenda. When we use a false view of God to justify our behaviors, thoughts, and attitudes.

I got a 5-year-old named Toby. He is my dude. I tell him all the time he is my favorite little boy (for those wondering I only have one son). Believe it or not, there are times when Toby and I are in conflict. Often times it revolves around him wanting something or wanting to get something or just wanting his way. Like us all, he even uses manipulation to try to get what he wants. So when Toby doesn’t get what he wants from me he often says, “Well my Momma said I could have it...”

And I am like “what, are you for real right now!?” You are my dearest 5-year-old and you are a liar. You forget that I have a direct connection to your mother. She is my wife. I know her and we are on the same team. We work together for your good.

He is connected to his momma, but he is not always connected to reality and in doing so he is bearing her name in vain. He misrepresents his mother to me.

Examples:

- We see it in the Bible in the book of Galatians - there is a group preaching a false gospel to the church requiring circumcision and other adherence to Jewish practices as a means of earning salvation. That ain’t it.
- We see it in history with the Crusades - Church-sanctioned holy wars. Christians fighting to kill those who didn’t believe as they did many motivated by hate, prosperity, fame, and papal indulgences. That ain’t it.

- We see it in current-day political agendas. To follow God is to choose this party and this platform. That ain't it.

It's also the everyday things I brought up at the beginning. God told ... God gave me ... God this, God that. When we attach God to our personal agenda we are bearing the name of God in vain. We are misrepresenting him - his actions, his words, and his character.

Colossians 1

so as to walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing to him: bearing fruit in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God ... 13 He has delivered us from the domain of darkness and transferred us to the kingdom of his beloved Son, 14 in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.

We misrepresent the character of God when we don't "walk in a manner worthy of the Lord"

We are instructed to walk in a manner worthy of the Lord who has delivered us. In his graciousness, he rescued us from the dominion of darkness and transferred us to the kingdom of His beloved Son. We were enslaved to sin and we are now set free and brought into a new kingdom with a new king. We are to walk in the light of that. In allegiance to our Savior and King.

When we don't walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, when our functional belief doesn't align with our confessional belief, we take the Lord's name in vain. With our mouths, we confess Jesus is Lord, but with our hearts and our actions, we declare something wholly different.

Confessional Belief - if asked we would say all the right things accurately proclaiming Biblical theology.

Functional Belief - what I actually believe is demonstrated through my actions and life, not just my words. In fact, my words sound hollow, unappealing, hypocritical when my life doesn't match.

- You say that you are saved by grace but your judgemental attitude for those who don't live up to your standards proclaims your self-righteous and self-sufficient religion more in line with the Pharisees than Jesus. They don't align, you say one thing and act a different way.
- You say God is all-knowing and all-loving, but your refusal to obey God's design for sexuality proclaims that God doesn't know what is best, good, or right for you.
- You say that you follow a gracious and generous and self-sacrificing God, but your unwillingness to sacrifice time or money for others points to a consumeristic Christianity that requires nothing of those who believe. Get what I want for the least amount of effort

- You say that you believe in the power of the gospel but your unwillingness to forgive and be reconciled to fellow believers proclaims an impotent, powerless gospel.

We bear the name of Jesus in vain when our beliefs are incongruent. When our actions, reactions, attitudes don't align with our confessional beliefs. This is why confession and repentance are such a huge deal and we practice Engage the Heart weekly. We are consistently out of line and the goal is to realize it and repent. Through the power of the Holy Spirit and the help of the community, we seek to realign our lives with our beliefs.

When Christians aren't in the habit of repenting, their lives paint a warped image of the God they follow.

Catch this...because we bear the name of Christ, those around us are always sensing and feeling this out. They are intuitively going,

- Oh, so this is how a Christian handles themselves when relating to a difficult boss at work.
- Oh, this is how a Christian wife interacts in her marriage.
- Oh, this is how a Christian salesman conducts business.”

You always bear the name.

- With that waiter who messed up your order...you bear the name. Be gracious as the Lord has been gracious with you.
- With the customer service employee who isn't good at their job...you bear the name. Be patient as the Lord has been patient with you.
- With your boss...you bear the name. So work diligently, as you were working for the Lord.
- With your neighbor...you bear the name. So be considerate, engaging. Cut your grass and let them borrow sugar!

You bear the name of Jesus. Do not take it in vain.

All of us in the room are people who have misrepresented God. We have taken or born God's name in vain in one way or another, most likely. We have not treated Yahweh with the utmost reverence that He deserves, but have sought to make Him small.

And here's the most amazing thing to me--according to Scripture, the very same people who are condemned by the act of profaning God's name are able to be saved by calling on God's name.

Joel 2:32

And it shall come to pass that everyone who calls on the name of the LORD shall be saved.

This is a messianic prophecy about salvation through Jesus. In his Pentecost sermon in Acts 2, Peter quotes this verse and declares that the time has come to fruition, that all who call on the name of Jesus will be saved. Paul also quotes it in Romans 10, stating again that all who humble themselves through faith and call upon God to save them will indeed be saved.

To call out to God by name is to request his intervention. To reach out, knowing we need help. It is a personal plea. Help me. God save me.

It appears that in a sense, calling on the name of the Lord is the antidote to taking the name in vain.

We call on the name of the Lord to be saved. And God loves to answer this prayer, to save sinners, to count the unrighteous as righteous through the sacrifice of His Son.

But we also continue calling on the name of the Lord after we are justified by grace through faith. We call upon Him for help the same way we called on Him to save us.

- Lord, help me to approach you with the appropriate posture. Don't let me treat you as if you are lesser than you are. Help me not to belittle You. Help me to shudder at the thought of demeaning or degrading you.
- Lord, help me to bear your name if not perfectly, with honor. Don't let me be a hypocrite who brings shame and confusion to the church. Help me know that I always bear the name, and I never know who is watching.
- Lord, help me be the boss you've called me to be, the employee you've called me to be, the parent you've called me to be, the church member you've called me to be, the missionary in my neighborhood you've called me to be.

He delights to answer all of these prayers, as we call upon the name for everything that we need. And one day all will proclaim Jesus as Lord. **Philippians 2** speaks of this day:

Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name,
¹⁰ so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth,
¹¹ and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

One day, the name that is above every name will be honored as it rightfully deserves. Every knee will bow, even those who stubbornly stood against Him. Every human, whether heading to eternal bliss or damnation. Every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord.

The name will be honored, one way or another. It will be held in the highest of praise, just as it deserves.

And as those who currently bear the name, we don't wait for that day. We do so now, having been saved by the name. We seek to bear the name of Jesus with honor.

Conclusion.

Now let's enter into a time of response. We are going to sing and declare the goodness and graciousness of God. We are going to do just the opposite of taking the Lord's name in vain, we are going to worship Jesus. It is an act of bowing before him in submission and exalting his name.

Before we do that I want to encourage you in a time of confession and repentance and then taking of communion. Confessing how you have broken the 3rd commandment whether with your words or your actions.

After confession let the act of communion, the taking of the bread and the juice remembering Christ's body broken for us and his blood of a new covenant. Take communion as a reminder that you have been rescued and redeemed through the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus. Freed from the dominion of darkness and brought into the kingdom of light.

When you are done then with all you have, proclaim his goodness. Sing and shout and set your heart's affection upon him.