

Sermon #1,277: Matthew 7:15-23 (Historic Gospel)
8-6-17 (Trinity 8), Bethany-Princeton MN

JESUS TEACHES THE SECOND COMMANDMENT

Prayer: Dear Lord: We pray that by the help of Your Holy Spirit we would honor Your name by the right faith in Your Word, so that we *will* enter the kingdom of heaven and not be told to depart from You. In Jesus' holy name. Amen.

Sermon Text, Matthew 7:15-23 (v. 22-23). ²² "Many will say to Me in that day, 'Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Your name, cast out demons in Your name, and done many wonders in Your name?' ²³ And then I will declare to them, 'I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness!' "

The Second Commandment (*as the head of the family should teach it in a simple way to his household*):

You shall not take the name of the Lord, your God, in vain. *What does this mean? We should fear and love God, so that we do not curse, practice witchcraft, lie, or deceive by His name, but call upon Him in every trouble, pray, praise, and give thanks.*

Lord, sanctify us by the truth. Your Word is truth. Amen.

In the holy name of Jesus, who is Himself the Word and the Truth:

This is about at the end of Jesus' Sermon on the Mount. Two Sundays ago we heard from the first part of this sermon, and if you recall, Jesus was teaching the 5th commandment. He taught us that it isn't just about murder, but even about envy and sinful anger. He was teaching the true meaning of the second table of the Law - the commandments about the neighbor - and how we have many more sins in this area than we even realize. But more than that, He was exposing our self-righteous ways so that we would flee to Him to receive His righteousness as a gift.

When we think of our own sins, we think first of these sins against our neighbor. These are the things that bother us most: how we mistreat or offend others, or wrong things we do that upset others. I find that I get most nervous about what other people think of me than what God thinks of me, and this is backward. I am to be more concerned with what God thinks of me, which brings us to the sins of the first table of the Law.

That is what Jesus ends His Sermon on the Mount with, which indicates how important they are. He speaks about unfaithful preachers of the Word – **“Beware of false prophets”** – so we might think of the 3rd Commandment, which is about hearing His Word.

But Jesus is dealing most directly with the 2nd Commandment, *“You shall not take the name of the Lord your God in vain.”* Notice the emphasis on His name. The false teachers will call upon Him by name on Judgment Day: **“Lord, Lord!”** They will say: **“in Your name ... in Your name ... in Your name.”** They claim to have used His name rightly, but they didn’t. **“I will declare to them, ‘I never knew you; depart from Me!’ ”**

Now, people don’t think much of this. God’s name is thrown around with abandon, and hardly anyone loses sleep over it. So what Jesus does here is to fast-forward to Judgment Day and show a 1st Commandment connection: to stand in the presence of the only true God. Later in Matthew, Jesus says God will judge *“every idle word men may speak, [when] they will give account of it in the day of judgment ... Whoever speaks against the Holy Spirit, it will not be forgiven him, either in this age or in the age to come”* (Mt 12:32, 36). Here Jesus makes a clear connection here between how we speak God’s name and, on Judgment Day, God speaking our name favorably or else saying whom He does not know.

We are suddenly wide-awake to the issue of how we use God’s name.

First, we need to know what “God’s name” is. The 2nd commandment isn’t about just any cursing, lying or deceiving. It condemns doing this *“in His name.”* God’s name is how He reveals Himself. He reveals Himself in His Word. The only way we can know God is from His Word, the Bible. Jesus is talking about the lying and deceiving done with His Word.

What Jesus condemns here is preachers doing this lying or deceiving *“in [Jesus’] name.”* They do their work in Christian churches. They preach in Jesus’ name. So people listen. But they they change the meaning of what God said. They don’t preach Jesus’ doctrine. They claim to be doing it, but they don’t – or Jesus wouldn’t have to say, **“I never knew you.”** These people use God’s Word. Supposedly they preach it, but really they don’t. They preach something else. They lie about God’s Word. They deceive with God’s Word. This is lying and deceiving in His name.

We also need to know how we are connected to Jesus' words about "**false prophets.**" Jesus' words are built on an important section of the book of Jeremiah. In chapter 23, God says: "*I have heard what the prophets have said who prophesy lies in My name, saying, 'I have dreamed, I have dreamed!' They are prophets of the deceit of their own heart, who try to make My people forget My name by their dreams ... I am against the prophets who use their tongues and say, 'He [the LORD] says.'*"

This is not just about ancient prophets or crazy preachers of so-called biblical prophecy who make outlandish claims about how Revelation corresponds exactly to current events. In Jeremiah 23, the false prophets the one true God claims to be "against" are those who speak their own opinion but say this is what God says, or who depart from God's Word and still say it's God's Word. By these dreams or mere human opinions, God says, they do nothing less than "*make My people forget My name.*" How awful that is! This is what happens, though.

This is about how people are led away from God's truth in all times, even – and especially – today. The 2nd commandment is for all people to obey. Notice that Jesus is not warning those false preachers. Jesus is giving this warning to every Christian. Every Christian has a responsibility.

Where true doctrine is not taught, then what God says in His Word is forgotten. Where sins are simply whitewashed and excused, there is no need for a Savior and people are diverted away from Jesus. He is turned into something less than a Savior. Jesus is ignored, hidden, or changed into a counterfeit Jesus. Then what do you suppose happens? Faith in Jesus dies, from not actually hearing the voice of the Good Shepherd.

Then the horribly sad "**Depart from Me**" on Judgment Day will be heard by that person who stayed in a false-teaching church, listened to false doctrine being taught and remained unconcerned or idle, allowing his faith to be changed and believing lies spoken in Jesus' name. They will be eternally "not known" by Christ. They will spend eternity unable to ever again hear His voice. Does Jesus want this? No, not at all!

This is why Jesus says, "**Beware of false prophets.**" What He wants is to save everyone from this – to save you from it! He preaches this strong Law out of love for your soul. We are all guilty of using His name – His

Word – wrongly at times, or of not loving it enough to take this as seriously as we should. This might make you feel nervous or afraid that you will not make it in the end. But Jesus isn't saying this to make you nervous. He is being pastoral. Jesus is shepherding. He is steering you away from the wolf, the devil. He's protecting you with His rod and staff.

So now if we listen closely to Jesus' words, He makes a great promise to you about His Word. As your Shepherd, He feeds you in good pasture with the bread of life by which you will never hunger and He leads you to living fountains of waters where you drink and live forever. This is the forgiveness of sins. He forgives your sins against the 2nd commandment. He forgives all your sins against His Word and truth.

Listen to His word of pardon. Listen to His promise. After Jesus says, **"Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' shall enter the kingdom of heaven,"** lest you be unduly afraid He says this next: **"but he who does the will of My Father in heaven."** This is a promise that such people shall enter into heaven!

These words of Jesus about doing the will of His Father and thus entering heaven are not talking about doing good works to get into heaven. Remember, those who miss out on heaven, He said, are guilty of **"lawlessness,"** which He defines as lying about God's Word, listening to and following false teaching, etc. It's about not hearing and believing. So the promise of going into heaven is about hearing His truth and believing it.

So if you are worried about your own salvation, the answer to that is to ask: *"Do I believe that I am a sinner? – Yes, I believe it; I am a sinner. Am I also sorry for my sins? – Yes, I am sorry that I have sinned against God. Do I believe that Christ died for me? – Yes, I believe it. Do I believe that He shed His blood for me on the cross for the forgiveness of my sins? – Yes, I do believe. Do I believe that by faith in Him I shall not perish but have everlasting life? – Yes, I believe it for He said it."* Then you shall enter the kingdom of heaven! This is the promise that Christ is making, in this verse, to you. It's certain!

This is what the Bible teaches from beginning to end. This is what His Word says. His Word from beginning to end is proven true by Jesus' resurrection which was testified by many eyewitnesses. It's true! So everything He says about your salvation is true. He says it to you.

But you do not arrive at this faith by your own powers and your own effort. It is a miracle worked by the Holy Spirit, that you believe. He does this miracle through His Word. So when you feel weak in this area, if you feel easily led astray, if you are lied to about God and deceptions about His Word are thrown at you from all directions, what do you need? You need to hear the voice of your Shepherd. You need to hear His Word. Through His actual words He shepherds you.

Where does He do this most specifically? In the blessing. In the blessing His name is spoken to you and placed upon you. "*The Lord ... the Lord ... the Lord ...*," you hear in the blessing. The Lord bless you and keep you. The Lord be gracious to you – giving you His grace, forgiving you. The Lord give you peace. This is what the name of the Lord is for. His name blesses you. His name takes away all curse and condemnation. His name is placed upon you to bless you, to forgive you, to keep you, to give you peace. This is the best thing I can tell you. This is what His Word is for. To bless you. To forgive you. To keep you His own. To give you peace.

This is what the 2nd commandment is about, really, all of this goodness that His Name and Word give you, both now and for eternity. Do not be afraid. It is not ultimately about what you do with His Name and Word. It is about what His Name and Word do with you. It's all good. Amen!