

Not Just Another Name

June 25, 2017

**Our Savior's Way
Worshiping Sundays 8:00, 9:30, & 11:00 AM**

Pastor Bill Mann

As some of you know my wife and I are looking forward to a new grandchild. He's expected to arrive in September. So my son and his wife are trying to choose a name. Remember coosing names for your kids? It's a big deal—isn't it? Lamaze classes, decorating the nursery—nothing takes as much time and effort as choosing a name for the new baby. And you have to be careful—I mean about the name that you choose. You don't want to choose a silly-sounding name. Maybe you heard about the little girl whose parents named her *Talula does the Hula from Hawaii*? Little *Talula does the Hula from Hawaii* had to put up with so much ridicule and teasing from the other kids--a judge finally removed her from the custody of her parents. Now she goes by the name of "K". Just the letter. And you don't want to make your kid's name into a joke. If your last name is "Wood" you want to resist the temptation to name your daughter "Holly." Or of your last name is "Case", don't name your son "Justin." Here's a tip from a pastor who has to remember how to spell a lot of children's names. Use the normal spelling. If you want to name your child, whether it's a boy or girl, Jackson—spell it J-A-C-K-S-O-N. Not J-A-X-O-N. You'll make my life a lot easier. Do you know, there was actually a study done of parents who gave their children bizzare names. What effect did the name have on the child later in life? For example one mother and father decided to name their newborn twins "Winner" and "Loser." You'd think that the names would have traumatized the kids. But surprisingly having a bizarre name had little effect on children. On the other hand, having

parents willing to name you “Winner” and “Loser”—made all the difference.

Back in the days of the Bible names had incredible significance. A person’s name communicated the very essence of an individual. Names were much more than just an identifying label. “Abraham” meant “Father of many nations.” “Sarah” meant “princess.” “Esau” meant “red and hairy” because he had red hair and was very hirsute. Today we still choose names for our children that communicate a message. We hear names like Michael Jordan or Martin Luther King or Queen Elizabeth and certain images and feelings flood our minds. On the back side of that, it’s been a long time since I’ve baptized an Adolph or a Judas or a Cain. These names carry with them a negative connotation. So, when Moses stood in front of the burning bush and asked God, “What is your name?” It was a loaded question. Moses wanted to know more than just a name. He wanted to know the true essence and nature of the deity that was speaking to him. Moses wanted to know what he could expect from this God who had called him from a life of luxury and abundance in Egypt to a life herding sheep in the wilderness. Who was this God? What was his name? Do you remember the name God gave Moses? The name is YAHWEH. Sometimes we say Jehovah. But there are many names of God in the Old Testament. They all describe something about his nature and his character. Here is a review of just a few of God’s names:

VIDEO: “Names of God” by Motion Design Media

Roughly translated YAHWEH or Jehovah means “I AM.” Jesus picked up on this. The Gospel of John records seven “I AM SAYINGS” of Jesus Christ. The message being that the God of the Old Testament—the God of Moses—and the God of the New

Testament—Jesus Christ are one and the same. Right now the Tuesday morning Bible Class is studying through the I AM SAYINGS in the Gospel of John. Here is what Jesus said about himself:

VIDEO: “The I AM Statements of Jesus Intro” by Minister2Kids

Why so much talk about names? Because this morning we’re taking a look at the Second Commandment and it’s all about God’s name—“Do not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain” or “Do not misuse God’s name.”

Last week Sally and I met a pastor and his wife that who went to seminary with us. We met them in Boston and then drove up to the White Mountains and the Lake Region of New Hampshire of a week. We’d never been there before and it was great! Now you may be wondering what do two pastors do when they go on vacation. Well, remember we are Lutheran pastors so one of the things we did was we went to breweries—and there are a lot of breweries in New Hampshire. I wanted to go to the Von Trapp Family Brewery, but that was two hours away in Vermont. Can you imagine—Maria and the Captain Von Trapp escaped the Nazis in Austria, came to America, and now their grandchildren are making beer in Vermont. But, I need to move on because the point of the story is not beer. Although Luther did say that Christians need to drink more beer. He said, “When you drink beer you get sleepy, when you sleep more you sin less, when you sin less you go to heaven—so drink more beer. Here’s the point—we were right by the lake—Squam Lake—where the film “On Golden Pond” was made (Can you guess when?—1981). Some of you old-timers remember that movie with Henry Fonda and Katherine Hepburn. So we took a pontoon boat ride and saw all the places where the movie was shot. One of the things I remember about the movie “On Golden Pond”, when it came out—was how terrible I thought the language was. We watched the movie again last

week. They were taking God's name in vain all through it—from beginning to end. But, do you know something, the language in that old movie was mild compared to what you hear in the movies, on TV, in our schools and in our homes today. The two most popular texting abbreviations are LOL and OMG. The second is not a laughing matter. It's taking God's name in vain. I mean, did I miss it? At some point during the last 30 years did God do away with the Second Commandment?—"Don't take God's name in vain—wait! Never-mind, you don't have to keep that on anymore. "

"Don't take God's name in vain." What's that really mean? Well, the word "VAIN" means empty. In other words, "Don't empty God's name of it's meaning." Remember that the name of God conveys the character of God, the nature of God, the very essence of God himself. And so to take God's name in vain is to rob God of his majesty and power and the meaning He has in your life. A recent poll found that 60% of Americans admit to having taken God's name in vain. I think the truth is more like 100%. I think in one way or another we've all robbed God of the honor and glory due His holy name. That's why we need a Savior. That's why Jesus died. So that you and I can be forgiven. So we can learn how to keep this Second Commandment. How do you do it? I think Luther puts it so simply and so well: "We should fear and love God that we do not curse, swear, use Satanic arts, lie or deceive by His name; but call upon it in every trouble, pray, praise and give thanks." "Call on God's name in every trouble, pray, praise and give thanks." It's that simple. It's as simple as remembering that we were created by God, for God and everything we have comes from God. And we, His people, are called to remember that He is God and to give His name the respect it deserves.