

**Sermon preached by Mr. Michael Bittenbender
at Faith Evangelical Presbyterian Church,
Kingstowne, Virginia, on Sunday, September 30, 2018**

THE TEN COMMANDMENTS (3 & 4)

Exodus 20:7-11

This morning's Scripture comes to us from Exodus chapter 20, verses 7-11. Yes, we are covering two commandments this morning, yes there will be more to discuss with both of them after this, no you will not miss the Redskins game today, oh wait...It's a bye week.

Please let us give our reverent attention to the reading of God's holy word.

“You shall not misuse the name of the Lord your God, for the Lord will not hold anyone guiltless who misuses His name. “Remember the Sabbath day by keeping it holy. Six days you shall labor and do all your work, but the seventh day is a Sabbath to the Lord your God. On it you shall not do any work, neither you, nor your son or daughter, nor your male or female servant, nor your animals, nor any foreigner residing in your towns. For in six days the Lord made the heavens and the earth, the sea, and all that is in them, but He rested on the seventh day. Therefore the Lord blessed the Sabbath day and made it holy.”

May God bless the reading of His holy word.

Before I get started I want to address a question. Why do these 10 commandments matter to me now? Aren't they from the Old Testament?

A prominent Christian Pastor has argued that we can confidently dismiss the 10 commandments and only rely on Jesus's words, “So now I am giving you a new commandment: Love each other. Just as I have loved you, you just love each other.”

The argument goes that if we obey this new commandment, there is no need to obey the old commandments. I, along with many others, disagree. I believe that when Jesus gives us commands, such as those to love God and love our neighbor, He is not only quoting Leviticus and Deuteronomy, He is simply restating the commandments in a simpler way, not abolishing the 10 commandments

I believe that the God of the Old Testament is the same as the New Testament, that the Old Testament is not irrelevant, that the God who wrote these commandments is the same God who is writing them in our hearts. The commandments help us have a better relationship with God and with others. There is grace to be found in the commandments and we will get to that a little later.

Now onto the commandments we have before us.

I really began to cringe when crunch time began on preparing for this 3rd commandment. Last time I preached I thought I may address it but didn't want to rush it or not give it its proper attention. As I began to read this commandment to myself, I found myself asking, ok, but what else is there to say? Seems simple enough. I guess I am supposed to say, "Don't say Oh My God". As long as you don't say that, or perhaps "God damn it", you are not violating the 3rd commandment. What I have come to learn is that it is not that simple. Turns out there are many ways people ascribe to misusing the Lord's name.

First, let's talk about the word "misuse". Many other translations use "do not use the name in vain, do not use the name of God for evil purposes." Often when thinking about this verse, the idea of profanity comes up. One of the definitions of profanity is "to make common", to use irreverently. When we profane the name of God, we are making his name common. Ron Mehl, author of a book I have mentioned in each of these commandments sermons before, *The Tender Commandments*, says this, "What does it mean, then, to profane the Lord God? It is nothing less than a denial of His holiness and majesty and power. It is an attempt to somehow pull God down to a common level and make Him equal with me." His name is not common. His name brings salvation. He goes on to quote John 20:31 which says, "But these things are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you may have life in His name." The name of God brings life. We must not take God's name lightly nor without meaningful intention. Many Jews to this day will not speak His name nor write His name. There is an utter reverence for God's name. Now, this is a pendulum that swings maybe too far, but worth noting and perhaps helps us check our hearts about how carelessly we may take God's name.

Through various studying, there are a few different ways we can misuse God's name. The overarching, all-encompassing way that precedes these three ways, we can misuse God's name for our own gain, with our own agenda, for our own purposes. Now, we can misuse God's name in prayer, prophesy, and proclamation. In those ways, we can use it to insult, to intimidate, to indulge ourselves, to impress others, and use it impulsively.

We misuse God's name in prayer when we pray selfishly. When we pray for things not according to His will. We are called to pray in His name and we are praying wrong, in His name, when we are not praying according to His will. James 4:3 says "And even when you ask, you don't get it because your motives are all wrong - you want only what will give you pleasure." We need to be careful when we pray, that when we use God's name we are not doing so selfishly, but according to the will of God.

We misuse God's name in prophecy. Ezekiel 22:28 says "Her prophets whitewash these deeds for them by false visions and lying divinations. They say, 'this is what the sovereign Lord says' when the Lord has not spoken." We have in "the church" people giving their opinions to you and

saying “thus saith the Lord.” Rev. Graham Smith said that in this way we can use God’s name to intimidate people. Forgery.

The 3rd way we misuse His name is proclamation. Rev. Graham Smith again said it this way: “That’s when you use God’s name as a reaction to something. “O M G I can’t believe you did that”. The worry here, is the lack of intentionality in using His name. There is a carelessness with which this uses God’s name. We need to be careful about the words we use, the words that come out of our mouth, for out of the heart the mouth speaks.

My encouragement to each one of us is to reflect on the manner in which we use the name of God, and see if perhaps, both with intentionality and lack thereof, we aren’t using His name for our purposes or in selfish ways.

Now, on to the Sabbath. To reread the commandment, it says,

“Remember the Sabbath day by keeping it holy. Six days you shall labor and do all your work, but the seventh day is a Sabbath to the Lord your God. On it you shall not do any work, neither you, nor your son or daughter, nor your male or female servant, nor your animals, nor any foreigner residing in your towns. For in six days the Lord made the heavens and the earth, the sea, and all that is in them, but He rested on the seventh day. Therefore the Lord blessed the Sabbath day and made it holy.”

Here is the longest of the commandments.

Robert Morris, pastor of Gateway Church down in Dallas, makes a bold claim about this commandment. He says that we all get really serious about 9 of the 10 commandments, have no other god before me, don’t make any idols, don’t take my name in vain, honor your father and mother, don’t murder, don’t commit adultery. don’t steal, don’t lie and don’t covet. Easy. But he isn’t convinced we take this commandment as seriously as the others. He even gives the example of how he responds to people asking for him to work on his Sabbath.

The busyness of life gets used as an excuse for us not to take time off to rest. There are always more e-mails, always more phone calls, always more reports, whatever work it is you do, there is always more of it. There is too much work and not enough time. In this commandment, God is telling us, we’re not slaves anymore. Slaves don’t get a day off, we are no longer slaves. Work 6 days and now rest. You are the daughters and sons of the King of all, now rest.

Now it is important to note that in Deuteronomy 31:17 it mentions on the 7th day, God rested and was refreshed. I’m sorry, God what? The most powerful being in existence rested and was refreshed? This is amazing, this neat little factoid I learned in my studies. The word there for refreshed is *Naphash* which also means to take breath. For 6 days the Lord created, He spoke the universe into existence. We exhale when we speak. If we inhaled we would sound something

like this. But for 6 days God breathed out and on the 7th day, He took breath. Find that refreshment for yourself, that moment when you can sit back and breathe in.

Now, there is a lot to be said about tithing and the benefits of tithing. Dave Ramsey says, **“Tithing was created for our benefit.** It teaches us how to keep God first in our lives and how to live unselfishly. Unselfish people make better spouses, friends, relatives, employees and employers. And they usually have better finances. God is trying to teach us how to prosper over time.” They usually have better finances. That doesn’t necessarily mean that people who tithe are richer, but there are benefits to tithing. There are also benefits to keeping the Sabbath holy, keeping it set apart.

Economists, close your ears. The average fast food chain, which is typically open 7 days a week, some even 24 hours, make around \$1 million a year. Some make more, some make less. This is the average. Mind you, Sunday is one of the highest grossing days of the week for fast food restaurants. Chick-fil-a is closed on Sundays. It explicitly states that it is closed Sundays to give their employee time for rest and worship. The average Chick-fil-a earns around \$5 million a year. Now, I know there are other factors at work, price per item, volume, all that stuff. But it is also not a stretch of the imagination to say that there are serious benefits to observing the Sabbath.

So if we can’t work and are supposed to rest, what is it that we are supposed to do? Graham Smith said we should take time to rest our body, rest our emotions, and refocus our spirit. Robert Morris talks about not doing anything out of a sense of obligation. This looks different for different people. One person may enjoy mowing his lawn. It allows him to breathe in. For myself, I have always hated mowing. Mowing was always done out of a sense of obligation. In the Jewish tradition, every little action was scrutinized as to whether you could do that or not on the Sabbath. People could not spit on soil because it could make a small indentation and that, through some extrapolation, was considered work, but he could spit on a rock. My encouragement for you this morning is to take time, reflect, and take a breath. Ask yourself am I doing this out of a sense of obligation, or does this allow me to breathe in, does this allow me to rest and relax? Are we using this time to refocus our Spirit, to draw near to God?

Why did God give these?

Let me show you grace even in the 10 commandments. God did not give the 10 commandments to Israel while they were in Egypt. In other words, God didn’t say, you straighten up and act right, and then I’ll deliver you from your enemies. God said, I’ll deliver you from your enemies, I’ll bury them in the Red Sea, and then after I save you by grace, I’ll give you some principles to help you and I have a better relationship that’s the 10 commandments. All by grace. I’m not telling you the principles to tell you to straighten up and live right, I’m telling you, Jesus took your punishment, and now keeping these principles will give you a deeper relationship with God and other people.”