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Loving God Beyond Our Words, Part 2

Matthew 15:1-9

Then Pharisees and scribes came to Jesus from Jerusalem and said, "Why do your disciples break the tradition of the elders? For they do not wash their hands when they eat." He answered them, "And why do you break the commandment of God for the sake of your tradition? For God commanded, 'Honor your father and your mother,' and, 'Whoever reviles father or mother must surely die.' But you say, 'If anyone tells his father or his mother, "What you would have gained from me is given to God," he need not honor his father.' So for the sake of your tradition you have made void the word of God. You hypocrites! Well did Isaiah prophesy of you, when he said:

"This people honors me with their lips, but their heart is far from me; in vain do they worship me, teaching as doctrines the commandments of men."

And so what does Yahweh mean? Yahweh means, in the context throughout the whole Scriptures, that God is declaring to us the essence of who He is.

And it literally means, from the Hebrew verb "to be" or "to exist," the existing one. In other places, God says, "My name is I Am. I exist. I am the existing one. I am who I am. I always have been, from eternity past to eternity future. I Am."

That is Yahweh. He is the most real thing that exists. Everything else that exists is a spin-out from the great I Am—Yahweh.

And you can begin to see why the Jewish people revered the name. Because, you know, we have this modern-day idea that refers to God as Source. And I've said this before, it's a kind of a new-age way of referring to God. And it's true, He is the source, but His name is Yahweh—Yahweh.

And it has been argued that you and I honor His name thousands of times every day by design. Because when we breathe—if you just quiet down and listen—every human being that is alive and breathes, just listen when you breathe. Hear it. The breath of life comes from Yahweh.

That is His name. It means life. It is the source of all things. It is a reference to the Creator.

But there are many other names in the Scriptures about God, and when He is using this, there's a reference to Him being a jealous God right before this.

And another portion of the Bible says His name is Jealous—not in the jealousy of sinful jealousy, but in jealousy of longing for people to come, get to know Him. He's given us free choice because He wants us to be in His presence and experience His life and enjoy fellowship with Him. He's jealous for this. His name is Jealous.

Just like sometimes, when my wife is gone for a period of time or we're separated, I become jealous to be near her.

But God has given other names: Elroy, the God who sees. It's a description of His essence. It's not just a personal name—that He's always been there. He's one who sees all things.

Jehovah Jireh, the Lord who provides. Jehovah Rapha, the Lord who heals. The Everlasting Father, the Eternal Shepherd of His people's souls.

And then, of course, Jesus is given names: Wonderful Counselor, Prince of Peace, Mighty God, Ever—He Himself—the Everlasting Father, Alpha and Omega, Beginning and End.

When He returns, His name will be written on His thigh in red blood. It says, “King of Kings and Lord of Lords.”

These are all descriptions of the essence of the plural God, Elohim, who was there in the beginning. “In the beginning, Elohim, the three in one, said, ‘Let there be light,’ and there was light.”

He's known as Adonai, the Master of all. El Shaddai, all-sufficient, all-powerful. El Elyon, the Most High God. So a name is an essence of someone or something.

Now, what does it mean to take a name?

To take a name—my parents, I talked with the children about this—they gave me a name, Timothy. And I've stuck with it. We obviously have the freedom to change a name. People go down and can change their names. It's kind of a maybe kind of cool, hip thing to do for some people now.

But I believe in God's sovereignty. He often gives people names, and I have received into my being the essence of Timothy—one who honors God—and that is a part of the mission of my life.

And then Carl—I like Carl—comes from nobility. It comes from strong, free men. I'm going to keep that name. I take that name I like, but it comes from ruddy, hard-working, barrel-making men.

And so I have received into my heart and being the name Timothy Carl Bodtke, and I work to live the essence of my name. I don't want to take it in vain or in a meaningless way.

What does it mean for you to take a name? My wife used to have a different name, but when we got married, she took my last name and has now taken to herself, in her essence of being, the name. But she's owned it and taken it.

It's to take it for ourselves—to take the nature of someone or something into our mouths, our being, our identity.

And what does it mean to do this in vain? God has said, to love Him well, we should not take His essence or His being and claim it for ourselves in vain.

What does that mean? To claim it for ourselves in a meaningless or dishonoring way. Some versions say, “You should not misuse the name of the Lord.”

Jesus was describing some people who were doing this in our gospel texts—the Pharisees, the scribes, the religious leaders of their day. And I would say, quite often, some of us. We claim something that we're doing in somewhat of a meaningless way.

I often claim to be a Hawkeye fan—a Hawkeye fan—but every once in a while, you can catch me down at Jack Trice cheering on the Cyclones. Now, if I claim to be a Hawkeye fan, and you always find me at Jack Trice cheering for the Cyclones, you know that I'm claiming the idea—the identity—as Hawkeye fan in a meaningless way. It's meaningless. It has really no meaning.

Jesus said of the scribes and Pharisees, “These people honor Me with what they say—with their lips—but their heart is far from Me. In vain do they worship Me, teaching as doctrines the commandments of men.”

Are you getting what it means to take a name in vain—in a meaningless way? To take it into ourselves, but not really desire to be the essence of what it is and to live it out.

There is another part of taking the name in vain, and that is misusing the name.

This is, I would call, a little, I don't know, less sinful, less hypocritical, but still mocks God, I believe. And that is when we misuse His name as a curse word or in some vile way.

And you and I have all heard it. Maybe we've done it. Said something like, “Oh my God, oh my God.” Or we've used the name Yeshua as a curse word—“Jesus Christ.”

You wonder how God, the essence of who He is, feels not only when we misuse His name but take it in vain, hypocritically. “Thou shalt not take or misuse the name of the Lord God in vain.”

What should we do with His name then? How are we to deal with His name?

We are teaching the children in confirmation the *Small Catechism*, which, when talking about this instruction or commandment from the Lord, Martin Luther wrote this in the *Small Catechism*:

We are to treasure and honor God's name with our prayers, our praise, and our entire beings—with our witness. In this description, it says we are to revere His name, the essence of who God is, in everything we do—to glorify His name and honor His name with our whole lives: with how we think, what we say, what we do, how we spend our time, how we spend our energy, how we spend our resources for the glory of God. Whether we eat or drink, we are to do it all unto the glory of His name.

The majesty of His essence, the source of all things.

Friends, I just want to remind you, what we're talking about here are how to align ourselves with the favor and the blessing of God for the flourishing of life. When we take things like the Ten Commandments out of the education of our children, we're taking away from them the guidance into the fullness of life.

This is more important than teaching them mathematics. It's more important than teaching them English. It's more important than teaching them social studies.

This is the pathway to life and life to the full, through the instructions—the axioms—of God. They are from eternity past to eternity future. They will not be bent. They will not be broken. They will not be changed.

These are the immutable axioms and principles given to us by our Creator, and no one can change them. These truths are not progressive. They are not relative. They are eternal. They will never change, and they need to ring out in our world.

They need to be taught to our children. It's why we give them the Holy Scriptures. We are to be instructors of the ways of God. You understand?

The Bible tells us in Deuteronomy six, we are to talk about these things when we go about our daily lives, when we sit, and when we stand—to write them on the doorposts of our homes.

The pathway to life—it has not changed. And God has told us here, we are to revere or honor His name.

Now, having said all of this, the text says He will not hold guiltless those who take His name in vain. Not only do the laws of Scripture give us curbs to direct our behavior, they give us a guide to the pathway of life. But they also expose our human sinfulness, our guilt before God.

They are designed to drive us to our knees before our Creator in repentance and godly sorrow, so that we might bear more fruit for the eternal kingdom. They are intended to drive us to cry out for a Savior—for Yeshua, for Jesus.

And so, if you find yourselves violating one of God's commands, that should be a sign to you that you're sinful before a holy God. And then God would want to soften our hearts in His kindness and bring us to repentance before Him—the only way to life—in sorrow before Him, to cry out for the forgiveness of

our sins, which He, in His love, has provided to us through Jesus, who will save His people from their sins.

Well, there's the third instruction from God: "Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord our God in vain. Misuse it." He will not hold those guiltless who do.

If you're here today and you're sensing the conviction of the Lord and your falling short before Him as a sinner, can I encourage you in our time of prayer? There's no time like the present to cry out to God for forgiveness and for salvation.

And in a moment, He will forgive you your sins and offer you the gift of eternal life. And then, by His Spirit, want to quicken and awaken you to follow in His eternal ways.

Let's pray together.

Father, thank You for Your Word. You didn't have to give it to us. You could have left us here in great confusion on the earth. You could have left us here making up our own ideas about what is true.

But You, in Your kindness, have involved Yourself with us by giving us revelation, by giving us Your truths to align our lives with. Help us with this, Father. Soften our hearts and continue to lead us in the ways of repentance, that we might continually bear more and more fruit for Your eternal kingdom.

And Father, if there are some here today who have never cried out to You with the need of salvation, and You're working in their hearts now, I pray that You hear their prayers and respond to them. And then sprinkle in their hearts this forgiveness of sins so they could walk in the newness of life, completely forgiven, empowered by Your Spirit, and free from the clutches of sin.

Guide us all in this pathway, Father, as we study these ways that You've given us. Encourage us in them. Strengthen us in them. Help us become more and more obedient to them.

We pray this in Jesus' name. Amen.