

THOU SHALT NOT TAKE THE NAME OF THE LORD IN VAIN

The second of the Ten Commandments. Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain. How are you doing with that? Personally? How's your family doing with that? OMG. I swear to G-d. In texting and Tweeting and a variety of other social media, OMG is a commonplace. O my gosh? Or. O my G-d? I remember going by a work site and I heard one of the workers swear: Jesus H. Christ. H? Christ is not Jesus' last name. There is no middle initial. But that person was definitely taking the name of the Lord in vain. GD It! GD you! When we are really angry at someone. The Lord's name IS taken in vain—still. A lot. Today. How about while driving? When you encounter a partially deranged person behind the wheel, putting you or other drivers at risk. What are the words that readily come out of your mouth?

In the mid-first century, Saint Paul wrote to the Christians living in the Church in Philippi these words: *“Therefore God highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name above every other name so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue proclaim that Jesus Christ is Lord.”* (Philippians 2: 9-11)

So what does your tongue proclaim? About Jesus? How do you say his name? When you hear someone swear the name of Jesus what do you do? I will tell you what I do. I add these words right after I hear the Lord's name spoken in vain: “have mercy on us.” The curse instantly is transformed into a prayer. Why not try it? Train yourself. Expect situations and then be prepared. You can change a curse into a prayer. You can. You can. Because you believe.

In the gospel for today the apostles try to stop a stranger from casting out demons in Jesus name. Why? Because they did not know him. He was not one of their group. He was “a stranger.” Jesus tells them to let him proceed. Let the man drive out demons **IN HIS NAME**. Why would a man want to drive out a demon from someone? And use the name of Jesus to do it? I am guessing that the stranger loved the one in the grip of the demon and wanted him or her to be set free. I am surmising that he had witnessed Jesus do this himself. And perhaps the apostles too cast out demons in the name of Jesus. So he wanted to invoke the power of that name.

My friends, the name of the Lord. Jesus. How does it figure in your own life right now? How do you use it? Why are we not afraid to take it in vain? And yet, we are very reticent about invoking the name of Jesus to set free someone we love from a compulsion, an addiction, an inordinate craving, a destructive activity, a debilitating habit. There really is power in the name of Jesus. Would that you all acted in the Spirit of Jesus and believed that your word of faith could unleash the power of his name in your family, in your own life, in your workplace, in your community. The very name of Jesus is a powerful name. Much more powerful than any bad habit or compulsion. Much more powerful than envy or an unforgiving spirit. But we have to be serious about it.

Really believe in the power. **AND**. Really that we have access to that power precisely for the good of others. Why not call on it? Why not renew our faith in the Lord Jesus and call upon him to liberate anyone and everyone who is enslaved by any spirit, held captive by any deed or memory? If today you hear his voice harden not your hearts. Are we listening right now? He speaks.

May the Lord bless us today and give us his peace.