

1C - March 2018
The Glory of God's Name

to dear listeners.

For today and next week, I would like to consider with you the Name of the LORD. Much of what you are going to revolve around the third of the Ten Commandments in Exodus 20:7. I hope it will seem self-evident as we go along that this is not merely an Old Testament instruction for an Old Testament people, and is no longer of relevance today, but that it is a law whose value and significance are. God does not change, and so his ordinances do not change, but continue to have a bearing on our society.

As we begin our discussion on the name of the LORD, it is valuable first to address the very question, what is a name? Typically, we think that a name serves merely to identify someone. Your name is a label of sorts; you were given your name at birth, to distinguish you from others. You might think of a name as a name of an uncle or an aunt, but that says something more about them than you, doesn't it? "What's in a name?" is a saying familiar to us, coming from Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet*. Whether you are Phil or Susan, does it really matter what your name is? Well yes. Your name describes only who you are, but also your reputation. If you hear a name of someone you know, immediately a person comes to mind. When you hear the name "Mr. Trudeau," you see our Prime Minister, you hear even hear him. It's almost as if he were standing right in front of you, in his position and with his mission. Our name reveals who we are. So, your name not only identifies you, it's your very identity! As much as this is the case today, it was even more so in the Old Testament. Knowing the name of a person is like looking at a picture to see the life and character of the person who held that name. In Genesis, for example, we encounter the Nephilim, those giants who belonged to an earlier era. They are called the "heroes of old," "sons of renown" (vs. 4). The Nephilim owed their name to their mighty or that was their fame. The name of the Nephilim does not refer to what they were called, but to what they were.

Well, dear listeners, it really is no different with the LORD our God. His Name tells us a lot about who He is. Time and again Scripture speaks about his name. You find it mentioned frequently throughout the psalms. It's a name we praise (Ps. 36:4). It's a name in which we are to dwell (Ps. 132:1). It is a name that dwells on the praises of Israel. It's even a name that saves (Ps. 54:1).

In Ps. 84:10, "The name of the LORD is a strong tower; the righteous run to it and are safe. Yes, the Name of God is his very identity. It is God himself as he is pleased to reveal himself to us. If you know the Name of the Lord, you know Him. Ps. 135:3 says, "Praise the LORD. Praise the name of the LORD, praise him, you servants of the LORD."

It's clear that the Name of the Lord is the Lord himself. It's a name that he himself chose and was not revealed. It was a name God revealed long before the Israelites even heard the third commandment proclaimed at Mount Sinai. In Ex. 3, the LORD appeared to Moses at the burning bush, and he made himself known by this name. The LORD had commanded Moses to go to Egypt to set God's people free from slavery. But Moses hesitated. He said to God, "If I come to the people of Egypt and say to them, 'The God of your fathers has sent me to you,' and they ask me, 'What is his name?' what shall I say to them?" The Lord answers, "I AM WHO I AM." Say this to the people of Egypt: "I AM has sent me to you." The LORD, the God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, has sent me to you. This is my name forever, the name by which I am to be remembered from generation to generation" (Exod. 3:11-15).

I am who I am. I am the God of the fathers, the God of the covenant. I am faithful. And I will continue to be. I act in history to free my people according to my promises. God's name speaks of his

regretly. And as the book of Exodus unfolds, as the exodus itself from Egypt takes place, his name identified to his saving power. The Israelites learned from their deliverance that the God who staked his name at the burning bush is a God who saves. And so Israel learned to sing about this in the psalms. Ps. 111:9, "He sent redemption to his people; he commanded his covenant forever. Holy and awesome is his name!" God brought Israel out of Egypt for the honour of his name! And so, by the day the Israelites came to Mount Sinai, they should know that God's name was much more than a name. It expressed God's glory in freeing his people from slavery. And because of that, it deserved as much reverence and respect as God himself. Glorious name of our LORD is to be feared and revered, because it is God himself in his work of love!

There is something very precious about this, dear listeners. If God's name stands for his work of love, that means that when we today speak his Name, or speak of his Name (his character, his nature), we are speaking of that same love of the work of Jesus Christ. He is God incarnate. And as I incarnate, he served as the Redeemer, as the Saviour of God's people. In Jesus Christ, the Name of God has been revealed in a most glorious way. In a prayer that Christ prayed to his heavenly Father, in the Gospel according to John, chp. 17, he exclaimed, "I have manifested [revealed] your name to the people whom you gave me out of the world" (vs. 6). In Jesus Christ, the very character, the very nature, the very faithfulness of God is so evident.

And the LORD Jesus made that clear on the cross. That's where he redeemed sinners from the Pit. (so sometime later, after Christ had risen from the dead, ascended into heaven, and poured out the Holy Spirit on the church, the apostle Peter declared before the Sanhedrin, the Jewish ruling council, that Peter's salvation is in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which man must be saved" (Acts 4:12). That exclamation of Peter's comes as no surprise; for if Jesus is God, he shares the same name, the same reputation, the same identity as God. Therefore, no other name but the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom the Jews crucified but whom God raised from the dead, can save us from our sins.

Dear listeners, I want you to feel the weight of this revelation coming from God. You and I today have a precious, wonderful, and direct connection to the glory of the Name of our Lord! Through Jesus Christ, the only Mediator between God and man. He is the only one who is able to bring you into contact with the Name of God. He alone is the way to the Father, the way to understanding the Father, the way to knowing the Father in his holiness, righteousness, mercy, and love. By believing in Him, your whole life is then safe in God's Name, a strong tower. Yes, you are safe in God himself; the glorious Name of God is the glorious God himself! The God in whom there is redemption, salvation, because of his Son. This is a Name worth honouring, worth using not in vain, but with reverence and respect. With that, we look forward to next week. Till then!