

I remember my philosophy professor in college. He was a Missouri Synod Lutheran pastor, teaching at an American Lutheran Church College. Teaching philosophy, not religion.

When it came to God he taught not ~~as~~ a pastor, but as a professor. God is that which I know not what it is, he taught. That is what he had figured out. All by himself. God is that which I know not what it is. That is as far as the human mind can go when it comes to God he said. God is that which I know not what it is.

Sit down this afternoon. Forget everything you have been taught about God. All that your parents and your teachers and your pastors have taught you. Put aside all that you have learned on TV or in the Bible or from friends about God. Then what can you say about God. God is that which I know not what it is.

In scripture the direction is the opposite. Not ~~man~~ seeking to discover God through ~~his~~ mind, but God coming to ~~us~~, revealing himself to his creatures. On the holy mountain these were his words, I am Yahweh, your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, you shall have no other gods except me. You shall not utter the name of Yahweh your God to misuse it, for Yahweh will not leave unpunished the man who utters his name to misuse it.

Yahweh, for most of you this is a strange sounding word. It is God's name. In Hebrew it means I am what I am or I will be what I will be. When Moses stood before the burning bush he asked, What is your name and God answered, Yahweh. Then again on the Holy Mountain God spoke the commandments beginning I am Yahweh, your God. The Israelites would not even speak this name for fear of misusing it. When they would come to God's name in scripture they would read, Adoni, which means Lord. Following that custom we are used to using Lord instead of Yahweh, I am the Lord, your God. You shall not take the name of the Lord your God in vain.

In vain. To use God's name for nothing, for no purpose, that is what the commandment forbids. No commandment is broken so often and with so little

concern. A day is warm and someone says, God its hot. The day is long and another says, God I'm tired. It is using God's name for nothing, to fill the space like some punctuation.

In vain. Cursing. Damn it we cry out. We call down God's condemnation upon what he has created. And loves, and intends for our Godd. In cursing we use God's name thoughtlessly and in vain.

In vain. How many stand up and preach and teach using God's name when they know him not at all. They preach and teach their own imaginings and for thier own advantage, telling the crowds th just what they wanted to believe about God all along.

Luther teaches: We are to fear and love God so that we do not use his name superstitiously, or use it to curse, swear, lie or deceive, but call on him in prayer, praise, and thanksgiving.

I am Yahweh, your God, he told the ancient Israelites. Maxdixmax From them he sought one thing, that they fear and love and trust in him above anything else. And so his name was given to his people that they might no longer warship a God who was a stranger but a God with a name that they could call upon. Call on him in prayer, praise, and thanksgiving.

What a precious gift this is, God gives us his name. We speak his name in prayer and know that our prayer reaches beyond the walls and the ceiling to your God who hears our every prayer.

God's word to the Israelites on the Holy mountain was but a small beginning, though. Not content to give his name, to show himslef by his mighty deeds, God has revealed himself in his Son, Jesus Christ. He taught us to pray, not Yahweh, but Father. Our Father in heaven. Jesus taught us to prayx trusting that our Father will give us every good gift, and continually bless us.

And now the revelaeer is worshipped as Lord and his name too is honored. As it says in Phillipians: God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow en heaven and on earth and under the earth and every tongue confess that Jesus is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

The commandment then is this, that we not use God's name for nothing, but use the names of God our Father and our Lord Jesus Christ ~~for~~ in the way which God intends. In prayer, calling upon him in our every need. Never growing weary of talking to our God for he never grows weary of hearing our needs or of the needs of others. And in praise for we need to praise the god who ~~has~~ is above all things and beings. And in thanksgiving for every good that we have received is from his hand.