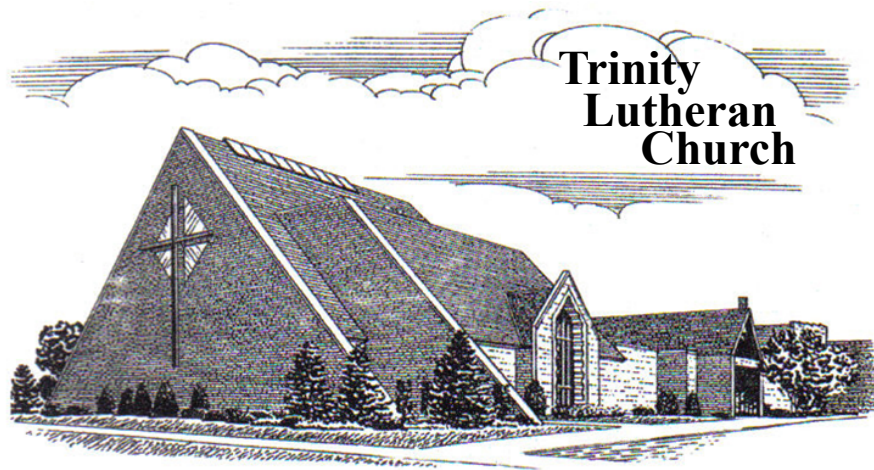


The Second Commandment



Sept. 21-27, 2026

Weekly Outline

Invocation

L: In the way of your testimonies I delight.

C: I will meditate on your precepts and fix my eyes on your ways.

L: Let us pray:

O Lord, take away from me all coldness, all wanderings of the thoughts, and fix my soul upon thee and thy love, O merciful Lord and Saviour, in this hour of prayer.

C: Amen.

Scripture

Sept. 21: Exodus 15:1-11

Sept. 23: Acts 19:11-20

Sept. 25: Matthew 6:7-13

Devotion

Closing Prayer

L: Ever blessed Trinity, to thy mercy I commit this day, my body and soul, together with all my ways and undertakings. I beseech thee to be gracious unto me; enlarge my heart and open my lips, that I may praise and magnify thy name which alone is holy. And as thou hast made me for the praise of thy holy name, grant that I may yield my life a sacrifice to thy honor in humble love and fear.

C: Amen.

Monday

Each one of the Ten Commandments contains an implicit promise. For the First Commandment, "You shall have no other gods," the implied promise is that the Creator of all things is our true source of life. The Second Commandment, "You shall not misuse the name of the Lord your God," is similar. The promise of this commandment is that God will answer us when we pray.

That may seem like a strange thing to pick out of this commandment, but think about what is required for prayer. If we did not know that there was a God, then how could we call on him for help? If we suspected that a God existed but we didn't know who he was, how could we ever be certain that he loves us and wants to help us? But God reveals his name in Scripture because he wants to be our God; he wants us to seek all help from him. He wants us to pray so that he can graciously answer.

We see a great example of the proper use of God's name in Exodus 15. God has just led Israel through the sea on dry ground but drowned Pharaoh and all his hosts. The response of the people is a prayer of thanksgiving where they praise God using the name he revealed to them, the Lord. In Exodus 3, God revealed to Moses that he heard their groaning as they cried to him for help. In Exodus 15, he receives their praise for the help he has given. That is why we must not misuse God's name. He has given it to us for a great purpose—that we might call to him in times of need and praise him for his help. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Wednesday

Martin Luther explains the Second Commandment in this way: "We should fear and love God so that we do not curse, swear, use satanic arts, lie or deceive by his name..." We all understand that using God's name as a curse word is a violation of the Second Commandment. But why does Luther include satanic arts as an abuse of God's name? That violation is more common than you might think. Our reading from Acts provides an example.

In Acts 19, we meet the seven sons of Sceva, who are called "itinerant Jewish exorcists." Paul happens to be in the same city, and God is doing great miracles through Paul. So the sons of Sceva decide to use the names of Paul and Jesus in this way when trying to drive out a demon, "I adjure you by the Jesus whom Paul proclaims." The demon answers, "Jesus I know, and Paul I recognize, but who are you?" Needless to say, it doesn't go well for the exorcists from there. Here's the point. God has revealed his name so that we can pray to him. But that's not what these exorcists were doing. They used the name of Jesus as part of a magical formula in a futile attempt to manipulate spiritual powers.

There is a great difference between Christian prayer and magical rites. In the first, we acknowledge our dependence on God as we call on him for help. In the other, we attempt to manipulate God so that he is forced to do what we want. We unwittingly break the Second Commandment when we use Jesus as a kind of talisman, thinking that a devotional object, such as a cross, will keep evil spirits away from us, or when we turn prayer into a formula, thinking that if we only use the right words or pray the right number of times that God must respond. Prayer is not prayer unless we humbly acknowledge our dependence. God is our Father; we are his children. And while we cannot manipulate God, we can trust him, because our heavenly Father has proven his love to us in Jesus. In his name, Amen.

Friday

The answer to many conversations depends on the relationship you have with that person. I remember being stuck in the middle-of-nowhere Illinois once about six hours away from home. The fuel pump had died on my S10. I was too young to rent a car, and so I had no way to get home. So I called my dad, "Could you come and get me?" If I had made that call to a stranger, I would still be stuck in Illinois. But I didn't. I called my father because the relationship I had with him carried with it the promise of help.

That's why it is so important that Jesus teaches us to pray, "Our Father." Think about who God is. He is the Creator of all things who needs no help from us. He doesn't need our sacrifices of thanks and praise any more than he needed the animal sacrifices of Old Testament Israel. Not only is there nothing we can offer him, but we do not really deserve his help because all of us are sinners. If God were a kind of stranger to us, a stranger to whom we could promise nothing and had often offended because of our sin, what help could we expect when we pray? But God is not a stranger to those with faith in Christ. Everyone who has Jesus as his brother through faith has God as his Father through that same faith, and embedded in that relationship is the promise of help.

Because God invites us to call him Father, we can pray with confidence in every time of need. We may be stranded, but we aren't abandoned. Our Father will send his help to all who pray. We can be sure of this because of the relationship we have with him in Jesus, who not only teaches us to pray to God as our Father, but is the assurance of God's love to all his children. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Evening Prayer

You may pray one or more of the following after dinner or before bed:

I thank you, my heavenly Father, through Jesus Christ, your dear Son, that you have graciously kept me this day; and I pray you that you would forgive me all my sins where I have done wrong, and graciously keep me this night. For into your hands I commend myself, my body and soul, and all things. Let your holy angel be with me, that the wicked foe may have no power over me. Amen.



Now I lay me down to sleep, I pray thee, Lord, my soul to keep; if I should die before I wake, I pray thee, Lord, my soul to take; and this I ask for Jesus' sake. Amen.



Visit, O Lord, our home, and drive from it all the snares of the enemy; let your holy angels dwell in it to preserve us in peace, and may your blessing be upon us evermore; through Jesus Christ, our Lord, Amen.

A Parent's Blessing

You may place your hand on the head of your child before kissing them goodnight and say:

My loved one, rest securely,
for God this night will surely
from peril guard your head.
Sweet slumbers may he send you
and bid his hosts attend you
and through the night watch o'er your bed. Amen.

Memory Verse

MEMORY VERSE

Let me hear in the
morning of your
steadfast love, for in
you I trust. Make me
know the way I should
go, for to you I lift
up my soul.

PSALM 143:8

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