

SERMON BY REV W HUIZINGA
ON
LORD'S DAY 36 OF THE HEIDELBERG CATECHIMS

LITURGY

Votum and Salutation

Psalm 63:1

Confession of Faith

Hymn 1A

Congregational Prayer

Thankofferings

Psalm 63:2,3,4

Reading - Lord's Day 36

- 2 Kings 18:13-37

Sermon

**LIFT UP THE NAME OF THE LORD YOUR GOD
WITH HONOR, NOT AS VANITY.**

By this command God wants us to:

- 1. Put to death the old self - do not use the name as vanity***
- 2. Raise up the new self - use the name with honor.***

Psalm 115:1,2,3

Prayer of Thanks

Psalm 115:5,6

Benediction

Beloved congregation of our Lord Jesus Christ.

What a wonderful name to be called: "beloved congregation of our Lord Jesus Christ"! You have been sealed with the name of the Triune God. You belong to Him as a bride belongs to the bridegroom. At her marriage the bride receives a new name which she will carry for the rest of her life. All her children will also share that new name.

Beloved, you carry the name of the LORD, I AM WHO I AM. To Israel God said, *this is my name for ever, and thus I am to be remembered throughout all generations* (Exodus 3:15). This is the name with which the King introduces Himself to us in His covenant: *I am the LORD your God.*

In Christ we too now belong to this wonderful name. We too may go to the house of the LORD where He causes His name to dwell. We too may call upon this name in prayer. This name has become all-important to us. It is our new name, the name of our Bridegroom, who has received the name which is above every name. In His name alone is there salvation for us sinners. No other name in heaven or on earth will save us.

We all have names which our parents gave to us. We take pride in them. Yet a name is not just that people call us Julie or Jack, but it stands for ourselves. Your name is your reputation. Proverbs says, *A good name is more desirable than great riches; to be esteemed is better than silver or gold* (22:1).

Similarly, God's name stands for God Himself. Since His name is full of wonders, you may equate His name with His fame. God did not want His name derogated to something foolish and vain, but instead, we must use His name with fear and reverence.

So I preach to you the third word of the covenant as we confessed it in Lord's Day 36, and we bring you God's Word under this *THEME:

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In order that the Spirit may make you holy and thankful people He first of all teaches you what must be discarded. Coming out of the slave-house of sin and superstition, we are by nature not inclined to revere the name of the LORD. But the Spirit gives us a new heart

and a right spirit by which we flee from the abuse of God's name. He teaches us the following:

We are not to blaspheme or to abuse the Name of God by cursing, perjury, or unnecessary oaths, nor to share in such horrible sins by being silent bystanders.

Man's use and control of the tongue with respect to God's name comes under scrutiny here. Does your tongue honour the LORD as your highest goal or do you trample it underfoot as the most vile object? Does the name of the LORD fly high as most important or does it fly at half-mast, signalling the death of God's name?

Usually we think of swearing or cursing as the worst sin against the third commandment. In our country, as in other countries, there is a terrible habit, which many do not even notice anymore. It has become that widespread and common. I refer to taking the Lord's name in vain in our everyday speech. "Damn" seems to have become God's last name. And the name of our Lord Jesus Christ is spat out as a profanity with vulgar regularity. Some people just cannot speak without peppering their speech with exclamations. The Devil must be tickled pink to hear civilized tongues speak in this blasphemous manner. As I said, many do not even hear the blasphemy anymore, since it has become an accepted way of spicing our speech. A stranger might well conclude that the Name of the Triune God is the most vile and dirty name in our society.

Now such swearing is unnecessary; it provokes God to anger. Young fellows sometimes feel the need to sound and act big. One way to show bravado is to use swear words, taking the name of God in vain. Children and parents, nip this in the bud before it spreads.

But is swearing the worst sin? Is that what "*do not take the name of the LORD your God in vain*" mean? Does it mean - do not swear? This is important. We have explained before that it means, 'do not lift up the name of the LORD **as vanity**.' Do not degrade the name as though it was like the name of an idol, an empty nothing, a name which means nothing, offers no help, cannot save, cannot punish evil-doers and is thus worthless. God wants us to respect his name as **all-important**.

This point is underlined by the value of God's name. What is a name? In our introduction we equated it with God's reputation. Well, as we heard this morning God revealed his name to Moses in the burning bush - **I AM WHO I AM**. God keeps his word; never reneges on it, never forgets, never compromises. What a name! I AM is God's memorial name. No one should lift up that name as an empty nothing, as a useless idol!

Later on in history the king of Babylon spoke blasphemously about the name of the Lord God of Israel. The gods of the other nations had not succeeded in helping their people against the invincible army of King **Sennecharib**. Why should Judah think that their God

would be different? Let the people be wise and put out the white flag of defeat and let them sue for peace. How God hated that arrogant disregard for His Name. Was the LORD just another idol, that is, vanity? Was He just another idle, empty name? God forbid! That night one angel of the LORD laid low 185,000 soldiers in the Babylonian army.

For the Angel of Death spread his wings on the blast,
And breathed in the face of the foe as he passed;
And the eyes of the sleepers waxed deadly and chill,
And their hearts but once heaved, and for ever grew still!

The Rabshakeh had taunted them with the mocking challenge of supplying riders for two thousand chariots he could give them, if they surrendered.

And there lay the steed with his nostril all wide,
But through it there rolled not the breath of his pride;
And the foam of his gasping lay white on the turf,
And cold as the spray of the rock-beating surf.

And the riders!?

And there lay the rider distorted and pale,
With the dew on his brow, and the rust on his mail:
And the tents were all silent, the banners alone,
The lances unlifted, the trumpet unblown.

And the widows of Ashur are loud in their wail,
And the idols are broke in the temple of Baal;
And the might of the Gentile, unsmote by the sword,
Hath melted like snow in the glance of the Lord!

[from: *The Destruction Of Sennacherib* by *George Gordon (Lord) Byron* (1788-1824)]

You shall not lift up the Name of the LORD your God as though it is an empty, useless nothing, as though it is like the names of the other idols of other nations. Those who intimidate God's people by mocking and blaspheming the Name of our God will feel His arrows of lightning, if not now, then when it is too late.

Is the blaspheming of God's Name by swearing and cursing such a grievous sin that God is angry also with those who do not prevent and forbid it as much as they can? This question brings the matter back into our court. God has made you the salt of the earth. Your salt should be put to work to prevent corruption such as swearing and cursing. Do you do that young people in your friendships with others outside the church? Do you do that men at work where fellow-workers may and do take the Lord's name in vain? Do we all prevent and forbid it as much as we possibly can? Let us not be too afraid to speak up when it is time to defend the name on our

forehead. Let not shame prevail over the courage to speak up against this national evil. For the Book of Leviticus says,

If any one sins in that he hears a public adjuration to testify and though he is a witness, whether he has seen or come to know the matter, yet does not speak, he shall bear his iniquity (5:1).

Thankfully we have already heard that you brothers and sisters, young and old, do sprinkle your salt on the godless speech of our fellow-countrymen. May the Spirit continue to give us the courage to testify to the Name of our Lord. May these times become opportunities for us to tell of the power of the Name to save those who fear that Name and the power to destroy those who blaspheme it. Let it be known that the Name of God and of Jesus Christ is precious to us, and should be to all.

There is another weed that grows like Patterson's Curse in our country. It is the democratic religion of tolerance and neutrality. No one may discriminate on the basis of creed. That principle has been taken to its extreme conclusion today, meaning that in all public institutions there should be no creed at all, no faith or religion at all, in order to insure that there is no discrimination against any particular person. For Australia is a nation with many races, many cultures and many religions. As a result the christian bases of the nation are being removed in the name of these democratic principles. How crafty the Devil is! If Balaam will not curse God's people, then he will find another way.

Brothers and sisters, practically that means that the Name of God must leave the state schools. Bible reading and the calling on the Name of the Lord in prayer are discriminatory, for there may be children in the class who hold to different religions. Moreover, the Name of all wisdom has no relevance in the curriculum, for example, in teaching science or history. The banner of God's name which used to fly high in state education has landed with a thud as being useless, vanity for education. Secular atheism has replaced the fear of the Lord's Name in education. Parents, parents-to-be, grandparents, and all of you, work together for the godly upbringing of the covenant children so that the Name of the Lord will be honoured in the classroom as all-important. If it costs sacrifices, and thankfully they are not high at the present time, then let us learn to deny ourselves, for the price is worth it. Neutrality is a farce! You either love Jesus or you hate Him. You cannot remain neutral. A house cleansed of all so-called discriminatory demons will become a haunt of a legion of lying spirits. Neutrality will soon change to open hostility. Remember that we are not fighting against flesh and blood, against people only, but against spiritual forces of wickedness, who want desperately to uproot the Name of the Triune God from this land too.

This is not only true for education, but for every sphere in life. The Name of God is all right, if it is left in the churches, but it must not enter the domain of public life on St George's Terrace. Secular

unions may become engrossed in politics but religion is a bad word. Keep it to yourself, they say. In politics pragmatism has replaced christian principles. Where-ever you turn, the Name of God is given the cold shoulder. As we confess the third word of the covenant today, we must keep that in mind, for God does not take us out of the world, but places us in the midst of the world to be the salt and the light of the world.

But we christians must criticise ourselves as well. Psalm 8 sings of the marvellous name of the LORD God, the Creator of heaven and earth. This created universe is Father's world. It is all a symphony of praise to the Creator. Yet we christians have often allowed the greenies and other environmental groups to defend creation against pollution, rape and selfish pillage. Yet it is our Father's world, all praising Him. Sea-gulls covered with slimy oil are a disgrace to the name of the Creator; polluted streams covered with thick algae; and denuded forests with no re-forestration program all show how man in his selfish cruelty has little regard for God's creation. We should be outraged by these shameful acts. Oh yes, environmentalists are often wrong for they treat creation as if it were God. A trapped whale is more important than the life of unborn human beings. A few endangered species of animals can stop a whole mining project. Creation is God. That is wrong. Yet the opposite practise of raping creation for man's greed is also wrong. We christians must speak out against both.

Another way in which the Name of God suffers is through neglect. How many evenings do we christians not waste in idle pursuits, while the study of the Word of God is neglected? Yet those Scriptures teach us about that Name in whom we were created, baptized, delivered and glorified. The ever-popular television robs many hours of biblical study. How many Bible-study meetings are not spoiled by neglect of preparation? The Bible clubs are well organized with presidents, secretaries and treasurers. Much work is done to have good organizations, constitutions, etc. But the heart of these clubs are you members, as you prepare yourselves at home, and come to club with the Scriptures burning in your hearts and minds. If we are serious about this business of daily conversion, then ask the Holy Spirit to make you more zealous in studying the Scriptures together or at home, so that the Name of the Lord may become more known and loved, and more confessed in the mainstream of life.

Hopefully this is enough for now as far as putting to death our old hostility against the Name of the LORD. Let us take the call to put these sins of our old person to death, for we have died with Christ.

2. Raise up the new person - use the name with honor.

As far as the positive side of the commandment is concerned the

catechism teaches us,

In short, we must use the holy Name of God only with fear and reverence, so that we may rightly confess Him, call upon Him and praise Him in all our words and works.

Once the Spirit of Christ begins His work in us we want to stand up for Jesus. Little do we wish to deny Him. We not only sing "faith of our fathers, living still", but we like Moses are called to practise their faith. For our forefathers publicly confessed the Name of the Triune God to their enemies, to their neighbours and to the judges and rulers of the land. Shame or fear did not silence their tongues when it was time to raise up the Name of the LORD as the living and all-powerful God. Their confessions still act today as official papers of the church. In 1618-1619 the Name of God was again at stake. Does God start and finish His plans for man? Is Jesus a complete Saviour? Is God a cruel and harsh tyrant who keeps His puppets on a short line? Or is He a merciful God who holds man responsible? You see, the Name of God stood central in these debates. The Canons of Dort rightly confessed God's Name as the alpha and the omega. We benefit from them today, if we still use them, and do not hide them as old antiques in the church attic.

Brothers and sisters, confess the Name of the LORD as relevant for all your words and works, as the catechism says. Explode the myth of neutrality. Confess the name of God as the only name by which we must be saved. Confess the name of Jesus as the Restorer of marriage, as the Mediator in labour, as the Redeemer in business, and as the Wisdom in education. For Christ has laid claim to every inch of life under the sun. It is all His by decree from the Father. Be a reformer whose life demonstrates that every muscle of your being belongs to the praise of God's name.

When heresy-pedlars knock on your door, you will be able to defend the Name of the Triune God which is so often attacked.

We also call upon the Name of the Lord in prayer. In the O.T. the Name of the LORD was closely associated with the worship of the LORD in the tabernacle or the temple. For the LORD caused His Name to dwell in His house there. As Solomon said, the people would bow down towards the temple of the Lord when they prayed for forgiveness, because God's Name dwelt there. It was a name of mercy and atonement and blessing and peace. Today the Name of the LORD is still associated with the church services where we worship the Name of our God. Here we publicly call upon the Name of the Lord for all our needs, concerns, sorrows and joys. But you call on the Lord at home too, before and after meals and before you retire at night. Let there be a good family worship of our God's name.

God's name is a power. But as with the power of the ocean and its waves, you must show respect or you could pay the ultimate price. The same applies to the power of electricity. You must show respect. If you are not careful with the angle grinder and with the table saw, you can be less a few fingers. If you do not use electricity with care,

you can be zapped. Moses told Israel, *if you are not careful to...fear this glorious and awful name, the LORD your God, then the LORD will bring on you and your offspring extraordinary afflictions*

(Deut.28:58,59). But if you use it reverently, God's name is also like the power of electricity. Really, we cannot do without it anymore. Neither can we miss the power and warmth of God's name. All his rich and varied blessings will then descend on us.

Maybe you exclaim that it is all too much. Yes, it is. Thanks be to God, Christ has kept this commandment in all its height and breadth. Indeed, Jesus explained the Name of God to us. He brought God's fame and reputation to earth. And what respect He had for the Name of His Father. How vehement was His language against who gave a distorted version or caricature of that Name. He never was a silent bystander when the scribes or priests maligned God's name in their false piety.

And Jesus paid the penalty for all our transgressions of the third word. They sentenced Him for...blasphemy! For that He underwent the death penalty as prescribed by the law of God. He did that for you and me, beloved. Your sins were His, and now His righteousness is yours. That is the wonderful exchange.

Today, His Spirit is yours as well. That Spirit of Christ has been busy this afternoon to write the third word of the new covenant of grace on your hearts. Put to death your old self, do not lift up the Name of God as vanity. Raise up the new self in you, rightly confess, call on and glorify the Name of God in all your words and works. Amen.