

St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church
Worship This Week Sept. 14, 2025

SCRIPTURES –

Exodus 20:7 – “You must not misuse the name of the LORD your God. The LORD will not let you go unpunished if you misuse his name.”

Psalms 111 – Praise the Lord! I will thank the Lord with all my heart as I meet with his godly people. 2 How amazing are the deeds of the Lord! All who delight in him should ponder them. 3 Everything he does reveals his glory and majesty. His righteousness never fails. 4 He causes us to remember his wonderful works. How gracious and merciful is our Lord! 5 He gives food to those who fear him; he always remembers his covenant. 6 He has shown his great power to his people by giving them the lands of other nations. 7 All he does is just and good, and all his commandments are trustworthy. 8 They are forever true, to be obeyed faithfully and with integrity. 9 He has paid a full ransom for his people. He has guaranteed his covenant with them forever. What a holy, awe-inspiring name he has! 10 Fear of the Lord is the foundation of true wisdom. All who obey his commandments will grow in wisdom. Praise him forever!

Matthew 6:7-9 – “When you pray, don’t babble on and on as the Gentiles do. They think their prayers are answered merely by repeating their words again and again. 8 Don’t be like them, for your Father knows exactly what you need even before you ask him! 9 Pray like this: Our Father in heaven, may your name be kept holy.

MESSAGE – In our culture, talk is cheap. I’m speaking in general because we don’t all operate this way. But I’m going to suggest that for the majority of people, we don’t always take care to think carefully about what we say. We don’t engage the mind before opening the mouth. We dismiss the importance of words. As a result, we say whatever we want, often without thought.

Words are powerful. They can express love and caring. Words can also hurt. Words can lead to conflict and war. Anyone who spends time on Facebook knows all about that. The comments on many posts can be nothing short of ugly. It’s toxic. This is not what God wants.

Language is a gift. It is a vital tool of communication between people created in God’s image. And if we are created in God’s image, then what we do with our

bodies and our minds, including our expression, is potentially holy. Language is important.

This week, we focus on the 3rd Commandment. First, a refresher. The first is to have “no other gods but me.” We can take it literally, like they did when this was written, when people of all faiths, even Jews, recognized several gods. Or we can understand this as not replacing God with a philosophy of life and what we value or what we fill our lives with: image, wealth or power. We are commanded to make God the most important thing in life – more than our work and interests, more than family, more than ourselves. The second: “You must not make for yourself an idol of any kind or an image of anything in the heavens or on the earth or in the sea. 5 You must not bow down to them or worship them, for I, the Lord your God, am a jealous God who will not tolerate your affection for any other gods.” (Exodus 20:4-5) Two specific things are prohibited: an idol and an image. An idol of God, strictly speaking, would be a statue or figure of the Divine. For example, Buddhists worship a small figure of the Buddha. An image would be a painting or image of what God would look like. In my mind, that would include any portrait of Christ – and just about every one of them is nothing like what Jesus would have looked like.

The commandments are given in a specific order. Once we have the first two down, then we’re given the third, which is to honour his name. More than that. We are to hold up his name in great esteem.

We’ve all witnessed the behaviour of obsessed fans. [Photo of Taylor Swift with fans]. This is nothing new of course. Flash back 60 years for a similar scene. [Paul McCartney in 1964.] People have a habit of saying the name of someone they respect and honour with great reverence. In my first career as a radio and newspaper journalist, I met all kinds of people, some of them famous. Whenever an admirer approaches a celebrity, most of the time, their body language, tone of voice would change. They would typically become submissive. Sort of like a dog who finds itself in the presence of the Alpha male of the pack. And they would never call them by their first name. It would be Mr. or Ms, or Sir or Ma’am. There is nothing wrong with that because it is a sign of respect. We train our children to do the same when meeting anyone older than them. John Lennon made the famous observation that they were more popular than Jesus. There was outrage at the statement. How dare they! Who do they think they

are! But he wasn't saying they were better. It was a statement of how celebrity worship had gotten out of hand.

Sadly, people do not treat God with the same respect. In fact, it's often the exact opposite. God the Father or Christ the Son are more often used as swear words. There are at least three ways the third commandment is commonly disobeyed.

Profanity: Using the name of God in blasphemy and cursing. This is obvious.

Carelessly: Using the name of God in a superficial, stupid way. How many of us have said, "I swear to God" when promising they will never do something again or that they're telling the truth. If it turns out that they break the promise or lie again – which eventually we will – then we have attached God's name to it. Jesus told us very plainly in Matthew 5:37, to "Let your statement be, 'Yes' or 'No'; anything beyond these is of evil." Don't bring God's name into anything – unless you are praising him or giving Him the glory.

Hypocrisy. Let's say we claim to be on a mission from God or are acting in the name of God. Maybe we are. But everyone is going to be watching to see if we mess up. And without a doubt, we will, because we are human. What that happens, God's name has just been disgraced.

God is way too great and perfect for us to even come close to him – or even look at Him. That's why He sent His Son to live with us and the Holy Spirit to fill us and be our helper and guide. The author of Psalm 111 lists the many amazing things God has done for us. "Everything he does reveals his glory and majesty. His righteousness never fails. He causes us to remember his wonderful works. How gracious and merciful is our Lord! He gives food to those who fear him; he always remembers his covenant. He has shown his great power to his people by giving them the lands of other nations. All he does is just and good, and all his commandments are trustworthy. They are forever true, to be obeyed faithfully and with integrity. He has paid a full ransom for his people. He has guaranteed his covenant with them forever. What a holy, awe-inspiring name he has!" – Psalm 11:3-9.

The problem with the world – and this is nothing new – is that we are too focused on ourselves. We ignore the first three commandments. We worship ourselves, we replace God with other things and we do not honour His name. If more people were to honestly say those words – and sincerely mean it – "What

a holy, awe-inspiring name he has!” then we would not be so heartless, and unforgiving, greedy and ugly. We’d actually come out of our safe spaces and spend time with our neighbours again.

This principle is woven through the entire Bible. Jesus communicated the third commandment in the disciples’ prayer: “Father in heaven, hallowed be Your name” – Matthew 6:9. Those are the opening words to the way we are instructed to pray. Holy is your name. Perfect is your name.

If we are ever tempted to use the name of the Father, the Son or the Holy Spirit in a negative or careless way – stop. Consider that every word that comes out is a reflection of what is in our hearts. I am pointing the finger right at myself for this. I can do better. I have work to do. If you can say that, then that’s all God wants. Thankfully, God looks at our hearts more than our actions. That does not give me a licence to sin. But when I do, I can repent and ask for forgiveness and know that God has an endless supply of assurance. Amen.

NEW PRAYER

- For Peyton Doom: We are praying for your healing touch Lord. We pray for comfort and peace as they apply the topical steroid treatment for the next four weeks. May the treatment be effective in reducing the tumor, and may Peyton experience relief from any discomfort. We thank you that the tumor is benign, and we trust in your goodness and sovereignty. Please guide the doctors and medical team, granting them wisdom and skill. Surround Peyton with your love and peace, and may they feel your presence in their life.
- Treasurer Linda Moore’s great grandson Aiden in neonatal ICU at LHSC and mom Melissa as she recovers from internal bleeding.

CONTINUE TO PRAY

- Healing and strength – Becca Braithwaite, Pam Cornell, Susan Doom’s father, Jen Langstaff Mason, Bonnie Lozon, Kris Richards, Jennifer Sayers, Bruce Stephens, Julie & Dan Shaw
- Shut ins – Dianne Richards at Wallaceburg Retirement Residence; Bonnie Lozon, Jim Lusk and Sandra Pegg at Oaks Wallaceburg; Ross Fuchs and Shirley Houston at Fairfield Park in Wallaceburg; Margaret Follows at home.

WHAT’S UP

- Wednesday Sept. 17 and 24th at 7 p.m. – ReFresh: the basics of the Christian faith from a Reformed/Presbyterian perspective
- Oct. 12 – Guest preacher Mary Pat Elliott (Pastor Andy on vacation)
- Oct. 26 – Anniversary Sunday with guest preacher Barb Sargent
- Nov. 9 – Guest preacher Colin Paterson (Pastor Andy study week)