



October 30, 2020

A Long Education in the Same Direction

(5) And now, Father, glorify me in your presence with the glory I had with you before the world began. (6) I have revealed you to those whom you gave me out of the world. They were yours; you gave them to me and they have obeyed your word. (7) Now they know that everything you have given me comes from you. - (John 17:5-7)

The history of Israel is a long, steady education in what it means to obey the commandment against taking the Lord's name in vain, which involved how they thought and spoke of God. In particular, in their escape from Egyptian slavery to their return from Babylon and again from Persia, Israel learned that their God—Yahweh—was literally out of this world, incomparable to anything in creation in his self-sustaining power, glory, and goodness. So, how do we arrive at the place when we finally can use God's name without doing so "in vain"? After we have come to know Jesus Christ. Only after that point are we fully capable of using his name rightly. Why is this so? One way to answer that is to look at what is commonly called Jesus' High Priestly Prayer, found in John 17.

As we saw in previous devotionals, Job 38:7 describes the time before time, which was one of wonderful, and joyous celebration, "when the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy." What do you imagine they were shouting about? What made them so happy? It was the glory Jesus is talking about in verse 5. God's name is an expression of his nature, and from everything we can glean from Jesus' entire life—his teachings, his healing ministry, how he treated people, and how he prayed—the only conclusion we can draw is that God is a being who is perfectly glorious and perfectly safe. This is what God's name means and why it is "exalted above all blessing and praise" (Nehemiah. 9:5).

To take the name of God in vain, then, is simply to speak or think or imagine God as being less than he actually is. And like Israel, we, too, require a long, steady education in this direction. Those who take time to increasingly come to know and trust God as he truly is, are laying the sure foundation of a life without lack.

Practice: *Take a moment right now and think of the most wonderful thing you could say about anyone. Consider what characteristics someone might have that would deserve your highest blessing and praise.*

Whatever you thought of, God's true blessedness is far above that. God's glory and power and goodness are deserving of infinitely more praise. No matter how magnificent in power or kindness or patience or any other attribute you want to assign to someone, God far exceeds that. So, as you "count your blessings," no matter how many and how wonderful they are, God's name will be beyond them all. And even when you give God your highest praise, he will always be deserving of more. There is absolutely nothing that God lacks. We must understand this, because the overflowing sufficiency that we will experience when Yahweh is our Shepherd lies in the all-sufficiency of the Shepherd himself. If we do not understand the all-sufficiency of the Shepherd, we will never experience that sufficiency in relationship to him. Because what we need, God has—in infinite supply.