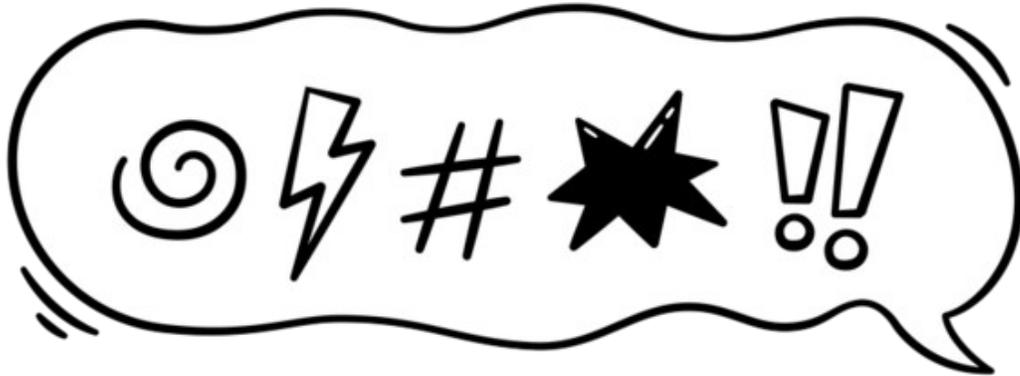


Message from the Minister:



This week in our service, one of our readings will be the Ten Commandments from the Old Testament. Many of us can list off at least a few on the list, like “Thou shalt not murder” or “Thou shalt not steal”, but the one that I’ve always felt was most misunderstood is “Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord in vain”.

The times when I’ve heard this commandment brought up has mostly been in relation to someone saying “Jesus Christ” when they’ve stubbed their toe or something like that. These days, I tend to shy away from wagging my finger at people who use Jesus’ name as a swear and instead, if I know them well enough, I’ll half-jokingly ask if they would like me to finish the prayer for healing they just started. That’s what you get for bringing up Jesus around a minister, after all!

But I have always felt that this isn’t really what the commandment is about. Consider the way it is translated in our pew bibles here at St. David’s: “You shall not misuse the name of the Lord”, or even more obviously in the Good News translation (designed to use straightforward language accessible to children) “Do not use my name for evil purposes, for I, the LORD your God, will punish anyone who misuses my name.”

The commandment not to misuse God’s name isn’t about what you say when you stub your toe. It’s about the misuse of religious authority, of calling something God’s Will when it really isn’t, or using religious language to make something seem more legitimate than it is. It’s about claiming my plans are actually God’s plans, and working to convince other people of the same.

So may we live in humility, always ready to listen for the voice of the living God in unexpected places. May we learn of God’s ways, and claim God’s name when we are feeding the hungry, caring for the destitute, welcoming strangers, or turning to God in prayer.

Now, as for what to say when you stub your toe, I have no final answer. But if Jesus’ name does slip off your tongue, just finish the prayer.