

THE LORD'S PRAYER

Part 2: "Hallowed Be Your Name"

Matthew 6:9-13

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Scripture Reading

"Pray then like this: 'Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name. Your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread, and forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil'" (Matthew 6:9-13).

Prayer

Heavenly Father, I thank you for the gift of your inspired words. May the Spirit of Christ your Son, teach us and form us to be a people of prayer this day. And as today is "Sanctity of Human Life Sunday," we pray that you would form us to be a people who value the Image of God and sacredness of human life. May we in our thoughts and words, in our prayers and actions to be a people that contend for the value of human life for the unborn, for the vulnerable, and for the weak. As it is Martin Luther King Jr. weekend, I pray we would also value human life as it relates to race as well. May your church be a people that value human life, whether born or unborn, whether black, white or brown, whether strong or vulnerable. Help us to be a people that rightly represent your holy name with all of our lives. We pray this in the name of Jesus Christ, AMEN.

Introduction

Our names are important to all of us. If you've ever been mistaken for someone else or had your name misspelled or mispronounced, you tend to want people to take better care of your name. If you have ever been a victim of identity theft or ever had someone slander you, you know very well the value of a good name. Even the staunchest unbeliever would agree with the statement of Proverbs 22:1 when Scripture says, *"A good name is to be chosen rather than great riches, and favor is better than silver or gold."*

Names matter a great deal, which is why God cares very much about his own name. In fact, God talks about his name a lot throughout the Bible. There are so many references to the name of God in the Bible, that I would not be able to cover them all in one sermon. But here are just a few examples from the book of Psalms:

"Ascribe to the LORD the glory due his name; worship the LORD in the splendor of holiness" (Ps 29:2 ESV).

“Shout for joy to God, all the earth; sing the glory of his name; give to him glorious praise!” (Ps 66:1-2).

“Ascribe to the LORD the glory due his name; bring an offering, and come into his courts!” (Ps 96:8).

“Praise the LORD, for the LORD is good; sing to his name, for it is pleasant!” (Ps 135:3).

God saves for his name’s sake (Ps 106:8). He leads his people in the paths of righteousness for his name’s sake (Ps 23:3). He atones for sin for his name’s sake (Ps 79:9). God’s name is awesome, majestic, and holy.

There is a sacred power in the name of God. So, it would make sense that when Jesus teaches us to pray to God in the Lord’s Prayer, the very first petition that we are to pray for is this: *“...hallowed be your name” (Mt 6:9b).*

Exposition

But what does it mean to *“hallow”* the name of God? The term “hallowed” isn’t a word most people use every day. In simple terms, *To “hallow” means to honor something as sacred and holy.* Often times, when people go to an old, beautiful church or a place where something of historical significance occurred, they say they are standing on “hallowed ground.” Jesus is teaching us that when you pray, you need to remind yourself to see the name of the Lord as holy.

Here I want to again read from the *Heidelberg Catechism (1563)*: *“What does the first petition [of the Lord’s Prayer] mean? ‘Hallowed be your name’ means: Help us to truly know you, to honor, glorify, and praise you for all your works and for all that shines forth from them: your almighty power, wisdom, kindness, justice, mercy, and truth. And it means, help us to direct all our living —what we think, say, and do — so that your name will never be blasphemed because of us but always honored and praised.”¹*

When we ask God to hallow his name, we are asking God to help us honor his name by what we think, say, and do. I love that definition, and I think it is right on with how Jesus is teaching his people to pray. So, for the rest of our time today, I want to talk about: *1.) Hallowing God’s Name in What We Think, 2.) Hallowing God’s Name in What We Say, and 3.) Hallowing God’s Name in What We Do.*

1.) Hallowing God’s Name in What We Think.

First of all, isn’t it interesting that in teaching the Lord’s Prayer, the first request that

¹ *Ecumenical Creeds and Reformed Confessions*. “The Heidelberg Catechism” (1563). Question 122. (Grand Rapids: Faith Alive Christian Resources, 1988), 71.

Jesus teaches us to make *has nothing to do with us!* The Lord's Prayer begins with God.² There are some modern-day spiritualists that teach what is called centering-prayer or centering-meditation as a way to retreat further and further into the depths of one's self. But biblical prayer is not self-centering-prayer. In fact, it is intentionally decentering from ourselves. It directs our thoughts and imaginations away from ourselves toward the glory and grandeur of God. *The prayer "hallowed be your name" recalibrates our thoughts toward a God-centered worldview.*

Moreover, the God that is the center of our worldview can't just be any God. It must be the true God. The late A.W. Tozer wrote a book called *The Knowledge of the Holy*. He begins this book by saying that what you think about God is the most important thought that you have; because, ultimately, your thoughts about God determine your thoughts about everything else. In other words, our theology matters. Also, how we get our theology matters.

Thankfully, we don't have to search for God in the dark. God is a God who reveals himself through the gracious gift of his Holy Scriptures. As such, he is a God who expects to be worshipped for who he is – not for who we, or our culture, would prefer him to be. Prayer shouldn't be modeled after Ricky Bobby's dinner table. We don't get to pick the version of Jesus we like best and then pray to him. To put the name of "God" or "Jesus" onto our preferred notion of God is to, in effect, make the name of God empty of its meaning and to pray to a dead idol.

Here's another way of saying the same thing: we don't have the right to name God in our prayers. The act of naming is to impose an identity. Thus, to name something is to assume a position of authority. And this can actually be a good thing. Humans are created in the image and likeness of God (Gen 1:27). As God's image-bearers, God gave man and woman dominion over creation. In Genesis, one of the first ways humans displayed that dominion was by naming the animals (Gen 2:19). Adam named the animals because he had the authority to do so. This relationship between naming and authority still holds true today.

Kate and I have three sons named Solomon, Samuel, and Simon Peter. We gave them their names. I would have had a problem if our doctor had wanted to name our kids. He doesn't get to. He does not have the authority. In the same way, we do not have the right to name God by putting an identity onto him that meets our preferences. Because God reveals his name to us through his word, we are to hold the knowledge of God in our hearts as a treasured possession.

Practically speaking, we are to hallow God's name by weaving the revelation of Scripture into our prayer life. We must pursue a right understanding of God through the lens of Scripture. And we must humbly and prayerfully ask the Holy Spirit to help us understand the character and nature of God. We are to reject false notions of God that creep into our minds through our culture or our fears. For we dishonor the name of God when we assume that God is distant, harsh, and unable to provide for his children.

² J.I. Packer, *Praying the Lord's Prayer*. (Wheaton: Crossway, 2007), 41.

Instead, we are to think upon, meditate on, and revere the name of God, who is righteous, sovereign, and a good Father. We are to run to the name of the Lord as we would run to a strong tower, where we will find refuge and strength (Pr 18:10).

A prayer that reflects what it means to hallow God's name in our thought-life would be, *"Heavenly Father, help my mind to understand your holiness. Help me to worship you and serve you for who you are – not who I want you to be, not who culture would prefer you to be."*

2.) Hallowing God's Name in What We Say.

Another way of saying this same thing is that we are called to honor God in the way we use our words. Here we might say there is a direct and intentional connection with the prayer "hallowed be your name" and commandment number three of the Ten Commandments: *"You shall not take the name of the LORD your God in vain, for the LORD will not hold him guiltless who takes his name in vain" (Ex 20:7).*³

At the most initial level, the Bible is telling us to be very reverent and worshipful when we use the name of God with our speech. When we say God's name, we are to say it with a sacred respect. This certainly would rule out willfully and directly cursing God, but it also means that we should never use the name of God or Jesus as an expletive. Using the name of God as a curse word (even if it is done for the sake of humor) amounts to *trivializing the God who created the galaxies*. When we use the name of God or Lord or Jesus Christ or the Holy Spirit, we are to do so worshipfully.

However, I think there is good reason to expand the application beyond merely words about God. In fact, in Number 6:27, we learn that God is a God who puts his name on his people. Because of this, we are called to honor God's people with our words.

I think we should find this point rather convicting. One of the greatest sins of Christians in the so-called Bible belt is the sin of gossip. We gossip about other Christians, and we gossip about other churches. This ought not to be so. We need to repent of this sin, and instead seek to bless other rather than curse them with our words.

Just like God's name is often associated with his people, God's name is also associated with his word. When we talk on behalf of God, we are bearing his name. In the Old Testament, if someone said, "Thus says the Lord," and they were found to be a liar, they were called a false prophet. Our culture, on the other hand, tends to be much more careless with what we say are God's words.

As a pastor, I can't tell you how often I hear people say and do the most foolish things and justify their words and actions by saying "God said." Let me tell you God is not going to tell you to do something that is sinful or foolish. So, when we say things like "God told me" or "the Holy Spirit said," our words better line up with what God has actually said in the Bible.

³ R.C. Sproul, *The Prayer of the Lord*. (Orlando: Reformation Trust, 2009), 30.

When we pray for God to hallow his name, we are asking him to place our tongues under the sovereign dominion of the Holy Spirit so that we would honor the name of God with all of our words. We are saying, *“God help every word that I speak today show that I believe that my life is centered around a God who is holy!”*

3.) Hallowing God’s Name in What We Do.

To hallow God’s name is to make God’s name sacred and holy in such a way that forms our worship. R.C. Sproul writes: *“What does it mean to say God is Holy? It means that He is different from anything that we experience or find in the material universe, that God the Creator differs from all creatures. The primary way in which God differs from all the creatures is that he is uncreated and eternal, whereas each of us is created and finite. We are not eternal but temporal. If nothing else separates the Creator from the creature, it is that high transcendent element of God’s own being, so marvelous, so majestic that He is worthy of the adoration of every creature.”*⁴

The holiness of God is a comprehensive, life-changing truth. Because God is holy, worship is due to his name, not just in thought or in word, but with all of our lives.

Some of the medieval theologians would say that Christians are to live *Coram Deo*, which be “before the face of God.” We are to live in the presence of, under the authority of, and unto the glory and honor of our holy God. This is the true calling of every created being, but how much more is this true for those who take upon themselves the name of Christ.

When you claim to be a Christian, you carry the name of God with you wherever you go. If you are a Christian, you are called to bear the name of God in such a way that brings honor and glory to God, and does not bring shame to him. If you are a student, be a good student. If you are an employee, be a diligent and honorable employee. If you are a business owner, go the extra mile to run your business with integrity by being honest with your customers and generous with your employees. If you are on social media, be kind, wise, and thoughtful about what you post. Consider tangible ways to honor and hallow God’s name in everyday life.

This is not necessarily our natural habit of thinking, speaking, and acting, which why Jesus teaches us to plead with the Lord daily in this way; that he would empower us to shine his glory through our lives. Consider asking the Lord on a daily basis, *“Lord, protect me from doing anything that would dishonor your name. Help me to live my life today in a way that gives you honor.”*

So just like I encouraged you to do last week, this week I want to challenge all of our congregation to take some time every day in the coming week to pray. Last week, we learned to begin our prayers in time of worship. This week I encourage you pray daily

⁴ Sproul, 31.

that God would help you honor his name in your thoughts, your words, and your actions.

Conclusion

Now, maybe you are listening to this and saying, *“That’s all great for good people, but my life is a mess. My life is a wreck. I don’t have a good name, so I don’t think I can do much for God’s name.”*

Well, I have bad news and I have good news. The bad news is *“Yes, you have a bad name, and so do I.”* But the good news is that Jesus willingly took your bad name on himself, so that you could have a new name and a new identity.

When Jesus was ministering on this earth, hardly anyone realized who he really was. On the night he was betrayed, the temple guards came to arrest Jesus as a common criminal while he and his disciples were in the Garden of Gethsemane. The gospel of John records how the guards said they were seeking Jesus of Nazareth. Jesus stepped forward, and the English translation renders his statement as, *“I am he”* (Jn 18:5). However, the original language doesn’t include the word “he.” In Greek, Jesus says, *“Ego eimi”* (Εγώ ειμι), which translates literally as *“I Am.”* At this statement, all of the guards fell to the ground (Jn 18:6).

Why would John include this small detail? He is showing us that Jesus was and is the glorious “I Am” in the flesh (Ex 3:14). He knew who he was, and he knew his name had power.

But even though this was the “Great I Am,” he went to the cross, and he took our shame so that by the power of his resurrection, all who believe in Jesus could receive the blessing of his righteous name! If you are not yet in Christ, come and receive a new name in Christ today!

When Jesus came to live, die, and rise again, most of the world did not recognize him or worship his name. But there is a day coming when all will acknowledge him for who he is: *“...Christ Jesus, who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name, so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father”* (Phil 2:5b-11).

Redeemer Christian Church, may we be a people who hallow God’s name by holding the name of God as a treasured possession. May we rest in the new name he has given us through the work of his Son! And may we bring honor to Jesus, as we live as Spirit-filled ambassadors for his great and holy name! AMEN.

Discussion starters for Gospel Communities:

- 1) *Hallowed is not a word many people use every day. What does "hallowed" mean? And what does it mean to view something as "hallowed"?*
- 2) *Read these verses from the Psalms: Psalm 23:3, 29:9, 66:1-2, 79:9, 96:8, 106:8, 135:3. Why do you think God's name is so important?*
- 3) *Through group discussion or private reflection, create a list of practical ways to honor and "hallow" God's name in our thoughts, words, and actions. Then, turn that list into a time of prayer in which you ask the Lord to help you do those things.*