

“Hallowed Be Your Name”

Lent: Teach us to Pray

Matthew 6:7-15

03/05/23

Introduction

PRAY.

Westminster Catechism. In the mid 17th Century, England found itself in a series of bloody civil wars. The conflict was primarily over who should rule and what the relationship should be between the kingdoms of England, Scotland, and Ireland. (Think like historical Brexit).

And one of the issues at play was the dissolution of the church of England, that rather than having one institution which would guide and oversee all of the churches in the three kingdoms, freedom would be given to churches to assemble as they see fit.

And this worried bishops and leaders within the churches. Without one organizing body to help lead the churches, how would they protect against heresy, false teaching, churches giving up orthodoxy, all of that.

In response, the Church of England came together in what was known as the Westminster Assembly with the goal of doing what Christians have done at various points in history – writing one standard confession of faith – a document summarizing *here is what we believe as followers of Jesus*.

And accompanying that confession of faith was a catechism. If you're not familiar with that terminology, a catechism is a series of questions and answers that could be used to teach church members these essential doctrines of their faith.

And in that catechism, *the first question and answer they started with is this:*

What is the chief end of man? (what is the goal, the point, the whole focus of life for mankind?)

To glorify God and enjoy Him forever.

That was their summation – that the whole reason we exist, when you boil it all down, is to give God glory and to enjoy Him as His people.

Explain Text

And what we're going to see today in the 2nd line of the Lord's prayer is an invitation that a primary way we glorify and enjoy God is in prayer.

In case you missed last week, we started a 6 week journey line by line through the Lord's Prayer from Matthew 6. And we started last week with the invitation to remember we pray with and to “Our Father in heaven”.

The starting point of all prayer is not what we say but who we say it to. That we are invited to pray not as an idea, or a transaction, or as empty words – but as an opportunity to commune with our heavenly Father. Who is present and near to us and yet is powerful and rules and reigns over all things.

And the very first thing after remembering who we're talking to that Jesus invites us to pray is not our requests, not our anxieties, not our worries, not our needs – but we start here – **Matt 6:9 - Matt 6:9 – Pray then like this: “Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name.**

If prayer at a base level is communion, entering into God's presence, then the first thing Jesus invites us to say in God's presence is a hallowing of His name.

Now, chances are this is not language you use in your everyday life. Someone asks you – How was your weekend? Chances are you're not going to respond with “It was good. You know I spent some time Saturday hallowing God.”

So let me take just a few minutes to break down this phrase for us – Hallowed be God's Name.

Hallow

“Hallow” comes from the Greek word **hagiozo** which is translated – **to make, to treat, or to set apart as holy.**

The Holman Christian Standard Bible translates this phrase as – “May your name be honored as holy.”

A helpful English synonym I'll use often today is the word **exalt.**

To hallow, to exalt, something is to declare – this is different than me, it's set apart – in ways I can't even fully comprehend, I just know are awesome. It's to recognize this something or someone I am hallowing is so magnificent and other and incredible, I'm not like it.

You may have heard of a place before being described as “hallowed ground”. It's a place on the earth that just seems sacred, set apart, not like the rest of the world.

That's what Jesus tells us to do first in prayer, we hallow - we make or treat or set apart as holy God's Name.

God's Name

This is a much weightier concept than we might first think. For many of us as modern westerners, our names aren't that big of a deal. We might get upset if someone mispronounces our name or forgets our name, but for the most part names are labeling terms – which means we can change it. We can ignore it, we can give ourselves a new name, or can go by our middle name if we want to or by a nickname.

And none of that is bad, it's just evidence we don't fully understand the weight that ancient Jews would have placed on someone's name. Someone's name, in Jesus' culture, was their entire identity. It was who they were. Names carried meaning, it declared or prophesied identity over someone.

As one scholar says – to Jewish people a name was inseparable from the person to whom it belongs. It is something of his or her essence in the world.

This is why the 3rd commandment in the 10 commandments is such a bigger deal than most people think. Most people think the command – “Do not take the Lord's name in vain” – means like don't say OMG. But the deeper issue with taking the Lord's name in vain is that the Lord God and his Name are inseparable. So taking the Lord's name in Vain is taking God Himself in vain. We attribute to God something that is not true, or don't attribute to God something that is true about Him. We cast Him aside or dismiss or ignore Him.

It's not a command so much about our treatment of God's name, as much as it is our treatment of God Himself.

So when Jesus teaches us to pray – Hallowed be God's Name. He's not inviting us to simply make much of the labeling identity of God, but about the very person and essence of God. **In other words – to set apart God Himself as holy.**

The third thing we have to understand to fully grasp the weight of this line comes in v10...

Matt 6:9-10 – “Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name. Your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.”

On earth as it is in heaven.

This is one of the times where our English translations don't quite capture it. It's not wrong, just not as helpful as you'd like it to be. So you'll notice in your Bible, there's a period after v9. Hallowed be your name. That's an interpretive decision. Ancient greek doesn't have punctuation marks. And the vast majority of scholars argue that hallowed be your name is actually a part of three sayings which Jesus modifies with – On earth as it is in heaven.

Meaning it's helpful to read verses 9-10 as:

- Your kingdom come, on earth as it is in heaven.
- Your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.

AND...Your name be hallowed, on earth as it is in heaven.

God, would your name be as holy and you be as exalted on earth and in my life as you are in heaven.

Well how hallowed is God in heaven? How set apart as holy is He?

Look at what the Scriptures show us... **Revelation 4:8 – ...and day and night they never cease to say, “Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord God Almighty, who was and is and is to come!”**

So the Scriptures say in the throne room of God there is unceasing worship of God declaring, setting apart, hallowing God as HOLY HOLY HOLY.

So hallowing God's name, on earth as it is in heaven, is not simply a continuation of the greeting to God, but rather asking Him to do on earth and in our lives, what is already being done in heaven – Him being set apart as holy.

But that is not only what's currently happening, It is also what will be happening into eternity. Our future as followers of Jesus is a day in which we will join our voices with that heavenly chorus declaring the very same song – we will glorify God and enjoy Him forever.

And so when Jesus teaches us to pray – Hallowed be God's Name He's inviting us to begin that forever hallowing now in prayer.

SUMMARY

Tracking? This is how I would summarize what we just said – When Jesus teaches us to pray “Hallowed be your name” he is saying, **pray that God Himself would be set apart as holy here on earth and in our lives as He is in heaven.**

Explain Need

Which might immediately bring up some confusion for us.

Because God is holy, right? So if God already is holy and set apart as such, why would Jesus tell us to pray in a way that sets him apart as holy. Why do we have to hallow someone who is already hallowed?

Is God some needy deity that needs us to affirm Him? Does God cease to be holy if we don't recognize Him as such? Well obviously, no.

So why this prayer? Why is the first thing we pray to our heavenly Father – Hallowed be your name?

Well let me suggest to us this morning that – **praying for God's name to be hallowed is actually less about God's needs and more about ours.**

Here's what I mean – we don't step into prayer from places of neutrality. When we step into prayer, we come as those in the world and affected by the world. When I'm in the midst of the chaos and busyness and brokenness of my own life and I try, by the power of the Spirit, through the work of Jesus, to commune with God – I become well aware of the state of my own heart.

I become well aware that when I come to hallow God, I come as someone who just a second ago been hallowing something else.

- I come to exalt God and yet find I've been exalting my achievements at work.
- I come to set apart God onto the throne of my life and find I put money there instead.
- I come to love God and worship Him only to find I've been loving and worshipping the approval of others.
- I come to ask God for mercy, grace, peace, welcome, only to find I've been searching for those things in escape and comfort.

We enter into prayer with divided hearts. We step out of the world and into communion with our Father in heaven, and we must first hallow God because we've spent all week in the world hallowing everything else.

This is important – We are mostly reactionary creatures. We live most of our lives out of response to what's happening to us and around us.

- Someone hurts us, we react with anger, bitterness, and resentment.
- We get a bad report at work, we react with anxiety, worry, frustration.
- Our kid disobeys us and we react with annoyance and sadness.

With a reactionary heart, we learn a way of being in the world that is dictated and determined by everything going on around us. Tossed to and fro by our suffering. Looking for all sorts of relief and escape in things and people other than God.

And that carries over into our prayer life. And so we step into prayer, with all of these compounded worries, and we rush straight to the problem, and prayer becomes synonymous with, if not just a Christianized-version of worrying.

We say "Dear God" and then rattle off our to-do list or our grievances.

So hallowing God's name, pausing at the start to recognize and set him apart as holy, is a means by which we slow down, we stop and we remember God.

Before we give him our sorrows, before we give him our requests, before we ask him for our needs – we ground our hearts back in who He is and He has done for us.

In other words I'm reorienting my heart not to pray out of reaction to the world and my life, but rather out of reaction to God. When I first stop in prayer to hallow and exalt Him, I'm now praying with Him much larger, and my problems and concerns much smaller. My prayers are now grounded in who He is and what He has done, not who I am and what's happening to me.

Tyler Staton – “Prayer flows from the posture of our hearts toward God, not from reaction to the world around us. Everything that comes from the Lord’s Prayer after this first movement is an overflow of the name of God being hallowed in the heart of the praying person. ‘Teach us to pray’, the disciples say to Jesus. And he responds in essence, ‘Start by remembering who you’re talking to.’”

Remember first and foremost that God is our Father in Heaven. The one who knows us intimately and yet commands all things. We first stop, we remember Him, we remember how He meets us with His presence in prayer, and we worship Him, exalt Him, hallow Him as He deserves.

Explain Invitation

And that leads us into our practice for this week – **Adoration**.

Adoration is a means of hallowing God’s name by declaring true things about God to God.

Adoration is a way we learn to get out of the burdens of our present situations, we turn our hearts from running after all these other things, hallowing all these other things besides God – whether that be our suffering or our sin – and fix our attention back on God. We learn to adore God, to worship Him.

We remember what’s at the core of who we are as humans and as children of God – that we are created to glorify God and enjoy Him forever. And adoration is how we live into that core of our lives through prayer.

“Adoration is the yearning of the heart to worship, honor, magnify, and bless God. We ask nothing but cherish Him. We seek nothing but his exaltation. We focus on nothing but his goodness.” - Richard Foster

We see examples of this all over the place in the Scriptures:

- **Psalm 57** – David on the run for his life from Saul, able to sing and to pray – God’s steadfast love is great to the heavens and faithfulness extends to the clouds.
- **Acts 16** – Paul and Silas – are in prison for preaching the gospel and it says that night, around midnight they are praying and singing hymns to God. Hallowing God in the midst of their present circumstances.

That is the invitation of our prayers of adoration – we learn, despite and in the midst of our circumstances to adore God.

Specifically, we adore God for two things:

1. We adore God for who He is.

Our Father in Heaven. Unchanging. Always and forever the same.

Who is God according to the Scriptures?

- Loving
- Gracious
- Kind
- Compassionate
- True
- Gentle
- Strong
- Holy
- All-Knowing
- All-Powerful
- Merciful

The Bible tells us...

- He's Yahweh – The Lord.
- He's El Shaddai – the God almighty.
- He's Jehovah Jireh – The Lord will provide.
- He's Jehovah Rapha - The Lord who heals.
- He's Jehovah Shalom – The God of peace.

We could go on and on and on. And in prayer we get to sit and delight and glorify Him. We get to tell Him what He knows about Himself and in so doing hallow him on the throne of our hearts.

2. We adore God for what He's done.

Big – we remember how He has been faithful through salvation history. How he fulfilled all of His promises by sending Jesus on the cross for our sins. By dealing with our separation from Him. Though we rebelled, He pursued us. Though we turned from Him, He came after us. Saved us, due to no merit of our own, despite our own best efforts to rebel, He won our hearts.

Small – our own redemptive history – how God has provided for us. As we sang last week - that all we have needed God's hand has in fact provided. That we're still here. We're still loved by Him. That He has cared for us, kept us.

Florida Retreat + Life Maps. Marking God's faithfulness through my life. All the ways God has been faithful to me over the past few years.

Communal Practice

Psalm 100.

- v3 – “he is God” – adore Him for who He is.
- v3 – “he made us and we are his” – adore Him for what He has done in your salvation.
- v4 – “Give thanks to Him” – adore Him for what He has done for you in your life (tangible provision)
- v5 – Praise Him for His future faithfulness

Whole psalm – **singing!!**