
Matthew 6:9a

Hallowed be Your name

What does this mean?

God's name is certainly holy in itself,

but we pray in this petition that it may be kept holy among us also.

Over the next few weeks (in the Sundays of Lent) we will be reflecting on 'The Lord's Prayer'. The inspiration for this has come from the Lutheran Tract Mission Devotional Booklet 'Hear our prayer' (for this, [CLICK HERE](#))

When it comes to the Lord's Prayer we have something very familiar before us. You know this prayer inside out, and it is not my task to teach you something you do not already know, but the privilege of reminding you of what you already have. As we reflect on the Lord's Prayer, it will be familiar. It will be like travelling from one room of your house to another.

Today we reflect on Jesus' word to us, and call for prayer, to say to God our heavenly Father, "Hallowed be Your name."

Take a moment to think about your name. Would you say it adequately describes who you are to someone who's never met you? Look up the meaning behind your name. You might also ask your parents why they gave you your names. Do they have special meanings? Are you named after someone?

In the same way, the names that were given to God in the Old Testament offer us a glimpse into God's character and how people saw and experienced Him. Some of the 'names' given to God in the Bible are as follows, and each of these 'names' reveals some aspect of His character: Elohim- The Mighty Creator- Gen. 1:1; Adoni- Lord or Master- Gen. 15; El Shaddai- God Almighty- Gen. 17; El Elyon- God Most High- Gen 14; El Roi- God The Strong One- Gen 16; El Olam- God Everlasting - Gen 21; Yahweh- I Am Who I Am- Ex. 3; Yahweh Jireh- LORD our Provider- Gen. 22; Yahweh M'kaddesh- LORD who Sanctifies Lev. 20; Yahweh Nissi- LORD our Banner- Exodus 17; Yahweh Rohi- LORD my Shepherd- Psalm 23; Yahweh Rophe- LORD who heals- Exodus 15; Yahweh Shalom- LORD of Peace- Judges 6; Yahweh Shammah- LORD is Here – Ezekiel 48; Yahweh Tsidkenu- LORD our Righteousness – Jer. 23.

Jesus begins the Lord's Prayer with the words, "Our Father in heaven" And then He says, "Hallowed be Your name" (Matthew 6:9).

Last Ash Wednesday we reflected on The Introduction to the Lord's Prayer, where Jesus teaches us to address God as "Our Father in heaven." We note that God is not some abstract "Higher Power" that we cannot reach, that we cannot know, and that we can't be sure if he's hearing our prayers. No, in and through Christ, we have a much better relationship with God than that. Jesus has revealed God to us.

We can know that God is our kind and loving heavenly Father. Jesus has opened the way to God for us. By His death and resurrection and His ascension into heaven for us, Jesus Christ has won forgiveness for our sins, has given us new life, and has seated us at God's right hand!

Now after the introduction, that is, the address to God as "Our Father in heaven," we come to the First Petition of the Lord's Prayer. The First Petition means the first thing we are asking for in this prayer. The petitions are the things we're asking for or requesting. And the first one in the Lord's Prayer is "Hallowed be Your name." Notice, the first thing we're asking for is not something like, "Lord, give me a new car," or even, "Lord, help Aunt Joan in the hospital." That's not where Jesus would have us begin. Jesus, instead, has us start out with something about God Himself. And this actually of the great benefit to us, and that's because it reorientates our life on what really matters, and where our 'centre' for understanding all things does lie.

We may ask, what is meant by "hallowed" and what is meant by "name." First, we remember that God's "name", biblically speaking, is the sum total of everything we know about God. God's name is all of His attributes and all of His actions rolled into one, made known to us in Scripture, so that, through faith, we know God as He really is. And so when we are praying, "Hallowed be Your name" we are actually praying to know God as He really is.

"Hallowed" is not a word that we use much anymore. It's an old-Englishy type of word that means "to be made holy" or "to be kept holy." We know it from the word "Halloween," which is short for "all hallows eve," all saints eve, the eve of all holy ones. What is holy is set apart, consecrated, reserved for sacred use in service of God.

So what we're praying for in this petition is that God's name would be kept holy, by us and among us. This means that's God's name would be set apart as holy, set apart for the special purpose for which God has revealed His name to us.

What does it mean to pray, "Hallowed be Your name?" Martin Luther reminds us (Small Catechism) that "God's name is holy in itself." God actually does not need our prayers to keep His name holy. We need to know His holy name that we may know the One who hears our prayers. What is at stake in this prayer is not the integrity of God's name. Someone has said that gold is gold, whether it is worn by a prince or a child person who has no idea what it is. What is at stake is what happens with God's name on our lips and in our lives. "We pray in this petition that it may be kept holy among us also."

Practically, how does this happen? Luther explains it this way, "God's name is kept holy whenever His Word is taught in its truth and purity, and we as children of God lead holy lives according to it. Help us to do this, dear Father in heaven! But anyone who teaches or lives contrary to God's Word dishonours God's name among us. Keep us from doing this, heavenly Father!"

God's name is hallowed, or kept holy, in the way that we teach about God, as also in the way that we live as God's children who bear His name. So both doctrine and life. What we teach and how we live.

The worst profaning and dishonour to God's name is false doctrine. To use the Scriptures to teach something other than God's Word as it is written. The second profaning of God's name occurs when we use God's name to cover up falsehood or by swearing or by trivial oaths. And a third profaning of God's name is when Christians who bear God's name as the baptised children of God live openly wicked and evil lives.

Jesus teaches us to pray daily, "Hallowed be Your name." And this is a very dangerous thing to pray, "Hallowed be Your name." It is a prayer for God to interfere with our lives. It means death to Adam and life to Christ. It will turn our life upside-down, or more accurately, inside-out, away from your self to live in Christ by faith and in those around you by love. In short God's name is kept holy when acknowledge our sin and rejoice we are forgiven in the name of Jesus, and when they speak and live as the forgiven children of God we are.

How are we supposed to pray? That's the question we're asking Jesus this season of Lent, and we're hearing His answer contained in the Lord's Prayer.

Did you know that when you pray the Lord's Prayer you are praying for your pastor? You are also praying for Bible study and Sunday School teachers. You are praying for parents and grandparents. When we pray the First Petition of the Lord's Prayer we are praying for all of those who teach God's Word. We pray in "Hallowed be Your Name" that the word of God is taught in its truth and purity.

We'll take this petition one step further before we end this morning. When we pray "Hallowed be Your name," we're not only asking that we keep God's name holy, but that more and more people would come to recognize and keep God as holy. In this petition, we pray that God would be at work through you and me to spread the Good News of His holy and forgiving love to all in this world. We pray that God's name would be holy for all people, not just for us.

By this prayer, Jesus is 'reorienting' the direction of our life. "Seek FIRST the Kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things will be added to you." (Matthew 6:33). And as paradoxical as this may sound, this is precisely what is best for us.

Jesus is the one who truly and completely hallows God's name. And you and I find our refuge and our identity in Him. We know God as a loving heavenly Father in and through Christ. As baptised disciples of Jesus, we pray along with Him. Our minds and wills are shaped by Christ. Our prayer priorities are shaped by Him. What Jesus would have us pray for, this is what we want to pray for. And the Holy Spirit helps us in our weakness.

So God will always be calling us back to the Lord's Prayer. These petitions will always be things that we can pray, every day, throughout our lives. And first

among them is this petition we have heard today: "Hallowed be thy name." Yes, Lord, teach us to pray this!

When Jesus says, "Pray like this...Hallowed by Your name..." He is reorienting our life to its proper relationship with the Father. And this prayer is answered completely and perfectly in Jesus Christ. It is the only-begotten Son who 'hallows' the name of the Father among us and FOR US and IN US. Jesus Christ is the One upon whom the Father has written His holy name.

And, as paradoxical as this may sound, it is in that place where the Father withdraws His Name from His Son, His only Son, Whom He loves, and turns His back on Him, that the Son truly 'hallows the name of the Father most definitely and most clearly for us. It is in His faithful life and suffering and death in this world, in which we live and move and have our being, that Jesus glorifies the Father's name. Through faith in Jesus Christ, and when we pray in His Holy Name, we may stand up straight and lift up our heads and pray "Hallowed be Your name," with the complete confidence that it has already been done.

What Jesus did at Calvary shows us the meaning of His name, Jesus. "Jesus" in Hebrew, literally means "He saves." Jesus' name tells us who He is: Saviour! This is what the angel told Joseph to call his son even before He was born: "You shall call His name Jesus, for He will save His people from their sins" (Matthew 1:21). This is the Name which is above every name, "that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven, on earth, and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father" (Philippians 2: 10-11). This is the holy Name we hallow, worship, confess, adore, and praise, not only with our lips, but with our lives. God's Name is the greatest treasure and the most holy possession we have. What a wonderful gift to be able to offer prayer, sing praise, and render thanks that is pleasing to God our loving heavenly Father through Jesus our Saviour. Amen.