

Hallowed Be Your Name

Luke 11:1 Now it came to pass, as He was praying in a certain place, when He ceased, *that* one of His disciples said to Him, "Lord, teach us to pray, as John also taught his disciples."

2 So He said to them, "When you pray, say: Our Father in heaven, Hallowed be Your name. Your kingdom come. Your will be done On earth as *it is* in heaven. 3 Give us day by day our daily bread. 4 And forgive us our sins, For we also forgive everyone who is indebted to us. And do not lead us into temptation, But deliver us from the evil one." (Lk. 11:1-4)

When children are growing up, it takes some training to teach them what is appropriate and inappropriate to say to adults. Untrained, children will simply ask an adult, "How old are you?" or "How much money do you have?" or "Are you buying me a Christmas present?" or any number of other questions or statements that no polite adult would think of saying. But children are growing and learning the world of polite society, and they need an adult to explain what we do and do not say.

That's a lot like the situation between God and us. When speaking to God there really are things you should say and ask, and things you should not say and ask. But the whole human race is like children when it comes to understanding how to speak to God. We need someone to teach us how to speak to God, just like children need adults to teach them how to speak to adults.

That someone was and is the Lord Jesus Christ. He taught us how to pray. When His disciples asked Him to teach them to pray, He gave them the famous Lord's Prayer. That prayer is the ultimate teaching guide for what you ask for and what you say when you speak to God. The Lord's Prayer is not a mantra we repeat word for word; it is a pattern that should shape what we say to God in prayer.

We began last week seeing that the opening words are meant to make us reflect on our relationship with God. When we say, "Our Father in Heaven" we are forced to think about whether or not He is our Father. It leads us to begin by thanking God for the relationship we have with Him through Jesus Christ, thanking Him for the Gospel, for the Cross. We are really beginning by stating and then revelling in the relationship we have as saved children of God.

That brings us to the second line. Sometimes, people make the mistake of thinking that the words "Hallowed be Your name" are part of the opening address, as if we are saying "Our Father in heaven, Most Exalted Name of All." But these words are not part of the address, these words are in fact the first request. They are in the imperative, which means it's a command. And if you're rightly uncomfortable at the idea of commanding God, the verb is also in the passive, which means we are recognising it is not something we can do, or even something we can make God do. We are asking God to do this, May Your name be hallowed. This is something theologians call the divine passive, where we are respectfully asking God to do the thing we are praying for.

So what does "Hallowed be Your name" mean?

To understand this request, we'll break it into three parts. First, we'll look at this word "hallowed" and determine what it means here. Second, we'll work out what Jesus means by "Your name".

Third, we'll bring those together to make sense of the actual prayer request, and then apply it to our own prayer lives.

Let's begin with the first part.

I. The Meaning of "Hallowed"

Hallowed isn't a word we use very often. Probably the most the word ever comes into common use, sadly is during October with the word Halloween, which is short for All Hallows Evening, which was originally a Christian celebration of martyrs. Most often, someone uses the word today to mean some place venerable, or something highly respected.

It wasn't always that way. If you'd spoken English, or Old English, a few hundred years ago, the word would have been instantly recognisable. It meant to make something holy or to honour something as holy. In Old English, you had the noun for holy, which was *halig*, and then when you wanted to speak of holy as an action, as a verb, you used *halgian*, which soon became *hallow*.

Fast forward to our present day, and we still use the word *holy*, but the action form of holy, hallow, is not used very much. You see how this word is dropping out of usage in some modern Bible translations of this verse, which try to update the language.

The HCSB renders it: Our Father in heaven, Your name be honored as holy. (Matt. 6:9)

The NLT puts it: Our Father in heaven, may your name be kept holy. (Matt. 6:9)

The NET says: Our Father in heaven, may your name be honored,

These translations are doing this, because the verb form of holy, hallowed, is becoming less and less known. In fact, besides the Lord's Prayer, every other time the original Greek has holy as an action, our English translations use the word *sanctify*. It's an accident of history and tradition, that you have the word *hallowed* here, but *sanctify* elsewhere in Scripture, because they are translating verb forms of the same original Greek word for holy. If they were consistent, they'd translate this line "Sanctified be your name".

But I for one, am rather glad about that accident, because I rather like the word *hallowed*, and in this context, it draws our attention to itself. It's a grand old word, and still has the sound of holy in it. We don't have the word *holify* in our language, but that's what hallowed means. Make holy, regard as holy, recognise as holy.

That leads us to the idea of holiness. Holiness means that which is other, separate, and unique. When something is holy, it stands apart from several things. It stands apart from what is evil, sinful, defiling. Anything corrupting and destructive cannot mingle with what is holy. A person who has been forgiven and cleansed, and is now a set-apart one, or a saint, has been hallowed.

When something is holy, it also stands apart from what is common, and ordinary. A holy object in the Temple was an ordinary object now sanctified, set apart, consecrated for holy use. The object had now been hallowed. "And you shall take some of the blood that is on the altar, and some of the anointing oil, and sprinkle *it* on Aaron and on his garments, on his sons and on the garments of his sons with him; and he and his garments shall be hallowed, and his sons and his sons' garments with him. (Exod. 29:21)

When one day in seven was set apart for holy uses, the day had been hallowed, and was to be hallowed. For *in* six days the LORD made the heavens and the earth, the sea, and all that *is* in them, and rested the seventh day. Therefore the LORD blessed the Sabbath day and hallowed it. (Exod. 20:11)

That's what this request is praying. Except, it is not an object in the Temple, or a day, or even ourselves we are asking to be Hallowed. It is God's Name itself. That leads us to the second part of the request.

II. The Meaning of "Your Name"

We live in a time where names are just labels we attach to things. In fact, we have the legal right to change our own names if we don't like them. If you want to re-name yourself Cosmic Rainbow, you

can do so.

But this idea would be very strange to the Hebrews who first heard Jesus give this prayer. To the Jewish mind, a person's name was deeply connected to who they were. You see in Scripture how often a person is named after a circumstance related to the birth, or to the person they are going to be. In the Bible, a person's name was deeply connected to his character. Nabal means fool, and a fool he was. Jacob means heel-catcher, or trickster, and trickster he was. Jesus' name means Yahveh is salvation.

We see how often God renames someone after a significant event. Abram becomes Abraham, father of many nations. Jacob becomes Israel. Simon becomes Peter, the Rock. Naomi wants people to call her Mare, but no one listened to her.

In the biblical world, names were more than mere labels. Not only did they describe realities, they partook of—perhaps even shaped—the realities to which they referred. One of the first acts that God did for Adam was to bring the animals to him and allow him to name them. In naming them, he was really explaining their essence, what the thing is. It was Adam's first act of kingly rule on God's behalf, to give names to the sub-creation.

In Scripture, God's name is what reveals His essence. That's why Scripture gives us so many of His names: El Shaddai – God Almighty, El Elyon – God Most High.

The central name by which God reveals Himself is simply using the verb to be, which becomes the Hebrew Yahweh. God reveals Himself as The one who exists in Himself, He is not part of the Creation, but the self-existent, self-sufficient I Am. He is the ground of all existence, all being exists because of the I AM.

Scripture also reveal compound of this name: YHWH-Yireh — "The Lord will provide" (Genesis 22:13-14); YHWH-Rapha — "The Lord that healeth" (Exodus 15:26); YHWH-Niss"i — "The Lord our Banner" (Exodus 17:8-15); YHWH-Shalom — "The Lord our Peace" (Judges 6:24); YHWH-Ra-ah — "The Lord my Shepherd" (Psalm 23:1).

So to speak of God's name is to speak of God Himself, His very being, His essence. When God manifested Himself to Moses in Exodus 34, He said He would proclaim His name to Moses, and when He does, He gives Moses a mini-sermon on His attributes: 5 Now the LORD descended in the cloud and stood with him there, and proclaimed the name of the LORD. 6 And the LORD passed before him and proclaimed, "The LORD, the LORD God, merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abounding in goodness and truth, 7 "keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, by no means clearing *the guilty*, (Exod. 34:5-7)

God's Name is God's Person. Throughout the Old Testament, when God is concerned with His name or acting for His name's sake, He is acting for the sake of His Person, for His glory. When the psalmists call for the name of the Lord to be praised, they are calling for God, and all His attributes to be praised.

Jesus says, we must pray, "hallowed be Your name"

III. The Meaning of Hallowed Be Your Name

As we bring these two thoughts together, what do we have? May the character and reputation of God, be regarded as unique. May who You are be known as sinless and matchless.

What we have here is really the positive form of the Third Commandment. The Third Commandment says, "You shall not take the name of the Lord Your God in vain". The opposite of

profaning, desecrating, blaspheming God's name, is if God's name is hallowed, honoured, glorified.

But as we saw when we studied the Third Commandment a few years ago, not taking the Lord's name in vain is a lot more than the obvious avoidance of using God's name as a swear word. The Third Commandment is not a narrow, tunnel-vision protection of the actual word, Yahweh, as so many Israelites thought. Profaning God's name can mean praising Him irreverently, claiming things in His name which He never said, it can be claiming Him as your God and then living in a way that contradicts His Word.

To pat yourself on the back because you don't use the word *God* as a swear word, while living in such a way that people call you and all of Christianity a bunch of hypocrites is to profane God's name. It's to fall into the precise trap of the Pharisees, who would not pronounce God's name out of fear of mispronouncing it, while living wretched lives devoid of love, mercy and justice.

Profaning God's name is all the negative. Hallowing God's name is all the positive. Let your reputation be lifted, let your worth be known and prized, let your majestic royalty be held in reverence.

What does that mean? It means we asking for God to reveal Himself, and act in the world of men so that He is known for who He is, His majesty is revealed, His church is enlarged and purified, His fame is spread. This is praying for the great priority of the universe, that's God's glory would be seen, God's beauty loved, God's fame be spread abroad.

It is what Jesus prayed in John 12:

28 "Father, glorify Your name." Then a voice came from heaven, *saying*, "I have both glorified *it* and will glorify *it* again." (Jn. 12:28)

Now ask yourself, why is this the first thing Jesus has us pray, right after addressing God as Father? This is the pattern, as soon as you have thought of how you are related to God, the very next thing you do is ask for His name to be revered. Why does Jesus teach us to do this?

First, we are making God's priorities our priorities. If we are making His name the subject of our prayers, then the focus is no longer our names. God wants to imprint on our minds His priorities, which are almost certainly not ours to begin with.

Like the children who ask an adult, "Are you buying me a birthday present?" we rush into God's presence and start rattling off our lists. But Jesus says, you don't do it like that. You begin by thinking about what God wants most.

If we do not regularly re-orient ourselves to the view from God's perspective, we have an innate tendency to slowly but surely drag God down to our level, turn His kingdom into our kingdom, hallow our own names, and ask that our will on Earth be done by Heaven.

We are born deeply devoted to self. In fact, before we are saved, we are slaves to self. But once you know the Lord as your Saviour, you need no longer serve self. But you may still. And it is likely you will unless you actively work in a God's centred direction. God's glory is uppermost. This is what prayer is primarily about – orienting ourselves to God.

By the way, that's why this request follows on from "Our Father". In His final prayer recorded in John 17, He prayed: 6 "I have manifested Your name to the men whom You have given Me out of the world. (Jn. 17:6)

What does it mean that Jesus manifested God's name? Was it that He told them God's name? No, they already knew God's name. But whoever has seen Jesus has seen the Father, because He is the radiance of the Father's glory. Jesus has fully expressed the name of God. If you want to know how

to hallow God's name, it begins when you know God through Jesus Christ. Only He can reveal to you who God is through His Person and work on the Cross. To know Him and His Father is life eternal.

God first needs to be your Father through Jesus, and only then can you go on to hallow Him.

This explains why it malfunctions for many people, because they want prayer to be an exercise in selfish requests. But a monologue in which you just rattle off things you want gets boring for even the most enthusiastically self-possessed person. If you embrace what prayer is, turning your entire being away from self-interest, away from selfish concerns, away from narrow, small-minded, petty, self-focus, and turn to the being of God, you have understood what prayer is. Prayer is not where you change God, but where you appear before the Divine Sculptor for Him to chisel away at you. And the very first request we make turns us from selfishness to God-centredness.

This is the most God-centred request in the world. Not men's salvation, not the neediness in the world, not the education of the unsaved, not temporal wants and needs. This begins with the ultimate truth: God's glorious nature should receive the worship due to Him.

Psalm 115:1 Not unto us, O LORD, not unto us, But to Your name give glory, Because of Your mercy, Because of Your truth. (Ps. 115:1)

Every Christian senses the need to live for something deeper and greater and more permanent than our temporal concerns. Many Christians live unsatisfying, frustrating Christian lives, because they have never learned the Hallowed Be Your Name principle. They are still in pursuit of their own names, still after their own fame, their own growth in power, success, prosperity.

We are protective over our own names. We want them spelt correctly, pronounced correctly. We want our reputations untarnished. Here we are praying about someone else's name.

Sometimes, the best antidote to being consumed with yourself is to simply get off your chair or your bed and go and serve someone else. And the best antidote to being consumed with your problems, obsessed with your health, idolising your family, worrying about your finances, is to spend moments in prayer where you ask that the most important Name in the world be regarded as the most important Name in the world.

Second, we are gaining us the right posture before God: reverent humility. When we call for God's name to be hallowed, we should remember some incidents in the Bible where people did not reverence God.

Leviticus 10:1 Then Nadab and Abihu, the sons of Aaron, each took his censer and put fire in it, put incense on it, and offered profane fire before the LORD, which He had not commanded them. 2 So fire went out from the LORD and devoured them, and they died before the LORD. 3 And Moses said to Aaron, "This is what the LORD spoke, saying: 'By those who come near Me I must be regarded as holy; And before all the people I must be glorified.'" So Aaron held his peace. (Lev. 10:1-3)

2 "You shall not profane My holy name, but I will be hallowed among the children of Israel. I *am* the LORD who sanctifies you, (Lev. 22:32)

Nadab and Abihu took God lightly and improvised, bringing their own fire. God judged them and commented, this is what I meant when I said, I am to be hallowed. Reverenced, regarded as great, holy, and not to be trifled with. Here's another reason this request follows right after Our Father, in heaven. If we begin to adopt a sentimental view of God as Father, and imagine that He is soft and permissive, doting and teary-eyed about us, then this request snaps us back into reality.

But I don't have to tell you that a lack of reverence is epidemic today. Look at children in most Western countries. The classrooms are out of control. Parents are routinely called by their first names, or shouted at if they don't perform or meet the immediate demands. People treat God's agents for justice: police, the judges, the Government with contempt and defiance. The idea of wives respecting their husbands is now scoffed at and mocked as some chauvinistic relic from the past where men dragged women by their hair to their caves. And church authority is looked at with the deepest skepticism, even by its own members. The church is supposed to be a friendly society that provides weekly religious products for its patrons and consumers. The church is not Christ's body on Earth, with delegated authority to receive and discipline members.

We now live in a society rushing insanely to amuse itself and distract itself at every possible free moment. Its only moments of awe are in the presence of the glory of Creation, and even this is being taken away by the lie of evolution. Billions of people amusing themselves to death, weary souls with no childlike wonder left in their souls, nothing to either magnify or terrify, just banality and emptiness.

But all of this irreverence ultimately comes back to one thing: a lack of reverence for God. If you do not hallow God, then the root of your reverence is missing, the hinge on which respect swings in broken, the foundation on which all human forms of respect are built is non-existent. A society without reverence for God must eventually crumble into anarchy, as modern secular society is steadily doing.

A church without reverence for God can only turn to religious substitutes and cheap entertainments because they fear the emotion of fear, and it soon becomes a lightweight, trivial, and irrelevant storefront for religious pop-culture.

A family without reverence for God soon finds it has children bored with life, disrespectful of parents and cynical of all authorities.

Show me a wife with open contempt for her husband, and I'll show you someone who is not praying "Hallowed be Your Name". Show me a child who calls adults by their first names, and mocks the services of the church, and I'll show you a child who has never prayed "Hallowed be Your Name". Show me a church casual about personal holiness, casual about church order, casual about how we should sing and pray and honour Him, and I'll show you a church that never prays "Hallowed be your name".

When we kneel or sit or stand to pray "Hallowed be your name" we are humbling ourselves. We are saying, "You are greater than I. Your name is more important than mine. I recognise this moment that you are My Creator, you are holy, you have dealt severely with those who took you lightly, and I don't want to be counted among that number."

If you don't feel reverent before God, trust the Lord Jesus Christ, and begin praying, "may your Name be respected. May you be held in high regard. May you not be treated as irrelevant, insignificant, lightweight." If you want to feel thankful, start thanking. If you want to feel loving, start loving. If you want to feel awe and reverence, begin praying the essence of 'hallowed be your name' That's why we don't sit around waiting for reverence to descend upon our congregation. Instead, we simply begin singing the word:

*Let all mortal flesh keep silence,
And with fear and trembling stand;
Ponder nothing earthly minded,
For with blessing in His hand,
Christ our God to earth descending*

Comes our homage to demand.

As we get into the God-centred, humble posture, it sets the tone for the entire day.

Robert Murray M'Cheyne, the Scottish preacher and pastor of the 19th century used to say that his morning prayers were not to try to get him through the day. He said we should not look at them as "laying up a stock of grace for the rest of the day, for manna will corrupt if laid by—but rather with the view of 'giving the eye the habit of looking upward all the day, and drawing down gleams from the reconciled countenance.'" In other words, when I start the day with "hallowed be Your Name" prayer, I will spend the rest of the day with a "hallowed" be your name posture.

What would it look like to pray this prayer? Well, think about it like concentric circles. Start with the outermost circle – globally. How might God's name be hallowed globally? Through worldwide missions. Through sound and healthy churches spreading across the globe.

Locally – our country and city: in Government, in business, in the arts, in the academy, let Christians faithfully represent you.

Ecclesiastically – honour Your name in our church, in how we worship you, by saving more people, by making us more like Christ, by giving us a more loving fellowship.

Personally-- honour Your name in my life. Use me today to show forth your truth, your goodness, your beauty. Keep me from misrepresenting you. Be weighty in my life. Make me an ambassador.

Jesus says, when you pray, first things first. Speak to God of His glory. Make His priorities your priority. Get yourself into the right posture of reverence.