

“Hallowed Be Thy Name”

September 17, 2017

Our Savior’s Way
Worshipping Sundays 8:00, 9:30, & 11:00 AM
Pastor Bill Mann

Last week we began a study of the most famous prayer of all time by looking at the first six words of that prayer—“Our Father who art in heaven.” Now, we’re going to add the next four words—“hallowed be thy name.” And I have to confess that when I was a little kid coming to church I spent a lot of time wondering who “Howard” was ... did any of you ever wonder about “Howard”? “Our Father who art in heaven Howard be thy name.” It took me quite a while before I realized that God’s name was not Howard. Instead, in this prayer, we are praying for God’s name to be “hallowed.” And that’s something very different.

There’s a story about two businessmen who were rooming together at a business convention and they had had a little bit too much to drink in the hotel bar. They were trying to find their way back to their hotel room but, instead of finding their way to their room, they came to the door of the elevator shaft and the first guy steps through the door and disappears with a thud. Luckily they were only on the first floor. His buddy peers down into the darkness and calls out, “Are you all right?” “Yeah,” his friend replies, “But you have to watch that first step. It’s a big one.”

The same is true of the Lord’s Prayer. The first step is a big one. The first step defines the shape and direction of everything that follows. Take a look at the Lord’s Prayer. Notice that it begins with three petitions concerning God—and ends with our needs. The order is important. We begin with God--thy name, thy kingdom, thy will. And

then give us, forgive us, lead us, and deliver us. The first step is not us and our needs. The first step is God. Prayer begins with worship and worship begins with reverence.

In Isaiah 6 is Isaiah's vision of heaven with God on His throne, surrounded by His angels. And the angels are calling out, "Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts; the whole earth is full of His glory." God is God, the almighty, eternal, ruler of heaven and earth. His name is 100% holy. We can't make it any more holy. But we can give it a bad reputation.

Imagine that I'm the pastor of Our Savior's Way (which I am), but imagine that I also have another job during the week. I'm a plumber. Preach a sermon on Sunday; plumber Monday through Saturday. During the week I wear a shirt saying "Our Savior's Way Plumbing Co.—A Flush Beats A Full House." And as a plumber/pastor I go out to people's homes and fix their toilets and unstop their drains. Maybe I stop by your house and before I even start the job, I light up a cigarette in the kitchen; and then you hear me under the sink cursing at the garbage disposal; and I track mud and grease all over your floors. You are going to remember me. God's name is still going to be holy, but I will have brought His name into disrepute. And we are all, each one of us, representatives of God in this community, in our homes, in our schools, in the places we work. And we don't always live up to that high calling. Sometimes the things we do and the things we say bring God's name into disrepute. And so we pray, "Hallowed be thy name." Lord, we know your name is holy, but let it be holy among us also.

And this is really the challenge because a part of keeping God's name holy is keeping ourselves holy. In Ezekiel 36:22-23, the prophet warns the people of God that the Lord is not happy with their behavior. "This is what the Sovereign Lord says: It is not for your sake, O house of Israel, that I am going to do these things, but for the sake of my holy name, which you have profaned among the nations where you have gone. I will show the holiness of my great name,

which has been profaned among the nations, the name you have profaned among them.”

Three times God says to his people, “You have profaned my name.” And this is the challenge we face. We are Christians. We live in this world and the world is full of sin and temptation and evil. And you and I, are in this world. But we think, “If I can just keep my distance—if I can just keep an arm’s length away from the world, I’ll be doing OK. Because the world is very evil. So, this arm’s length is important. The world is very evil. It does not value the things that I value as a Christian. As a Christian, along with God, I value honesty and integrity. I value my family—spending time with them. I value helping other people—and not just helping other people, but living and sacrificing for other people. I value humility. But the world is very evil and it’s plain to see that the world does not value the same stuff. So, I keep the world at arm’s length. The world is very evil and it just keeps getting worse.

Now, I know what you’re thinking right now—I just keep stepping closer to the world. But really that’s not true. I’m still an arm’s length away from the world. The things I value as a Christian, I still value. Honesty—I am very honest (most of the time). Integrity defines who I am (usually). And my family always has priority (unless there is an emergency in the plumbing business). And I’m all about helping other people in need (as long as I have enough money for lunches this week). Sold my old minivan last week. The engine light was going on, but I was able to disconnect it. And everybody knows it’s buyer beware. Yeah, the world is getting worse. But still I am keeping my distance. I’m still an arm’s length away.”

Do you see what’s happened? I’m so far away from God. God is still holy. But I am a long way away from His holiness. I am far away from God. My friends, this is exactly why God sent his Son. 1 John 4:9 says, “God sent his only begotten Son into the world ... for the forgiveness of sin and the salvation of sinners.” The Apostles’ Creed says, “I believe in Jesus Christ, conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of

the virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified died and was buried. He descended into hell. He rose from the dead on the third day. He ascended into heaven. And he will return to judge the living and the dead.” Jesus Christ bridged the gap between you and your creator. By his life, by his death on the cross, and by his resurrection he gave you the right to approach the throne of God’s grace—in prayer (and one day to approach God’s throne in person). But for now, prayer is the gift that God has given us to rebuild the relationship between us and the almighty, eternal, ruler of heaven and earth—our Father in heaven—our God whose name is forever holy.

We live in a world where are children are being taught to profane God’s name. The hallways of our school ring with profanity. God’s name is being profaned in the business world and in the entertainment industry. You don’t have to listen very hard even to hear God’s name being profaned in the church. My friends, this should not be. The first petition of the Lord’s Prayer (and remember, that first step is a big step)—the first petition of the Lord’s Prayer is: “Hallowed be thy name.” Martin Luther said, “God’s name is certainly holy in itself, but we pray in this petition that it may be kept holy among us also.” May it always be so.

Prayer: Lord, regardless of our day job, You have called each of us into full-time service as a Christian. Help us to keep Your name holy in everything we say and do. The Bible says, “Now you belong to him ... in order that you might be useful in the service of God.” (Romans 7:4) Make us useful in Your service, Lord. Use us to bring Your name glory. Amen.