**Hallowed be Your Name**

Matthew 6:9-13

For six weeks we are **with Christ in the school of prayer**. When the disciples came to Jesus and said, “Lord, teach us to pray,” He gave them these now familiar phrases. These are not magic words. We are not to mindlessly repeat this prayer. The Lord’s Prayer is a MODEL for us to learn from - and to use the phrases as signposts on the journey of prayer.

We saw last week where the journey begins:

**Prayer’s Beginning:**

1. Prayer is a **Relationship** with our loving Father
2. Prayer is a **Miracle** of mysterious grace

“Our Father in heaven…” Matthew 6:9

In the opening phrase of this great prayer we immediately feel **both sides** of this - ***the intimacy*** of approaching God directly as our Father and ***the amazement*** that we, as sinful earth-dwellers, can connect with the glories of heaven at all! Yes, God is our Father! But He is also in HEAVEN. He is accessible because of Jesus. But He remains glorious, exalted beyond our understanding. We must never lose either side of this as we pray!

Prayer should always remain **a wonder. for us**. The fact that we can bow our heads and connect with the Almighty should blow our minds. “What is man that you are mindful of him?” But that is the wonderful Gospel truth - the doorway to heaven has been opened. Jesus holds that key, and He has given it to us! We can come freely, come joyfully, and come whenever we want before the Throne of Grace!

And we come because **God is our Father**. We are His children, adopted by the blood of Jesus, so we belong to His family. Prayer is the mysterious wonder, the unfathomable gift of relationship with the Almighty. And we don’t relate to God as enemies or even as groveling slaves. We relate to God as His precious, beloved children. God is our loving, present, merciful, gracious FATHER. So, prayer should feel like ***crawling up into the arms*** of our strong, wise, compassionate Papa.

Now we move from prayer’s beginning into the foothills of prayer.

**Early Stages of Prayer:**

1. Relationship with our Father
2. **Communion** with the Holy One
3. Surrender to the King

***“Our Father”*** shows us that prayer begins as a relationship.

“In heaven, ***hallowed be your name***” - our focus for today - reminds us that God is holy, so prayer must include reverence, worship and awe for the HOLY NAME OF GOD.

Next week we will get into ***“Your kingdom come, your will be done,”*** - seeing that prayer is about us surrendering to God as King and committing to serve Him, not trying to manipulate the King of Heaven and getting Him to serve us.

So let’s move now from “Our Father in heaven,” to “Hallowed be your name.” We will take three steps into WORSHIPFUL COMMUNION with God, each expressed in one of the Names of God. First:

1. See the **Holiness** of God - “The Holy One of Israel”

“Our Father in heaven, hallowed by your Name.” Matthew 6:9

 God is our Father. God is in heaven. And God is HOLY. ***The word “Hallowed”*** is not one we use very often but we don’t have a word for ***HOLIFIED*** so Hallowed is pretty much the best we can do. It’s the same word for SANCTIFIED when used in reference to US, but that word doesn’t work in reference to God since it implies us growing in holiness, while God is already completely righteous, holy, and good.

What is clear is that **prayer is a holy act** - it is a sacred discipline that ushers us into the holy presence of God. ***The Jews in Jesus’ day*** had this part down - reverence for the holy name of God was so significant they wouldn’t even say the personal name of God. Whenever THE LORD, in our Bibles all capital letters, came up in a Bible reading, the Jewish Rabbis would say **Adonai**, the more common word for ruler or Lord in all lowercase letters.

Some used to pronounce the name of God as Jehovah, following the Latin and King James, but the Jews - if they would have pronounced it, would have said **Yahweh**, since there is no J in Hebrew, which Indiana Jones learned the hard way. Yahweh is a play on the Hebrew expression “I am,” which was how God revealed Himself to Moses. “I am the God who is. I am the God of all existence. I am.”

Prayer begins when we see the holiness of God - when we realize the Being with whom we are interacting. To bow in prayer is ***like Moses approaching the burning bush*** - removing his sandals in the awareness that the PLACE he approached was holy because the GOD appearing there was holy.

To see that God is holy - to pray “Hallowed be your Name” is to recognize three dimensions of God’s holiness. The first is His UNIQUENESS.

1. See the **Holiness** of God - His **Uniqueness**

“Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the Lord is One.” Deuteronomy 6:4

This is the Great Shma of Israel, the central confession of the Jewish Law - ***there is only One True God***, and His Name is the LORD. The first of the 10 commandments requires that we worship only this God, serving no other gods but Him. And the reason we worship only this One God is because He alone is God. He is holy in the sense of being set apart, being exalted above all other pretenders to the throne of heaven.

This is **what the prophets proclaimed** over and over to Israel, urging them not to worship idols or the false gods of the nations around them, because the LORD their God is not just the strongest and best among many gods - He is the ONLY God. The LORD our God is unique. He is HOLY. Nothing else is like Him. No one else is like our God.

***Think of the privilege it is to pray to this Being*** - The One True God who IS! Do you see the holiness of our God? Do you feel the significance of His absolute uniqueness, His unparalleled, unrivaled supremacy? The holiness of God also means:

1. See the **Holiness** of God - His **Righteousness**

“You shall be holy, for I the LORD your God am holy.” Lev. 19:2

The Law of God commanded the people of God to ***be LIKE THEIR GOD***. The 10 commandments and the other laws were designed to make Israel a shining example of righteousness among other sinful, violent, corrupt nations. Over and over in Leviticus and Deuteronomy there is this refrain, “for I the Lord your God am holy.” The conduct of Israel reflected on their God. If they were righteous and just, if they were loving and generous - that reflected well on their God. But if they were cruel and wicked, if they were immoral and idolatrous, that reflected poorly on their God.

**The Law of Moses provided clear instructions** for Israel in individual behavior and national behavior. They didn’t follow it very well at all, but the principles and applications were all there. And did Jesus throw out the Law of Moses? Far from it! He said, “I did not come to abolish the Law but to FULFILL IT.” Look at Matthew 5.

1. See the **Holiness** of God - His **Righteousness**

“You therefore must be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect.” Matt. 5:48

Jesus modernized the Jewish command to HOLINESS with the GREEK idea of **PERFECTION - maturity, completion**. God is PERFECT. The Holy Name of God represents His untarnished, unblemished, blindingly beautiful PERFECTION. There is no trace of shadow or evil in the nature or thought or action of God. He is the essence of all that is good and right and true.

This is the God we commune with when we pray - the God who is HOLY, set apart as the Unique Sovereign King; the God who is RIGHTEOUS, holy in His absolute perfection and one more. **When Isaiah saw the Lord**, high and exalted on His heavenly throne, the angelic beings around God were calling out to one another the anthem of heaven:

1. See the **Holiness** of God - His **Glory**

“Holy, holy, holy, is the LORD of hosts. The whole earth is filled with his glory.” Isaiah 6:3

To see the holiness of God is ***to bow down in awe before His infinite GLORY***. God is not only perfect in righteousness, He is perfect in every perfection, including a trillion attributes we don’t even have categories for. This is why it’s so hard for us to understand what heaven will be like and why we need eternity to enjoy it - because we cannot begin to fathom the glory of God and what it will mean to see Him face to face.

Now, when we pray, **we glimpse** - as from a great distance - **the holiness of God**. We bow before the One True God; we profess His perfect goodness, justice and love; and we bask in the radiance of His limitless glory.

Are you starting to get the idea of what prayer is? Until you actually start to pray you might **think that prayer is about TELLING GOD THINGS**. But you immediately realize that is wildly unnecessary because HE IS GOD - He already knows all those things. Prayer is not about INFORMING GOD much less about DIRECTING GOD. Prayer is primarily about WORSHIPING GOD.

So we begin - “Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name.” We come before our loving Father, ***first acknowledging His glorious holiness***. That is the first name of God of the hundreds of names given to Him in the BIble.

1. See the **Holiness** of God - His **Uniqueness**, **Righteousness** and **Glory**

“They will sanctify the Holy One of Jacob and stand in awe of the God of Israel.” Isaiah 29:23

To pray “Hallowed be your Name,” is ***to recognize that the name of God is HOLY***. His Name - representing His being, His very essence - is one of a kind, it is perfect in righteousness and it is radiant with glory. When you see the holiness of God, as Isaiah did, the automatic response is to see your own UNHOLINESS. And that is the second step of worshipful prayer.

1. Celebrate the **Mercy** of God - “The Only God our Savior.”

“Woe is me! For I am lost; for I am a man of unclean lips… for my eyes have seen the King, the LORD of hosts!” Isaiah 6:5

To see God in His holiness and glory is **to be undone like Isaiah**. When you step into ***the full light of God’s blinding righteousness***, you are exposed for every speck of sin that is on you and in you. Yes, the blatant sins are laid bare, but so are the small, subtle ones you haven’t even fully admitted to yourself.

To pray “Hallowed be your Name,” is to acknowledge the holiness of God and in the same breath ***to admit our own UNHOLINESS***. We are an unclean people - with unclean lips and unclean eyes and unclean hands.

But God has addressed this problem for us - so we need not tremble as Isaiah did. The angel brought a coal from the altar of God to purify Isaiah’s lips, announcing the gospel to Him 700 years before Jesus was born:

1. Celebrate the **Mercy** of God - “The Only God our Savior.”

“Your guilt is taken away, your sin atoned for.” Isaiah 6:7

The altar in Jerusalem was the place of sacrifice. That was **how Israel ATONED for sin** - providing a temporary COVERING for the sins of the people. It was only partial and temporary which was why sacrifices had to be continually offered - every day, every month and in extravagant numbers every year.

There was no animal to sacrifice for Isaiah there before the heavenly throne of God. But the coal from the altar of God in heaven meant that ***GOD had a sacrifice that could take sin away*** and atone for that sin completely. In **chapter 53** Isaiah perceived that sacrifice would come in the Messiah, the Servant of Israel, suffering and dying for sin.

This is another way that God is HOLY - set apart from all other pretender gods - because ***our God is the only One who addressed the problem of sin HIMSELF***. Jesus came to give His life for us. He died in our place. All other religions demand that you save yourself. They have slightly different ways you have to go about doing that - but all religions apart from Christianity have that in common - they require YOU to do the work. Only the God whose name is JESUS said, “I know that you cannot fix this on your own - so I have come to fix it for you.”

So this is the second title of God that we celebrate today, from Jude.

1. Celebrate the **Mercy** of God - “The Only God our Savior.”

“Now to Him who is able to keep you from stumbling and to present you blameless before the presence of his glory.” Jude 1:24

***This is the God we worship.*** This is the HOLY, UNIQUE God to whom we pray - the only One who can not only save us but sanctify us - who can keep us from stumbling back into sin; who can preserve and present us holy and blameless in HIMSELF.

1. Celebrate the **Mercy** of God - “The Only God our Savior.”

“To the only God, our Savior, through Jesus Christ our Lord, be glory, majesty, dominion and authority.” Jude 1:25

This is **the heart cry of prayer** - ***GLORY BE TO our gracious and merficul Lord Jesus*** Christ! We bow before the holy God of heaven. We humbly recognize our deep sinfulness and unworthiness to approach Him. But our wonderful Savior comes to us, picks us up from the floor and assures us of His sufficient sacrifice. Jesus paid it all! There is nothing left for you or for me to pay. The blood of Jesus has INFINITE VALUE - we cannot add to it even the tiniest bit. All we can do is sing the praises of the only God our Savior - the Lord Jesus Christ, our great redeemer, our suffering servant!

Do you see the progression? “Hallowed be your Name” first sees the holiness of God and then celebrates His mercy toward unholy sinners like us. One more step into worshipful prayer.

1. Cry out for the **Honor** of God - “The King of Kings and Lord of Lords”

“Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your Name.” Matthew 6:9

This beautiful phrase, “Hallowed be your Name,” has a rich **double meaning**. On the one hand it is simply the acknowledgement that God’s name is HOLY. We pray, “Heavenly Father, your name is holy.” We acknowledge the truth of God’s glory, goodness and grace. But Jesus didn’t teach us to pray, “Holy is your name.” We pray “Hallowed BE your name.”

There is another level of meaning to this phrase. As we say it **we are confessing** the truth of God’s Holy Name ourselves but we are also ***crying out to God to bring others to this same confession.*** We are praying, “Heavenly Father, may other people come to see and say that your Name is holy! May more and more people come to worship your Name, Lord Jesus! May the whole world come to join in this declaration - the Name of the Lord is Holy!”

The key passage in the Old Testament that teaches about the holy name of God is Ezekiel 36.

1. Cry out for the **Honor** of God - “The King of Kings and Lord of Lords”

“When they came to the nations… they profaned my holy name.” Ezek. 36:20

***God chose Abram*** and from that one old man built a great nation. God protected the Israelites as they grew, then He delivered them from Egypt with the dramatic signs of the 10 plagues. Then, after their 40 year timeout in the wilderness, God led them into the Promised Land and gave them victory over the nations that lived there. God gave them great leaders in Joshua and Moses. God gave them prophets, priests and scribes. ***God gave them EVERYTHING***.

But Israel was unfaithful to their God. They dishonored His Holy Name by disobeying His Law, by oppressing one another - even descending into civil war - and by worshiping the gods of the nations around them. In spite of the constant rebuke of one prophet after another, God’s people turned away from Him and, according to Ezekiel 36, ***they defiled their land with their evil and idolatry***. They did not HONOR God’s Holy Name that was upon them as their God. They PROFANED it. They disregarded God’s Name and dishonored it.

***So God sent them into exile***, allowing Israel to be carried off by Assyria. This brought shame upon Israel but also upon Israel’s God for the kings and people of Assyria and the other nations concluded that the gods of Assyria must be stronger than the God of Israel. That’s what Ezekiel means by “profaning” the holy name of God.

1. Cry out for the **Honor** of God - “The King of Kings and Lord of Lords”

“They profaned my holy name, in that people said of them, ‘These are the people of the Lord, and yet they had to go out of his land.’” Ezek. 36:20

God is concerned about His own reputation - about His NAME. We use this reasoning with our kids, don’t we? We say, “Your behavior reflects on our family. Represent us well. Don’t embarrass us.”

Kristin and I enjoy British television - I’m not embarrassed to say that we really enjoyed Downton Abbey. I refused to watch it at first, but when Kristin forced me to watch season 1, then I was hooked. We’ve seen other shows more focused on Queen Elizabeth and learned a little about the royal family. Clearly, ***the behavior of each member of the family reflects upon the CROWN***. The Queen is responsible not just for her family’s reputation but for the CROWN, which includes the honor and reputation of all of England. To bring dishonor or open shame to the family is the greatest tragedy, the greatest catastrophe.

If the royal family around Queen Elizabeth takes seriously their responsibility to bring honor to the crown, ***how much more must we bring honor to the Name of the One*** who wears the ULTIMATE CROWN?

That is certainly God’s commitment.

 3. Cry out for the **Honor** of God - “The King of Kings and Lord of Lords”

“I will vindicate the holiness of my great name, which has been profaned among the nations.” Ezek. 36:23

God makes it exceptionally clear that His agenda in history is **to bring glory and honor to His own Name**. He explicitly states, “It is not for YOUR SAKE, O house of Israel, that I am about to act, but for the sake of my holy name” (v. 22). Even as God promises to bring total transformation to His people through the indwelling presence of His Holy Spirit inside us, God says before that promise and again after it:

 3. Cry out for the **Honor** of God - “The King of Kings and Lord of Lords”

“It is not for your sake that I will act… be ashamed and confounded for your ways…” Ezek. 36:32

God did not choose Abraham because he was so deserving of it. ***God did not send Jesus to die for us because we were so wonderful and worthy.*** Precisely the OPPOSITE! If we were so righteous and good, God would not have needed to send us a sacrificial Savior. The whole reason a Savior is needed is that we are such desperate sinners.

The Bible consistently reminds us that ***IT IS NOT ABOUT US***. Nowhere is that clearer than right here in Ezekiel 36, one of the most powerful prophecies about the cleansing transformation that would come in Christ. God acted in history to save Israel for the sake of HIS Holy Name. God sent His Son for the honor and reputation of His own Name. God called you to Christ, for the glory of His own Name. God saved you and is working in you first and foremost, ***primarily and ultimately for HIS OWN GLORY.***

***The Lord’s Prayer teaches us this every time we pray it.*** We agree with God that His priorities are right. It MUST BE about HIM. History must be about Him. The nations must sing praises to Him. Our lives must be devoted to the glory of His Name. “Hallowed be YOUR Name.” We must never pray, “Hallowed be MY name.” Psalm 115 shows us the proper way to pray:

1. Cry out for the **Honor** of God - “The King of Kings and Lord of Lords”

“Not to us, O Lord, not to us, but to your name give glory.” Psalm 115:1

God alone is the great God and King. **God alone is worthy of our praise** and trust and devotion. God alone - His Name - the Holy One of Israel, our Great God and Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ - God alone is worthy of our worship. We pray, “Hallowed be YOUR Name.” For Jesus Christ alone is King of Kings and Lord of Lords!

As we pray that prayer **we see His holiness** - His uniqueness and absolute supremacy; His righteousness and untarnished perfection; His radiant and infinite glory. As we pray “Hallowed be Your Name” **we celebrate the mercy and grace** of the God who loved us so much He sent His only Son to die for us. And we not only confess the truth that God’s Name IS Holy, **we join in the cry of the angels and saints throughout all of history** - ***MAY GOD’s Name be honored as holy***. May more and more people come to pray this prayer deeply from their hearts:

***“Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name!”***

Let’s pray.