

**"HALLOWED BE THY NAME."**

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**First Christian Reformed Church, Lynden, WA**

**October 29, 2023, 6 pm**

**Text for Sermon: Matthew 6:9; Ezekiel 36:22-23**

**Introduction:**

Today is Reformation Sunday, the Sunday before October 31, the day credited with marking the beginning of the Reformation in 1517. On this occasion we celebrate the providential goodness of God for the history and heritage that is ours because of His great grace.

This evening I want to focus our attention on one of the great and central pillars of what it means to be Reformational and Reformed people. The glory of God, to God alone be the glory. And in the providence of God in our evening sermon series on the Lord's Prayer we come this evening to the petition that points us to the glory of God, hallowed or holy be thy name.

Jesus was asked by the disciples, "Lord, teach us to pray." How Jesus answers that request is insightful. In a few brief words He lays out what is absolutely essential to prayer. Where He starts and what He includes are important. So important, that if we grasp its importance and meaning it will transform our prayer lives and all our lives. Jesus is lifting us up out of the poverty of our own hearts into the richness of His will for us in prayer. This especially applies to our text this evening.

**Hallowed be thy name.**

This is the first and greatest petition and none of the others are quite like it. This one stands out. It's like, "Seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you" (Matthew 6:33).

Jesus wants the very best for us, so He teaches us to pray first of all for the very best thing. He is teaching us to lay aside every other thought and concern and to put above every selfish interest, the majesty and splendor of God's glory in all things. Put God's glory before your food and forgiveness.

Now consider how our hearts respond to this. Think about how cold and apathetic and detached we are toward this first petition. Who of us has a burning passion for the greatest thing of all? Who of us prays as earnestly for God's glory as we do for our health or well-being or success or for our children or for any of our wants, needs or desires?

You can tell what is most important to you by what is the first thing you ask for in your prayers. Most of our prayers are self-centered, shallow, they hardly escape Whatcom county, let alone earth's atmosphere.

Most of us don't do this, so we need to be taught how to pray when we come into the presence of the God of all glory and majesty. Let's do that by asking and answering

### **What does "hallowed be thy name" mean?**

Let's start with *name*, we need help just to understand that. In our culture names are mostly labels, how we refer to each other. But in the Jewish culture names were much more than just a label, they were their identity. Your name was not just who you were but what you were. Name and person were virtually indistinguishable in Jewish culture.

When the Jews named their children, they gave them names that reflected spiritual and divine realities. They didn't use famous sports figures or Hollywood stars.

When LCS had international students in the high school, those students would give themselves American names that were easier for us to pronounce. We had one student who named himself Marshall because he loved martial arts. Then we had another student whose name was Calm. Phama and I agonized about whether we should contact his parents before he came to the states and tell them calm is not a name for a person. And then we found out that his father spoke English and he had purposefully given that English name at birth, he was Calm and he was.

When the angel told Joseph what to name the baby, he said, "His name shall be Jesus, because He will save His people from their sins" (Matthew 1:21).

God's name is the revelation of Himself. His name is the expression of all that is true about Him. He is holy and His name is holy. He is great and His name is great.

**Psalm 8:1** O Lord, our Lord, how majestic is your name in all the earth!

**Jeremiah 10:6** There is none like you, O Lord; you are great, and your name is great in might.

God has revealed Himself in Scripture by many names. One way we can hallow His name in prayer is to choose one of those names and focus on it, meditate on it, offer a prayer that draws out its meaning.

The word *hallowed* is not part of our vocabulary, what does it mean? *Hallowed* means to sanctify, to set apart, make holy or to consider holy or to treat as holy. Hallow means to hold in highest honor, to esteem, to give reverence to.

This is not totally foreign to us. We show reverence and honor to the names of great people in history. We hallow and hold in high esteem the names of George Washington, Abraham Lincoln or Mother Teresa. When we honor their name we are honoring their character and their person.

***Think for a moment what it means to do the opposite.*** The opposite of hallowing or honoring is to profane or blaspheme. We live in a world that is awash in profaning the name of God and

everything about God the Father and God the Son. Our world has turned His name into a curse word. Many of you work in environments where God's name is taken in vain and profaned all the time. We hear it constantly on TV and in movies. We read it in books and magazines. His name is dishonored in the media, in our schools, on the sports field and social media, in the public square and in the halls of legislature and justice and on and on.

When you see and hear God being profaned or blasphemed or dishonored, we should be provoked at the very least to whisper a prayer, "Father in heaven, hallow your name, make it honored and respected. Make your name spoken well of on the lips of all men."

### **What are we asking God to do when we pray this petition?**

We are asking "the most important person in the universe to do the most important act in the universe" (John Piper).

Has it occurred to you that being the first petition, this is the most important petition, in fact all the other petitions serve this petition.

When we ask God for our daily bread, we are asking God to glorify Himself as our provider. When we ask God for forgiveness, we are asking God to glorify Himself as our redeemer. When we ask to be kept from temptation, we are asking God to glorify Himself as our deliverer.

The chief end of man is to glorify God and enjoy Him forever. Everything else points to this. Whatever you do, whatever you eat or drink, in forgiving and being forgiven, in fleeing from evil, do it to the glory of God.

Jesus teaches us our first petition, the supreme petition before all other petitions, is to ask God to do something He already has every intention of doing.

In other words, prayer is not about talking God into doing something He is not particularly interested in doing, but rather prayer is bringing our wills into line with His will. When we earnestly seek God with all our heart and pray for the things that are on His heart, our prayers will have great results, great things will happen.

When we pray this request we can be certain nothing is more pleasing to God and He delights to answer this prayer.

When we pray, "Our Father in heaven, hallowed be thy name," we are praying that God would cause us to honor His name, to treat it as supremely glorious, and that He would cause all people to do that. In other words, this prayer has both personal and worldwide implications and application. It's for us and all the earth.

This prayer is acknowledging we are poor at doing this, we don't desire to do this. So we are asking God by His power and grace to incline our hearts to do this, to more highly esteem Him,

to reverence Him, to honor Him, to worship Him. We are asking Him to make us do what He created us to do, this is our unique calling in all of creation.

There is something else we are asking when we pray this petition. We are asking God to make us desire this before desiring our daily food. We are acknowledging that we pretty much desire everything else first, what we want, our stuff first, and now Jesus is teaching us to desire God first and foremost, to desire His glory supremely. May God increase and we decrease.

### **What will this petition look like when God answers it?**

First, when answered an ever-increasing number of people will begin to have new and higher thoughts concerning God, His name, His character, His nature and what He does and who He is.

It will mean we will lay aside every habit of using God or Jesus as oaths, or expressions of anger or frustration or as any part of jokes (heaven, golf). Do not use God's name or Jesus' name in any frivolous, flippant manner. Protect God's name from a common use to a sacred use only.

Do you know what a minced oath is? A minced oath is when we use a word that means God but pretend we don't mean God. Gosh, Golly, Jeez, OMG. This is taking God's name in vain, while pretending we aren't. God is God, He is jealous for His name, don't put Him to the test.

**Leviticus 22:32** You shall not profane my holy name, that I may be sanctified among the people of Israel. I am the Lord who sanctifies you.

It means we read the newspaper and watch the news without fear, confident in God's sovereign control and purposes knowing that all things must and will glorify Him and be for our good.

We will eat our breakfast with true gratitude and thanks marveling at all the miracles it takes to get coffee beans from South America to our cup and grain from the fields into our toaster.

It means we humbly acknowledge the gift and blessing of His provision of a spouse, children, grandchildren, a job, health and strength, a long life, of the freedoms of our country. In other words, we see God behind everything and all we have.

It will mean the chief reason and purpose of my life and yours, will be to glorify God and enjoy Him forever. Life will increasingly be all about Him. He will become the center, the ground, the standard, the starting point, the source, the cause.

We are saying, "Lord, cause and enable all that I say and think and do to glorify you, to show faith and trust in you and to lift you up as the most high. May all that I do and say around others show them that I honor you most of all."

**Psalms 115:1** Not to us, O Lord, not to us, but to your name give glory, for the sake of your steadfast love and your faithfulness!

To pray this prayer is to ask that His name be the greatest name named among men, that His Son be loved and believed and the cross and the gospel embraced; that His Word be faithfully preached without compromise; that His church be lead by faithful pastors and elders; that false prophets and false shepherds be exposed; that His Holy Spirit not be quenched and grieved but relied on; that church members not seek honor for themselves but think more highly of others and make allowances for others and care for others more than themselves; that all Christians everywhere seek the glory of God in all things and over all things.

This is the greatest request made to the greatest person asking Him to do the greatest thing. When you pray this, it will give depth and power to all your prayer requests.

### **Application and Conclusion:**

I want to conclude by setting before you the example of Jesus. In John 12 Jesus prays, “Now is my soul troubled. And what shall I say? ‘Father, save me from this hour’? (John 12:27).

Now is my soul troubled? Jesus is facing a most horrible death. The disturbing magnitude of the suffering that awaits Him must surely overwhelm His soul. He sweats drops of blood as He agonizingly anticipates the crushing weight of what is about to happen. The hatred and hostility, the excruciating physical trauma and pain, the crown of thorns, the scourging, the nails, the hours of torment, and the ultimate pain of all, the separation from God Himself.

What shall I say? That’s easy to answer. How about, “Father, get me out of this, deliver me from this hour.”

No, that isn’t what Jesus prays. Instead He says, “For this purpose I have come to this hour. ***Father, glorify your name***” (John 12:28).

Facing a horrible death. Being greatly disturbed and overcome with the magnitude of the suffering that is before Him, Jesus does not shrink back. Of all the things that could be filling His mind and thoughts, one thing is in the forefront. One thing motivates Him, one thing comforts and consoles Him.

***One singular holy imperative***, “Father, glorify Your name.” Marvel at that singular focus and ask God to give you that kind of focus no matter how profound your momentary needs and afflictions are and see if it doesn’t transform your life.

The person who has learned the fundamental importance of this petition above all other things has learned the secret to prayer and to life, everything in is as gift and gives thanks to God for it.

For this person life is not dull, drab, grey, boring and lifeless, but beautiful, grace-filled, miraculous.

***The chief end of man is to glorify God and enjoy Him forever.*** He has made us so that we will only find our deepest joy, satisfaction and fulfillment in hallowing God and His name. God has

made a way possible for us to experience complete joy in this life in a way that is truly satisfying and fulfilling.

Is this not the Reformation imperative, *solus Deo gloria*, to God alone be all the glory.

Hallowed be thy name. When you pray, start here. Whatever else is on your mind, whatever else is dominating the landscape of your life, start here, start looking up, start focused on God and see if that doesn't start to transform your vision and your prayer and your desires.

This is the beginning of real Christianity. This is the treasure in the field, this is the pearl of great price. Our joy is in finding, seeking, knowing, honoring, loving, following and hallowing God all the days of our life and forever and ever.

**Psalm 72:19** Blessed be his glorious name forever; may the whole earth be filled with his glory! Amen and Amen!

**Prayer:** Holy Father in heaven, in asking you to hallow your name, we are asking you to do what we should do but are unable to do and need your divine enabling to do. Give us eyes to see your glory. Give us hearts to love your glory and desire it and seek it. Give us minds to know and acknowledge your glory. Give us lips to praise and declare your glory.

Make us holy as you are holy so that our lives will be a reflection of your glory in all we say and do. Remove from our hearts and habits everything that is a hindrance to your glory and you being glorified in us and in our homes and in our church.

And for all the ways in which this does not seem desirable or satisfying or fulfilling or worth pursuing, to us, change that in us, transform us with such a vision of you through Christ by your Spirit and Word that we our desires match those of the saints and most of all Christ. For the sake of your name and the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, in whose name alone, we pray. Amen.