

Over the last few weeks, something has been happening that I've really been enjoying. We've been teaching our way through the Lord's Prayer on Sundays, and more importantly, many of you have been praying this prayer throughout the week. And over the last week and a half or so, some of you are beginning to feed back to me with prayer stories.

Last week we set aside time during my teaching to be quiet before our Father in Heaven, to ask Him to speak to us...and a number of you have shared with me what God was saying and doing in you in that moment. Others of you have shared stories with me about how you are living a prayed life, living and praying, praying as you go about your normal routines during the day, and the ways that God is intersecting your day and giving you courage, or direction, or love.

I want to encourage you to keep the stories coming, write them out and send me an email as the weeks go on. I'm asking for a few reasons: (1) it blesses me so deeply to hear how God is intersecting your life...God is living and active, and you are the living proof; but (2) your stories, both big and small, can really bless others in our congregation...and if you're willing, I like to find some ways during this series to share some of your stories with our congregation.

So keep the stories coming...and may Jesus, the Supreme Author of our story continue to write His purposes within our lives.

And as we continue to focus on the Lord's Prayer this morning, I want to keep stressing that prayer is not about techniques, it's not about saying the right words, in the right way, at the right time in order to please God, or to get what we need. Prayer isn't about

impressing God with our many words, or convincing Him that we are really serious.

In our performance-driven culture, wrong ideas about prayer either keep us prayerless, or, produce performance anxiety. *I'd better get this prayer thing right, it sounds like a lot is riding on this...I need master prayer, I need to be the best prayer, I've got to try harder, I've got to set aside more time...whooooaaa...let's stop the hamster wheel...*

Even with the Lord's Prayer in hand, there will be moments when you feel prayerless, like you can't pray, when you don't know what to pray. And in those moments, the Scriptures tell us that Jesus is praying for us and with us. Hebrews 7:25 tells us that Jesus is praying for us...He's talking to God on our behalf all the time.

Romans 8:26 tells us that when we are at a loss for words, when we don't what to pray, the Holy Spirit who lives within us, prays for us with groans that words cannot express. And so God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are listening to our prayers, as well as praying with us, for us, and within us.

So don't let all this talk about prayer make you feel like you're falling behind...God is at work in you. Our part is simply to get there...to enter into dialogue with Him...and a prayed life begins to unfold. Let me encourage you to keep at it, to keep prioritizing God in your life, to keep praying as you live...

This morning I want to fix your attention on the first request Jesus invites us to pray: *Father, Hallowed be Your Name.*

Now let me get the obvious out of the way; “*hallowed*” is a strange word. Outside of the Lord’s Prayer, this word is rarely used in the English language. Occasionally you might hear someone speak of the *hallowed halls* of UBC, or whatever other University they attended, but one thing is certain, *hallowed* is not an everyday word for us...and I think Jesus intends to change that.

1. So first, what does Jesus mean by hallowing God’s name?

In it’s purest sense, to *hallow* means to make something holy, to set something apart as special, sacred, and honoured. But in the case of God, we don’t make Him holy, He already is. So what are we praying for? R.T France writes, “it’s a prayer for us, for the world, to recognize the honour that is due God and the will to give it.”¹

In the ancient world, to speak of one’s name was to speak of the sum total of the person: their nature and character. Proverbs 22:1 says, *A good **name** is more desirable than great riches; to be esteemed is better than silver or gold.* In this way of speaking, to have a good name is to have a good reputation, to live a life worthy of honour.

Unlike the ancient world, we don’t stop to think about the importance of our name until someone messes with it...this usually begins on the school playground. I’m not sure exactly when it happened but I’m pretty sure on a school playground somewhere in Milton Ontario, Shane Gould was probably playing his heart out, minding his own business, when some young punk started messing with his name.

*Plain Shane, Plain Shane...*and his little heart started beating faster, and his little fists probably clenched...we’ve all experienced it...when you mess with my name, you’re messing with me.

When a person in a large corporation says, *In my company, I feel like I’m not a name, I’m just a number*, we empathize with them...knowing our name is an integral part of our identity. One of the cruelest acts in the Nazi concentration camps, is one that on the surface might appear to be so minor. The Jewish prisoners were seen as subhuman and the first step in treating them as less than human was to ignore their names and tattoo an identification number on their forearm.

You take away a person’s name...you take away their personhood. In reverse, when you call someone by name, you recognize them as a person. To hallow God’s name is to honour, praise, and revere Him as a Person...God is not an “it,” He’s not an impersonal force or cosmic energy, He’s revealed Himself as a person.

Psalm 7:17 says, “*I will give thanks to the LORD because of his righteousness and will sing praise to the **name** of the LORD Most High.* Psalm 29:2 says, “*Ascribe to the LORD the glory due his **name**; worship the LORD in the splendor of his holiness.*” Psalm 48:10 says, “*Like your **name**, O God, your praise reaches to the ends of the earth; your right hand is filled with righteousness.*” Isaiah 47:4 says, “*Our Redeemer—the LORD Almighty is his **name**—is the Holy One of Israel.*”

¹ R.T. France, *NICNT: Matthew*, 246.

When we come into relationship with God through Jesus, we end up with glory by association. When we invite Jesus to forgive our sins and lead our lives we too are named: we become the sons and daughters of God. In baptism, we are both named and blessed: You _____, you _____, you _____...you are my beloved son/daughter, with whom I am well pleased.

Now, the sad reality is that just as certainly as God's name can be hallowed, it can also be profaned. His name is profaned every time He is treated with contempt, or every time He is treated as common and ordinary.

If you are anything like me, you hear God's name being mentioned all the time...and I don't mean in the church. Every time I hear the word "God" or "Jesus," my ears perk up...I want to hear what they're saying. They're talking about someone I know and love. But all too often, His name isn't being hallowed, His name is being used as a swear word.

As you can probably imagine, I'm not a fan of four-letter-words. But no four-letter-word disturbs as much as hearing the name of Jesus maligned as a swear word...it grieves me so deeply. And I often find myself praying, *Father forgive them, they do not know what they are doing.*

Jesus invites us to pray, *Father, hallowed be Your Name*, quite simply because He alone is worthy of praise, honour, glory and worship.

And what I want to do now is take the next few minutes to paint a picture of God's glory, majesty, and power. In order to understand why His name should be hallowed, we must first see Him as He is. And even now, may God by His Spirit give us eyes to see and hearts to understand how great and glorious our God is.

2. A Vision of God's Glory

In part, to *hallow* God is understand that He is sacred, set apart, and different than everyone else. William Barclay writes, "God supremely belongs to a different sphere of life and being."² We can rightly say about God, *He's out of this world.*

If you listen to me for long enough, one of the things you will come to know about me is that I am a student of church history. It's one thing to be familiar with what people, pastors and theologians are saying about God today, but what did these same groups of people say 400 years ago, 800 years ago, 1600 years ago.

C.S. Lewis once said that if he had to choose between reading current books and ancient books, he would always give preference to the ancient ones. He writes, "Every age has its own outlook. It is specially good at seeing certain truths and specially liable to make certain mistakes. We all, therefore need the books that will correct the characteristic mistakes of our own period. And that means the old books...People were no cleverer then than they are now; they made as many mistakes as we. But not the same the mistakes."³

² William Barclay, *The Lord's Prayer For Everyman*, 178.

³ Athanasius, *On The Incarnation*, 4-5 (Introduction written by C.S. Lewis).

Last week I talked about the opening line of the Lord's Prayer, *Our Father in Heaven*. I talked about how much God the Father loves us...He loves us as much as He loves Jesus. As the scripture says: we are the apple of His eye, our name is engraved upon His hands, and He delights in us, He sings songs of love over us.

We need to know this about God, He is a Father who loves us. I think it is fair to say that we live among a people who are starved for love. We need a loving Father...and if you listen to people, pastors and theologians today, you'll hear a lot of this language.

But what keeps our need for a loving Father from lapsing into mushy sentimentalism? God is not a cosmic lovesick teddy bear in the sky, just waiting to give you a hug. We cannot let the needs of our time reduce God into a simplistic caricature. This is why we need the Scriptures, this is why we need the old books.

One thing the ancient writers talked about often was the glory, the majesty, the power, the transcendence, the otherness of God. In our own time, we tend to shy away from these descriptors because more than anything we long for a God who is close and loving. The scriptures tell us that He is close and loving, but the God who is near us is also glorious, powerful, and majestic.

illus: Earlier in the service we watched a video that portrayed the various names of God. And I couldn't help but notice that one of my favourites was missing. Over the last few years, there is a biblical picture of God that I have been carrying around in my mind's eye...it is the picture of Jesus as a Lion.

We frequently talk about Jesus, the Lamb of God, who was slain for the sake of the world. When we think about a lamb, we might think about its innocence, its vulnerability, its weakness. If we walking down the road and saw a lamb a few paces away, we might take pity on it, we might take advantage of it, but we certainly wouldn't be fearful. How you react if you walked around a corner and came upon a Lion?

Most times describing an image isn't nearly as helpful as seeing the image itself...there's a reason why they say a picture is worth a thousand words. I want to invite you to watch a scene taken from the *Chronicles of Narnia*, it's a movie based on the children's book written by C.S. Lewis.

In this movie, four British children stumble into a parallel world where trees walk and animals talk. In this new world known as Narnia, the children encounter a Lion King by the name of Aslan, who have come to save his creatures from a terrible enemy, the White Witch. And in a shocking turn of events, Aslan saves Narnia and defeats the witch by laying down his own life. Take a look.

video: 1:53:05-1:54:54

The parallels to the death and resurrection of Jesus are obvious...but you know what gets me every time I see that scene...it's the roar...

Jesus is described as the Lion of Judah...a King by nature and by might...glorious, proud, majestic, wild, and powerful...certainly not one to be trifled with.

Exodus 33 tells of an encounter between God and Moses, and at one point Moses said to God, “*Show me your glory*”. And the Lord said, “*I will cause all my goodness to pass in front of you, and I will proclaim my name, the LORD, in your presence. 20 But,*” he said, “*you cannot see my face, for no one may see me and live.*” 22 *When my glory passes by, I will put you in a cleft in the rock and cover you with my hand until I have passed by. 23 Then I will remove my hand and you will see my back; but my face must not be seen.*”⁴

In Isaiah 6, we’re told that the very same year the King in Jerusalem died, the prophet Isaiah “*saw the Lord seated on a throne, high and exalted, and the train of his robe filled the temple. 2 Above him were seraphs, each with six wings: With two wings they covered their faces, with two they covered their feet, and with two they were flying. 3 And they were calling to one another: “Holy, holy, holy is the LORD Almighty; the whole earth is full of his glory.” 4 At the sound of their voices the doorposts and thresholds shook and the temple was filled with smoke.*

5 *“Woe to me!” I cried. “I am ruined! For I am a man of unclean lips, and I live among a people of unclean lips, and my eyes have seen the King, the LORD Almighty.”*

God’s holiness, His majesty, was so complete, so total, so other that when Isaiah saw Him as He is...he thought he was done for.

God is so far beyond us, so completely other than us, and yet He is closer than our heartbeat. He is gentle, patient and loving...holy, majestic, and mighty, all rolled up into one. And if you never seen that mix of characteristics before, it’s because there is no one like our God.

Finally, I want to spend our last few minutes thinking specifically about how God’s name is being hallowed.

3. Hallowing the Name

a. First, I’d like to point out that the *hallowing* of God’s name is already going on in heaven. Heaven, God’s dimension, is not made up, it’s not make believe and what is happening there is more real than the things we can see with our eyes...because in heaven there is nothing to hinder people from seeing God as He is.

Revelation 4 and 5 tells us that right now, angels surround God’s throne to the tune of ten thousand times ten thousand, and they are singing, and bowing down in worship. Jesus is the Lion and the Lamb, the One who died for in our place, and the triumphant One who has risen and been crowned King. In heaven, worship is already in full swing, in heaven, God’s name is being hallowed every moment.

But not only in heaven. Psalm 19, verses 1 and 4 says, “*1 The heavens declare the glory of God; the skies proclaim the work of his*

⁴ Ex. 33:19-23, NIV.

hands. 4 Their voice goes out into all the earth, their words to the ends of the world.

You might remember that when Jesus was entering into Jerusalem the week before He was crucified, the crowd cut palm branches, lined the road and cried aloud: *Blessed is the king that comes in the name of the Lord!* Well...the religious leaders of the day were furious and said to Jesus: *Teacher, rebuke your disciples!* And Jesus replied, *I tell you...if they keep quiet, the stones will cry out.*⁵

Right now, all of heaven, and the rest of the created order have already got it straight...God is King over all, He is worthy of praise...they've already got it...now it's our turn.

When we pray for God's name to be hallowed on earth as in heaven, we are asking for the worship of heaven to be let loose upon the nations. We are asking for the eyes of the nations to be opened to the worthiness of God so that they can join in, with us.

b. And that leads me to the second thought, God's name is being hallowed in and through us.

I think that Helmut Thielicke is right when he says that in praying for God's name to be hallowed, we're ultimately praying against ourselves.⁶ The great sin at the Tower of Babel was humanity's attempt to make a name for themselves, instead of hallowing the name of God.

illus: I came across a video clip a few years ago that made me laugh. It was set up like a "K-Tel Records presents..." video...you know the ones where they play hit songs from the 80's or 90's...well, this album was entitled *Me-Worship*. The featured artist was playing 90's worship songs in a cheesy lounge singer kind of way, and he had changed the God focussed lyrics in favour of a more me-centered feel.

And so he sang, "*Lord I lift my name on high, Lord I love to sing my praises*" and as the sound bite faded into the background he would into another favourite: "*I exalt me, I exalt me, I exalt me, O Lord...*" Fortunately for all of us, I don't recall the rest. *When we pray for God's name to be hallowed, we're ultimately praying against ourselves...* we're asking God to keep us humble and obedient.

It is interesting to me that Jesus instructs us to pray: *Hallowed be Your name*, instead of, *Father, make us holy*. More often I think... this is where we end up in our praying. Don't get me wrong, God intends to make us holy, but when we begin with ourselves inevitably we end up missing the mark. We need to begin with God...Father, may your name be hallowed. When our hearts are fixed on Him, when a vision of His beauty, His holiness, and His worthiness captures our imagination...He begins to bring our lives into line with His life.

I was out for coffee a few weeks ago with one of our missionaries, Dayna Evanow, and she said to me: "*We become what we behold.*" If start with ourselves, with our need to be made holy, we can end up

⁵ Luke 19: 38-40, NIV.

⁶ Helmut Thielicke, *Our Father In Heaven*, 45.

wrapped up in our shortcomings, focussed on our failures and sins...when we begin with ourselves we often get lost in the darkness. But when we begin by beholding Him, recognizing His glory, not only is His name hallowed, not only do we find ourselves repenting, but we find the Holy Spirit has snuck in through the side door and our lives are being washed clean.

If we're concerned with what we're becoming, then we need to stop and pay attention to what we are beholding.

I want to stop right there and invite you to talk back to me for a few moments. As we think about the nature and character of God, what is it about Him that is praiseworthy and excellent? (**Get Responses**)

Brothers and sisters, right now, what we've been doing is hallowing His name...whenever we speak or sing, or meditate on what is right and true about God with praise in our hearts...we're hallowing His name.

Every time we humble ourselves in obedience before Him, we are hallowing the name. Every time we live in such a way so that people around us see our good deeds and praise our Father in heaven...His name is being hallowed. We need to keep in mind that in Jesus, God the Father was fully and completely hallowed...and this same Jesus now dwells in by the Holy Spirit.

Our God is the Everlasting God, the Transcendent One, the Holy One, He is a God of Strength, and Might, and Love, and Compassion...it is this God who has drawn near through Jesus. The *hallowing of His name* is already in full swing in heaven, meanwhile,

the rocks, the hills, the oceans are crying out in praise of our God...let's not get left behind, lets not be out done.

After addressing God as our Father in heaven, the first place Jesus directs us is towards honouring and revering God...it's the best place to start.

I want to Jim and his team to come and lead us in one final song before I pronounce a final word of blessing.

Worship

Benediction: Usually at the end of our services one of the pastors speaks a final word of benediction (blessing) before we conclude our service. In keeping with our focus this morning, I thought it would be appropriate if concluded by blessing God by singing the *Doxology*.

Invite people forward for prayer