**The Lord’s Prayer**

**1st Petition**

**Hallowed Be Thy Name**

*Mid-week Lent 1 – 03/01/2023*

*For our Lenten mid-week meditations we will be using the Lord’s Prayer, specifically as it is divided by Rev. Dr. Martin Luther in the Small Catechism. Today we will consider as our text, “Our Father who art in heaven.”*

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ……

Please open your hymnal to pg. 323 and find in the right-hand column, *The 1st* Petition of the Lord’s Prayer. Let us read it together:

*What is the First Petition?* Hallowed be Thy name.

*What does this mean?* God’s name is certainly holy in itself, but we pray in this petition that it may be kept holy among us also.

*How is God’s name kept holy?* God’s name is kept holy when the Word of God is taught in its truth and purity, and we, as the children of God, also lead holy lives according to it. Help us to do this, dear Father in heaven! But anyone who teaches or lives contrary to God’s Word profanes the name of God among us. Protect us from this, heavenly Father!

As Luther reminds us, God’s name is holy, by it’s very nature it is holy. If you take the time to examine the Scriptures where you see God’s name given, His name is more descriptive than we think of a name. When Moses first met God in the burning bush and asked Him His name, God said His name was “I Am.” He is eternal – He has no beginning and no end. He is all things – “I Am.”

When the coming of God in human flesh was foretold in Isaiah, it was said this way. *For to us a Child is born, to us a Son is given; and the government shall be upon His shoulder, and His name shall be called Wonderful, Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.* (Isaiah 9:6) Note that they are descriptive words. In His birth narratives of we are told His name is Immanuel – God with us. And that they will call His name Jesus – for He will save His people from their sins.

All these things are holy! These descriptors of God are far and above anything that we can imagine.

Now comes the real question, if God’s name is already holy, then why do was ask God in this petition that it be hallowed, or made holy? Because we need it to be made holy among us.

Our Father wants us to bear His name. He called us by His name. He gave us His name in the waters of baptism. He signed our adoption papers in the blood of Christ. He made us holy – in His name. As we concluded last week’s sermon, the greatest privilege of prayer is that you and I are in an intimate relationship with *Our Father* –that in Jesus Christ Holy name, we are holy.

While we are holy in Christ, are we holy all the time? A simple observation from unbelievers will suffice. How many times have you heard people say something like, “I see how Christians act they're not any better than the rest of us, why should I want to be one of them? They act as if they are all holy, but they aren’t. They try to push their morality on everyone, but they don’t even do it themselves. They’re all hypocrites!” Unbelievers see how easily it is to profane God’s name instead of hallow it.

Luther suggests, and I concur with him, that we pray the Catechism each week. If you do, Wednesday is the Lord’s prayer. And as we read in this petition earlier, *God’s name is kept holy when the Word of God is taught in its truth and purity, and we, as the children of God, also lead holy lives according to it. Help us to do this, dear Father in heaven! But anyone who teaches or lives contrary to God’s Word profanes the name of God among us. Protect us from this, heavenly Father!*

How often do we profane the name of God in our teaching? How often do “good Christians” want the Word of God to be watered down, to be taught differently than as simply as Scripture declares? Many churches allow their teachings to be carried along by the currents of our society and culture, oftentimes in direct contradiction to God’s Word. God’s name is profaned in such teachings.

It is not just them – those others over there. When we have no desire to study regularly the Word, to grow in the knowledge of the truth that leads to salvation, we are profaning the name of God. When we think that our heart trumps the clear teachings of Scripture, because we ***KNOW*** that our heart cannot be bad – even when Scripture says something different than our heart – we profane the name of God.

Look also at our lives? A simple way to examine how we profane the name of God is to look at what we do with our tongues and our lips? Look at what James teaches.

I remember an incident that brings home the point. One of my boys and I used to friend shooting with a friend who one day committed a badly errant shot – God’s name slipped from his mouth in an expletive. He tried to cover it up by saying, “Pardon my French!” My son simply stated, “I didn’t think you were bright enough to know French!”

With a bit of barbed wit, the truth was exposed. It was not French! It was profaning God’s name. Yes, sometimes it just slips out. I think you know that you cannot say certain words on TV. Many people think that one word in particular is especially bad – you know the one – it starts with the letter “F.” But how freely does the phrase “Oh my God!” pepper the airwaves. God forbids that in a specific commandment, “Thou shall not take the name of the Lord your God in vain.” You shall not use His name for no purpose. Such blasphemy had as its penalty, being stoned to death.

We profane the name of God when we think we do not need to be made holy by God on a regular basis. God makes us holy when He comes to us and delivers His holiness from the cross in Word and Sacrament. When we fail to gather and receive this holiness from God on a regular and weekly basis, we not only violate the 3rd Commandment, but we defile God’s holy name among us.

Repent of defiling the name of God with your lips and by your actions.

And that is why we pray this petition.

Luther’s teaches in hi Large Catechism on this petition: *But how does it (God’s name) become holy among us? Answer, as plainly as it can be said: When both our doctrine and life are godly and Christian. For since in this prayer we call God our Father, it is our duty always to deport and demean ourselves as godly children, that He may not receive shame, but honor and praise from us.*

*Here, now, learn how great need there is of such prayer. For because we see how full the world is of sects and false teachers, who all wear the holy name as a cover and sham for their doctrines of devils, we ought by all means to pray without ceasing, and to cry and call upon God against all such as preach and believe falsely and whatever opposes and persecutes our Gospel and pure doctrine, and would suppress it.*

*Likewise also for ourselves who have the Word of God, but are not thankful for it, nor live as we ought according to the same. If now you pray for this with your heart, you can be sure that it pleases God; for He will not hear anything more dear to Him than that His honor and praise is exalted above everything else, and His Word is taught in its purity and is esteemed precious and dear.*

You are the dearly beloved of God. In fact, you are His beloved saints, His *holy ones*. You are such, for Christ, in your flesh, purchased forgiveness for your profaning of His name. In baptism you were clothed with Christ’s righteousness – His holiness is now yours. You are to live in His holiness each and every day. It is your baptismal life of daily contrition and repentance – your daily acknowledgement of your sinfulness and trust that the forgiveness Christ purchased is yours – and that in Christ, you are truly holy.

Christ fills you with Himself, feeding you His flesh and blood. He delivers to you His holiness, His righteousness. It is indeed yours, and you are to live in it.

How is God’s name kept holy? *God’s name is kept holy when the Word of God is taught in its truth and purity, and we, as the children of God, also lead holy lives according to it. Help us to do this, dear Father in heaven!*

You gather together to receive His gifts to you. Here the Word of God is taught in truth and purity. And as you gather, His name is kept holy in your reception of His holiness for you and to you. Continue to do so! For in so doing, God is making His name holy in you.

When you leave this place, Christ dwells in you richly. You leave with every intention to lead holy lives according to what you have received. That is what you declare in song after every sermon! *Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right Spirit within me. Cast me not away from Thy presence, and take not Thy Holy Spirit from me. Restore unto me the joy of Thy salvation, and uphold me with Thy free Spirit. Amen.*

Consider those words, they are another way to pray this 1st petition – they say exactly what Luther taught in his explanation of this petition, *Help us to do this, dear Father in heaven!”*

That song is requesting that God would keep us from falling into further sin, just as Luther’s explanation concludes, *Protect us from this, heavenly Father!*

You are the beloved saints of God. You are His holy ones. Prayerfully consider and learn this petition, that it might be your heartfelt prayer. Pray God to lead you to live holy lives according to His name! And do so, knowing that in Christ Jesus, God is doing this in you. Hallow His holy Name in all your words and life – from today and into eternity. In the name of Jesus. Amen.