



3/8/2020

“... In Heaven, Hallowed be Your Name”

Scripture: Exodus 20:7; Psalm 103:19-22; Isaiah 6:1-5; Matthew 6:9; Matthew 25:31-40

Lenten Series: Living the Lord’s Prayer

Second Sunday in Lent

We continue with our sermon series this Lenten season on Living the Lord’s Prayer – The Way of Discipleship. **Today we focus on acknowledging God’s rightful place in the universe and in our lives.**

Jesus taught his disciples, including us, to pray, “***Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name.***”

As I said last week, Jesus at times used the Aramaic word “Abba”, coming from the Hebrew word for father, “Awb/Av” – a very personal term, in speaking to or of God. This we know from the record in Mark’s account, of Jesus praying to God in the Garden of Gethsemane the night before his death. The term was also alluded to in Paul’s letter to the Romans (8:15). And to the Galatians (4:6 NRSV) Paul wrote, “**And because you are children, God has sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying, ‘Abba! Father.’**”

† So when Jesus teaches us to pray, “**Our Father in heaven,**” it both affirms God’s closeness and family relationship we have with our Creator and reminds us that God is far greater than any mortal or temporal existence and relationship.

God is the creator and giver of our very souls – body and spirit. God is our spiritual parent. And when we repent and turn to God for forgiveness, we are reborn, not of flesh and blood, but of the Spirit. Our identity as true children of God is restored. This is best seen by the Parable of the Prodigal Son told by Jesus himself (Luke 15). He is the loving Father who runs out to embrace the wayward son who has returned home in shame after squandering his inheritance; then orders a fine robe to place upon him, a ring for his finger, and party to celebrate his return.

It is sad to realize that there are so many people in our world, indeed in our own country, who do not know or acknowledge God as their Father, their heavenly Parent. Sadder still, there are many who don’t acknowledge God at all. Very often their spiritual ignorance is coupled with moral blindness.

As King David of the Old Testament wrote, recorded in Psalm 14:1-2: “**Fools say in their hearts, ‘There is no God.’ They are corrupt, they do abominable deeds; there is no one who does good. The LORD looks down from heaven on humankind to see if there are any who are wise, who seek after God.**” As the NIV bible footnote points out, the Hebrew words rendered fool in Psalms denote one who is morally deficient.



But it is not for us to judge. Even David fell to temptation yet was redeemed, because he was a man after God's own heart and acknowledged his sin.

And another Psalmist wrote (33:13-22):

- ¹³ The LORD looks down from heaven;
 he sees all humankind;
¹⁴ **from where he sits enthroned he watches**
 . all the inhabitants of the earth —
¹⁵ he who fashions the hearts of them all,
 and observes all their deeds.
- ¹⁶ A king is not saved by his great army;
 . a warrior is not delivered by his great strength.
¹⁷ The war horse is a vain hope for victory;
 . and by its great might it cannot save.
¹⁸ Truly the eye of the LORD is on those who fear him,
 . on those who hope in his steadfast love,
¹⁹ to deliver their soul from death
 . and to keep them alive in famine.

We can say with the Psalmist,

- ²⁰ **Our soul waits for the LORD;**
 . he is our help and shield.
²¹ **Our heart is glad in him,**
 . because we trust in his holy name.
²² **Let your steadfast love, O LORD, be upon us,**
 . even as we hope in you.

The One Eternal God is indeed an awesome God, who reigns in heaven above, with wisdom, power and love. Are those words familiar? Do you know the song? Say it with me... Our God is an awesome God!

Now, when I perceive God in heaven, I don't really picture an old man sitting on a big throne, but as a divine loving presence in Spirit. And being Spirit as the bible tells us, God can reveal God's self in and through any form desired: including a burning bush, a pillar of fire, human form or a quiet voice from within. And as the gospel tells us, God has been revealed to us most perfectly in and through Jesus Christ.

We can rejoice then and be glad that God is a loving and eternal heavenly Father, who watches over all God's children.

† **The bible also teaches us that God is a holy God, and that God's name should be kept holy.**

As Albert Haase, O.F.M., has written (Living The Lord's Prayer – The Way of the Disciple; IVP,



2009, p. 74), “To pray, ‘hallowed be thy name,’ in the Lord’s Prayer is to open ourselves to a rich Jewish tradition. According to the Hebrew Scriptures, names and existence are closely associated. . . . a name reveals one’s character, identity and how one’s life is lived. And to know a name is to have knowledge and relationship with that person.” This can be seen many times throughout the bible, especially the Hebrew Scriptures.

I believe most of us can relate to how our parents used our names, whether full name or shortened version if we had one; sometimes with one tone or another, to let us know how they were relating to us at the moment! :-)

And I remember when I was substitute teaching in Philadelphia many years ago, how students would be much better behaved and pay attention if I demonstrated that I knew their names. :-)

With understanding the significance of names, we can see how the revelation of the different names of God at different times in the bible suggests a deepening relationship between God and God’s people. (Ibid) This includes the New Testament, as we will see.

Elohim, El Shaddai, El Elyon, El Roi, and others all reveal something about God’s nature and character. And when God revealed to Moses the name **YHWH**, “I Am Who I Am”, it was with the explicit instruction to keep that name holy, set apart from all others.

Exodus 3:13-15 records God telling Moses, **“This is my name forever, and this is my title for all generations.”**

And one of the Ten Great Commandments given to Moses on Mount Sinai for God’s people was this (Exodus 20:7) **“You shall not misuse the name of the LORD your God, for the LORD will not hold anyone guiltless who misuses his name.”**

In fact, the name is translated as “LORD.” And Jews to this day consider the name so holy and sacred that it is not pronounced or even written in full. Only the first letter or the word LORD, or Adonai in Hebrew, is used. And when written or typed, some do not include the letter “o” in the word God.

So, when Jesus teaches his disciples to pray “Hallowed be your name”, he is not really teaching them anything new. Rather he is reminding them to make it a daily prayer that we keep God’s name holy and sacred, and not profane it.

† **Further, to keep God’s name holy is to hallow and honor God’s name by how we, God’s children, live our daily lives.**

Just as the choices and actions of earthly children reflect upon their parents and family names. So we, as God’s children, may cause others to reflect upon the God we worship.

If we take God’s name in vain – that is lightly or without respect – then others may think less of God and less of us. When we honor, revere and respect God’s name, others tend to think more



carefully and respectfully about God and God's name as well.

Jesus said (John 5:43), "***I have come in my Father's name. . .***" Further, he told us to pray and ask the Father in his name (13:14). He even adds (13:15), "***And I will do whatever you ask in my name, so that the Son may bring glory to the Father.***"

And, the New Testament tells us, when we use the name of Jesus, we invoke his presence and spirit. Jesus said (Matthew 18:5), ". . . whoever welcomes a little child like this *in my name* welcomes me." And again, he said (Matthew 18:20), "For where two or three come together *in my name*, there am I with them."

Therefore, we live now in Christ, with profound adoration and appreciation for God's goodness and love, and with a deep sense of humility, even as demonstrated by Jesus himself as he went to the cross to prove God's love for all.

For this week, remember to pray and reflect each day, "**Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name.**" Observe and remember the images, visions and revelations God may give you this week. Record them in you journal. Share and discuss them with your faith friend or family.

Perhaps the Holy Spirit may even provide you with opportunities to hallow God's name in your conversations or in a practical way as well, using an intentional or random act of kindness, as suggested in today's sermon notes. And may all glory and praise be to God! Amen.