

Text: Matthew 6:9-10¹
Series: Talking With Our Father, Part 2
Title: Talking With Our Father About God
Date: March 8, 2009
Place: First Baptist Church, Olds, AB

As we did last week, I'd like us to begin this morning by praying together the Lord's Prayer as we find it in Matthew's Gospel. Again, we're taking it as we find it in the English Standard Version translation rather than the more familiar King James Version. As we pray it together, I want you to take special note of two words, the word "your" and the word "us." So then, as Jesus taught his disciples to pray, let's pray together...

Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name. Your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread, and forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil." Matthew 6:9-13

Last week we noticed three important, foundational truths about this prayer of Jesus.

First, we talked about the way in which this prayer is to serve us as a **model prayer**, rather than as a form of prayer. There's nothing wrong with memorizing this prayer or praying it from memory, but we need to resist the impulse to turn it into a ritual prayer. The prayer contains at least six important themes that are intended to be woven together into what we called "a wreath of prayer." We never find this prayer repeated again in the rest of New Testament but we do find the themes highlighted by Jesus recurring in the prayers of the Bible. Here is the outline I gave you last week:

Adoration...

"Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name."

Mission...

"Your kingdom come,"

Submission...

"your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven."

Petition...

"Give us this day our daily bread,"

Confession...

"and forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors."

Protection...

"And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil."

¹ Unless otherwise indicated, all Scripture quotations are from The Holy Bible, English Standard Version, copyright © 2001 by Crossway Bibles, a division of Good News Publishers. Used by permission, All rights reserved.

Secondly, we noted that the prayer is full of the words “us” and “our” rather than “me” and “mine.” This is a **corporate prayer** that points to the importance of the church body praying out loud together and we talked about our need as a congregation to grow in this area. I invited your input on ways in which we can express corporate prayer and I got some good ideas this week. Please keep on sending those ideas in.

And **thirdly**, we took special note of the fact that this is a **family prayer** addressed to “our Father.” Prayer, at bottom, is a conversation between the Father in heaven and his children on earth and if we want in on this conversation we need to make sure that we’re a part of God’s family through faith in His Son, Jesus Christ. Becoming a child of God is about believing in Jesus. The Bible tells us that...

“to all who did receive him [that’s Jesus], who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God, who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God.” John 1:12-13

If you’re not sure whether you’re a member of God’s family, I would love to talk with you after the service and show you from God’s Word how you can become part of the conversation with our Father today.

This morning I want you to notice another important foundation truth about Jesus’ prayer. I asked you to take note of two words as we prayed it together, the words “your” and “us.” Those two words divide Jesus’ prayer into two halves.

The first half involves...

Talking With Our Father About Him

“Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name. Your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.” Matthew 6:9-10

The second half focuses on...

Talking With Our Father About Us

“Give us this day our daily bread, and forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.” Matthew 6:11-13

Although the prayer seems to be balanced equally between the two halves, I think if we were to take a survey of our prayers we’d find that we emphasize the second half far and away above the first. It seems far easier for us to bring our needs and requests to God in prayer than it does to spend time in prayer taking

with God about God. But Jesus teaches us to begin our conversation with our Father by talking with him about himself...

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

This prayer theme is commonly called...

Adoration

“Adoration” is another word for “worship.” When we come to worship week by week as a church we gather together to praise God’s character and his work. We intentionally take truths about God from the Bible and we sing them, we pray them, we read them from God’s own Word. In other words, we take God’s own words about himself and we declare them back to him. That’s worship and that’s what we do every Sunday. What Jesus is teaching us here is that that is also to be a regular part of our prayer life. We are to take truth about God from his Word and declare it back to him in prayer.

The word “hallow” means to hold something as holy, to hold something in reverence. It means to treasure something and view it as superior and special.

God’s “name” represents everything that God is – in the Bible, the “name” is equal to the person. When we believe in Jesus’ “name,” as we read in John chapter 1, verse 12, it means that we to accept the truth about who Jesus is and what he has done for us. The Ten Commandments stipulate that we “hallow” the name of God. The third commandment states:

“You shall not take the name of the Lord your God in vain, for the Lord will not hold him guiltless who takes his name in vain.” Exodus 20:7

David, that great worshipper of God, wrote...

“I bow down toward your holy temple and give thanks to your name for your steadfast love and your faithfulness, for you have exalted above all things your name and your word.” Psalm 138:2

When we “hallow” God’s “name” it means that we are treating him as a treasured possession and setting him apart as different from us and worthy of special treatment. In worship we declare that God is above us, we “boast” in his greatness, and we “glory” in what he has done and who he is. When we hallow God’s name we’re saying: “Father, we desire to give you all the respect and honour and praise that is your due as God.”

What Jesus teaches us here reflects what Rick Warren states in the opening line of his book, The Purpose Driving Life: “It’s not about us.” Dr J.I. Packer, a man

who has been one of the most significant influences in my own spiritual life, wrote about Jesus' directive to "hallow" God's name:

"Were we left to ourselves, any praying we did would both start and end with ourselves, for our natural self-centeredness knows no bounds. Indeed, much pagan praying of this kind goes on among supposedly Christian people. But Jesus' pattern prayer, which is both crutch, road, and walking lesson for the spiritually lame like ourselves, tells us to start with God: for lesson one is to grasp that God matters infinitely more than we do." (J.I. Packer, Praying the Lord's Prayer, p. 41)

Ben Patterson, chaplain at Westmont College in California, tells of a time when he was still in pastoral ministry in a church and he ruptured a disc in his back. He was ordered by his doctor to take six weeks of total bed rest. Due to the medication he was on, Patterson found it impossible to read with any degree of concentration and it was in that feeble condition that he learned an important lesson about prayer.

I was helpless, he wrote.

I was also terrified. What was all this going to mean? How was I to take care of my family? What about the church? I was the only pastor it had, and I could do nothing for it. Out of sheer desperation I decided to pray for the church. I opened the church directory and prayed for each member of the congregation, daily. It took nearly two hours, but since there was nothing else I could do for the church, I figured I might as well pray for it. It was not piety that made me do it, it was boredom and frustration. But over the weeks the prayer times grew sweet. One day near the end of my convalescence, I was praying and I told the Lord, "You know, it's been wonderful, these prolonged times we've spent together. It's too bad I don't have the time to do this when I'm well."

God's answer came swift and blunt. He said to me, "Ben, you have just as much time when you're well as when you're sick. It's the same twenty-four hours in either case. The trouble is that when you're well, you think you're in charge. When you're sick, you know you're not." (As quoted in Philip Yancey, Prayer: Does It Make Any Difference?, p. 169)

Beginning our conversation with the Father by focusing on his greatness is one way to remind ourselves whose really in charge! "Hallowed be your name" is an invitation to allow our minds and hearts to be filled with the greatness and glory of God.

How do we "hallow" the name of our Father? How do we treasure and exalt his greatness?

We hallow God's name by knowing Him as he reveals himself to us in his names

God's character and person is revealed in the names the Bible writers used to describe Him. The Holy Spirit of God moved the writers of the Bible to reveal aspects of God's character in the variety of names and descriptions they used when they referred to him. David tells us that when we know the name of our God we will grow in our trust and confidence in him...

“those who know your name put their trust in you, for you, O Lord, have not forsaken those who seek you.” Psalm 9:10

I've given you a handout this morning in your bulletins that lists “**31 Ways to Praise.**” It catalogues thirty one different names and descriptions of our Father found in the Bible. It's a gold insert and I'd like you to pull it out now. Pastor Bob Hostetler put this list together for his own prayer time and he recommends cycling through this list to help us get on the praise track with our Father. We've reproduced it so that you can tuck it in your Bible and use it in your prayer time on your own or in your small groups.

Just take a moment glance down over these thirty one declarations about our Father. What aspect of his character and his work stands out to you today? Is there a need in your life that is touched by one of the “names” of our Father today? There are probably several different ways in which this list of our Father's character and work touches your life.

Just take a moment and scan the list.

Take a look at #7 – “A Faithful God”? Do you need to be reassured that God will never break his Word to you? Praise him that he is faithful and will always keep his word to you!

How about #15 – “A Provider God”? Are you facing a situation where God needs to provide what you need? Praise him for what he's already provided for you and for what he will provide for you!

What about #16 – “God, My Shepherd”?

Philip Yancey tells the story of a woman who gave him a journal she had kept of her husband's seven-year long battle with Lou Gehrig's Disease (ALS). Year after year, the journal records the progression of the disease and the increasing levels of debilitation. “After seven years,” Yancey wrote, “comes this entry, [written by the woman's daughter]:

‘Lying beside Dad as he sits in his chair working for breath. Praying for peace. Wiping his nose. Rubbing his shoulders. Watching Mom love Dad. Saying goodbye. Hearing Dad express his love for Mom and his love for their life together. Watching Dad gaze heavenward and take his last breath ... The Lord is our shepherd.’ (Prayer, p. 266)

There's no one else who can walk with us through the "valley of the shadow of death." Praise him!

Did you notice #22 – "A Forgiving God"? Which of us is unable to connect with that? If you've experienced his grace and forgiveness, praise him for his mercy!

What about #29 – "God of Joy"? If you've known his joy that passes all human understanding, adore and worship him for being a God who gives us joy.

"31 Ways to Praise"... And So Many More! The Bible contains hundreds of descriptions and names of God and we "hallow" his name when we come to know him and treasure him as he has chosen to reveal himself to us in His Word.

We hallow God's name by worshipping Him as His names reveal Him

Remember that Jesus' prayer directs us to pray together. David invites us to do the same thing in the Psalms. He wrote...

"Oh, magnify the Lord with me, and let us exalt his name together!" Psalm 34:3

We do this every Sunday morning when we sing His praise! Notice some of the words of the songs we've sung this morning:

- **"Indescribable"** – we declared the power and amazing wisdom of God that is revealed to us in His created world.
- **"You Are Holy"** is a song that is jammed full of the names of God:
**Lord of lords, King of kings,
Mighty God, Emmanuel,
Great 'I Am,' Prince of Peace,
Ancient of Days, Alpha & Omega,
Saviour, Messiah, Redeemer and Friend.**
- **"Holy, Holy, Holy, Lord God Almighty"** – the title itself is a declaration of who our God is.
- **"Enough,"** perhaps a new song for you this morning, declares that our God is our very great reward, that he is our coming King, that he is "more awesome" than we can possibly know.
- **"How Great Are You Lord"** reminded us of the greatness of God's love that reaches to the heavens AND to the very depths to rescue us.
- **"Clean Hands"** is a prayer of confession and rededication before our God who demands our whole-hearted, singular devotion. We are to have "no other gods" but One, but we have set up "idols" in our lives that replace God: greed and materialism, people whose relationship we crave at the expense of our relationship with God, pleasure-seeking and selfishness of all kinds.

The songs we sing together are not warm-ups for the sermon – one dear saint once referred to them in conversation with me as “the preliminaries.” They are not “preliminaries,” they are a crucial part of what worship is all about – hallowing and exalting the name of God together.

But there’s another important aspect to hallowing the name of God and it’s one that takes our prayer out into the world. Paul challenged us to...

“pray without ceasing” 2 Thessalonians 5:17

How do we do that? I believe we’re “praying without ceasing” when...

We hallow God’s name by living to bring honour to his name

Ray Stedman wrote...

“When we say, ‘Hallowed be your name,’ we are praying, ‘May the whole of my life be a source of delight to you and may it be an honor to the name which I bear, which is your name.’ We find the same sense in this prayer of David’s from the psalms: ‘May the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be pleasing in your sight, O LORD, my Rock and my Redeemer.’ (Ps. 19:14) ... we are really praying, ‘Lord, I open to you every closet. I am taking every skeleton out for you to examine. Hallowed be your name in every compartment of my life.’” (Ray C. Stedman, Talking With My Father: Jesus Teaches on Prayer, p. 57)

Our worship and prayer need to leave this place and change the way we live our lives out there, on our streets, in our workplaces, in our homes, in our schools and during our leisure time.

We have a prayer group that meets here weekly on Wednesdays. It’s called “Mom’s Who Care” and you’ll find them listed in the bulletin in the “This Week” section. They’ve been praying for many years for the students and teachers in our community. At least once a year, they bake some cookies and squares and distribute them to the teacher’s staff rooms in the schools for which they pray. The reason I know this is that they also leave a plate for the church staff, too!

What they’re doing with those squares is carrying their prayer ministry outside of their prayer room and blessing those for whom they pray in tangible ways. It’s also a picture of what we need to do. After having prayed for others, we need to be ready to be the answer to our own prayer and bring blessing from our prayer room out into our community and our world: to help those in need; to reflect the mercy of the God who rescued and saved us; to deal honestly and graciously in our businesses; to be kind to those who need God’s love.

Philip Yancey was touring a leprosy clinic in Nepal with his wife Janet when he met a woman whose deformity was startling. Her leprosy had eaten away the

centre of her face so severely that he could see into her sinus cavity. She was, at first impression, Yancey wrote, “one of the ugliest human beings I have ever seen.” She scuttled along the ground like a wounded animal on all fours and as she approached Philip and his wife, Yancey prepared to be solicited for money, assuming she was a beggar. But his wife’s reaction, as he tells the story, was “more holy.” She bent down and put her arm around the woman. The old woman rested her head on Janet’s shoulder and began to sing in her native Nepali a recognizable tune: “Jesus loves me, this I know, for the Bible tells me so.”

A staff member of the hospital told Yancey that the woman was one of the most devoted church members at the clinic, most of whose patients were Hindus. “Dahnmaya comes every time the [chapel] door opens,” the staffer said, “She’s a prayer warrior. She loves to greet and welcome every visitor who comes to the clinic.”

A few months later, Dahnmaya died. Yancey keeps a photo he took of Janet and Dahnmaya on his desk. He pulls it out occasionally when he wants to remind himself of what true beauty really is. He wrote:

I see two beautiful women: my wife, smiling sweetly, wearing a brightly colored Nepali outfit she had bought the day before, holding in her arms an old crone who would flunk any beauty test ever devised except the one that matters most. Out of that deformed, hollow shell of a body, the light of God’s presence shines out. The Holy Spirit found a home. (Prayer, p. 273-274)

“Hallowed be your name.”

A few minutes ago I told you that Jesus teaches us to begin our prayer conversation with our Father with adoration because we need to learn the life lesson that “it’s not about us.” But there’s another reason why I believe Jesus wants us to begin our conversation with our Father by “hallowing” his name.

Let me ask you: what is it that you long for most in your relationship with our Father? Do you long for intimacy? Do you long for the Father’s personal attention to your life? Do desire a close, personal relationship with God? I hope you do. Jesus chose to teach us to address God as “Father” for that very reason. He wants us to draw close to God and “Father” expresses that intimacy. In fact, Jesus got even more intimate when he prayed with the Father. In the Garden of Gethsemane, as he prepared to go to the cross, he prayed...

“Abba, Father, all things are possible for you. Remove this cup from me. Yet not what I will, but what you will.” Mark 14:36

“Abba” is a word from the Aramaic language that was in common use in Palestine in Jesus’ day. It means “father.” It was a word that children would use

to call to their fathers: “Abba, pick me up! Abba, listen to me! Abba, I love you!” It was a word filled with warmth, relationship and intimacy. And it was a term that was never used of God – until Jesus did. And following Jesus’ example in prayer, his followers began to use it in their prayers and in their relationship with God. Paul wrote to the Romans to tell them that when they came to faith in Jesus, the Spirit of God came into their lives...

“the Spirit of adoption as sons, by whom we cry, ‘Abba! Father!’” Romans 8:15

Let me ask you a question: How is it possible for you, and you, and you, and you, and me, and every one of the millions of believers in Jesus around the world today to have a personal, intimate “Abba Father” relationship with God, all at the same time? It’s because we have a God whose greatness and majesty and wonder is beyond our comprehension! It’s his awe-inspiring greatness that makes possible his intimate closeness and that’s why we praise Him! When we praise His greatness, God closes the gap and we become aware of his amazing closeness and mercy to us. The prophet Isaiah wrote of our Father...

“For thus says the One who is high and lifted up, who inhabits eternity, whose name is Holy: ‘I dwell in the high and holy place, and also with him who is of a contrite and lowly spirit, to revive the spirit of the lowly, and to revive the heart of the contrite.’” Isaiah 57:15

Philip Yancey made a great observation about this principle. He wrote...

“In one hand I hold the truth of God’s vastness, and in the other hand I hold the truth of God’s desire for intimacy...Only lately have I understood that the vast difference between God and us allows this very capacity. God operates by different rules of time and space. And God’s infinite greatness, which we would expect to diminish us, actually makes possible the very closeness that we desire. A God unbound by our rules of time has the ability to invest in every person on earth. God has, quite literally, all the time in the world for each one of us.” (Prayer, p. 49)

I want you to know this morning that our Father has time for you – each one of you. In your hands you have “31 Ways to Praise” and the wonder of God’s greatness is that he can be every one of those things to every single one of you at every moment of the day or night. And by His Spirit he can minister one way to someone on the south side while he’s ministering in another way to someone at the back and also in an entirely different way to a third person on the north side. If you really want to experience intimacy with God, hallow His name. Lift Him up, exalt him and he will draw close to you.

As we close this morning, I want us take time to hallow God’s name together. We’re going to do that’s a bit different and I want you to listen carefully.

First of all, we're going to read Psalm 111 together, a psalm that was written to be spoken together to the Lord by God's people to enable them to hallow the name of the Lord.

Secondly, when we're finished reading the psalm together I'm going to **invite you** to speak out loud one of the "31 Ways to Praise" and here's the interesting thing: *you get to choose which one you speak out*. We're going to do it all at the same time. You can choose how loud or how softly you speak it. You can say it very quietly or you can declare it very boldly – all I ask is that whatever way you do it, you do it sincerely from the heart. It means we won't all be saying the same thing but it does mean we'll all be hallowing the name of the Lord together. Take a moment right now and choose which of the "31 Ways to Praise" you'll read out. We'll read Psalm 111 together and then I'll invite you to pray the item of praise you've chosen. Got it?

Finally, we're going to conclude the service by singing a "Psalm of Praise" together.

Let's pray together the words of Psalm 111.

Psalm 111:1 Praise the Lord! I will give thanks to the Lord with my whole heart, in the company of the upright, in the congregation.

² Great are the works of the Lord, studied by all who delight in them.

³ Full of splendor and majesty is his work, and his righteousness endures forever.

⁴ He has caused his wondrous works to be remembered; the Lord is gracious and merciful.

⁵ He provides food for those who fear him; he remembers his covenant forever.

⁶ He has shown his people the power of his works, in giving them the inheritance of the nations.

⁷ The works of his hands are faithful and just; all his precepts are trustworthy;

⁸ they are established forever and ever, to be performed with faithfulness and uprightness.

⁹ He sent redemption to his people; he has commanded his covenant forever. Holy and awesome is his name!

¹⁰ The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom; all those who practice it have a good understanding. His praise endures forever!

Now, let's speak out our praise to the Lord – let's hallow his name together:

#27 "Father God, I praise you because 'you are a shield around me, O Lord; you bestow glory on me and lift up my head' when I am weary or despised." Ps 3:3

Father, be hallowed in our prayers and by our lives. We ask it in Jesus' name, Amen.

- **Invitation to Worship Team & Prayer Ministry Team:** invite the team to come forward now as we get ready to sing.
- **Song:** Psalm of Thanks
- **Benediction:**

“Now to the King of the ages, immortal, invisible, the only God, be honor and glory forever and ever.” (1 Tim 1:17)

Go in peace and serve the Lord, in the power of the Spirit, to the glory of the Father. Amen.