

INTRODUCTION (PRAY)

This morning we're continuing the series we began last week on **The Lord's Prayer**, and in so doing we'll be reading from **Matthew chapter 6 and verses 9-13. Matthew 6**, beginning in **verse 9**. Let us now hear God's Holy Word. (READ)

THE BRIDGE

Our Father in Heaven, hallowed be your name.

That's obviously the first petition of the Lord's Prayer, but the question is...what are we praying, what are we asking and expressing when we say these words?

WHAT'S IN A NAME?

Well to answer that, I want us to begin with the final word of this first petition, the word 'name.' For Jesus didn't simply teach us to pray, 'Our Father in Heaven, hallowed be you.' No, he taught us to pray...**Hallowed be your name**. Why the emphasis on God's name? Well...**What's In a Name?**

In many respects everything. Think about our own personal names, how they express our uniqueness, how they declare and define who we are, how our names convey our character, our personality and our reputation. And if this is true for us who live in culture where names are normally given for sentimental reasons or simply because mom and dad like the name, how much more was it the case in the world of the Bible where names were given always intentionally? For in the biblical world, names always conveyed meaning. They were given to define who a person was and what that person would become. In the Bible, one's name told the story of their life and character. For example, the name Abram means 'Exalted Father,' and as we know from **Genesis**, this name was eventually changed to Abraham, which means, 'Exalted Father of a Multitude of Nations.' And indeed, that's who Abraham was, for from him has come a worldwide family defined not by a particular race, but by God's grace. What about the name Moses? Well, it's a name that means, 'Drawn Out.' For as a baby, Moses was drawn safely out of the Nile River, and then later on as an adult, he, through the power of God, drew out Israel from their slavery in Egypt. So again, names in the Bible told one's story, they expressed *who, what* and *how* a person would be in the world.

Now if this is true for human beings, how much more is it the case for the One who formed and fashioned human beings in his own image? For if having a name is central to being human it's because having a name is central to being God. In other words, we're named because God himself has a name. Even more, God is his name in that his name perfectly expresses who he is, for God's name is his own self-description and self-declaration. God has a name. And this in itself is good news, for the fact that God has name teaches us that he isn't some abstract concept or nebulous force in the universe. No, the fact that God has a name declares that he's personal; that he's living and active. God has a name! But...**What is his name?**

To answer that we need to recall the well-known story from **Exodus chapter 3** when God appeared to Moses out of the burning bush for the purpose of commissioning him to deliver of Israel from Egypt. And in response to this amazing appearance, one of the main things Moses wanted to know was God's name, for he said to God...**If I come to the people of Israel and say to them, 'The God of your fathers has sent me to you,' and they ask me, 'What's his name?,' what shall I say to them?** And how did God respond? Well...**He said to Moses, 'I AM WHO I AM. This is my name forever, and thus I am to be remembered throughout all generations.**

God's name is...**I AM**. In Hebrew the word's...**YHWH**. And this is a name humanity didn't construct and then impose on God. No, this is the very name God has given to himself from all of eternity, and that he revealed in time to humanity, and in revealing his name, he's revealing something of his own being and character. For in this name, 'YHWH,' God's declaring...**I AM** the Eternal, Sovereign, Holy and Unchangeable God, the God who's ever-present, ever-powerful and ever-faithful. I am the God who lacks nothing, the God whose perfectly content within his own Being, the God who's self-existing, self-sufficient and self-fulfilled, the God who's always been and the God in whom all other things live and move and have their being. I AM is God's name, his mysteriously personal name.

And the deep meaning of his name becomes all the more clear later on in **Exodus 34** when Moses asked God to show him his glory. To which God responded...**I will make all my goodness pass before you and I will proclaim to you my name, YHWH**. And sure enough, we read in **Exodus 34** that...**YHWH descended in the cloud and stood with Moses and he proclaimed the name of YHWH, saying... 'YHWH, YHWH, a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger, abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness, keeping steadfast love for thousands, forgiving iniquity, transgression and sin, but who will by no means clear the guilty, that is, clear those who refuse to trust in his name**. And in light of the revelation of God's name we're told that...**Moses quickly bowed his head to the ground and worshipped. And he said, 'If I have found favor in your sight, O Lord, please let the Lord go in the midst of us, for it's a stiff-necked people, and pardon our iniquity and our sin, and take us for your inheritance**.

You see, when YHWH revealed the meaning of his glorious name to Moses, Moses didn't encounter a harsh and brutal God. No, he encountered a Gospel God...a God who's merciful, gracious and slow to wrath. He encountered a God of covenant love, a God who's fully committed to his people, willing to forgive his people's sins. Yet he's also a God who's holy and pure and therefore he takes sin seriously.

My friends, this is God's name, a name that reveals his goodness and glory and grace, for God's name is his own theology, theology in the highest sense, in that God's name unpacks God's character. At the same time, His name is also his powerful promise in that he promises to be with his people. I AM will be with you to rescue and restore you and to take you as my own forgiven and loved inheritance. So, what's in God's Name? Absolutely everything! And because this is so, we're called to not simply to know something about his name. No, we're called to know God's name intimately and truly, for only in and by God's name are we saved and sustained and shaped into the human image bearers we were created and called to be.

THE HALLOWING OF GOD'S NAME

And central to knowing God's name is **The Hallowing of His Name**. For those who *know* God's Name *hallow* his name. Now that's a good churchy word, isn't it? *Hallow*. And because it's such a good churchy word we probably need to define it. We need to ask...*What does it mean to hallow God's Name?*

The word 'hallow' itself means, '*To treat or regard as holy*,' which means, to hallow God's Name is to regard his name and relate to his name as set apart and set above all other names. To hallow God's Name is to treat his name as the greatest and best name, the name worthy of all our love and loyalty. To hallow God's name is to see his name as the source and goal of our deepest desires and delight, for he were made for his name, to find our joy in his name. And throughout the Bible we're taught what it means to hallow God's name. Let me give you some examples...

- **Psalm 9...**YHWH's a stronghold for the oppressed, a stronghold in times of trouble. *And those who know your name put their trust in you, for you, YHWH, have not forsaken those who seek you.*
- **Psalm 105...**Oh give thanks to YHWH, *call upon his name*; make known his deeds among the peoples! Sing to him, sing praises to him, tells of all his wondrous works! *Glory in his holy name*; let the hearts of those who seek YHWH rejoice.
- **Psalm 106...**Save us, O YHWH our God, and gather us from among the nations, *that we may give thanks to your holy name and glory in your praise.*
- **Psalm 113...**Praise YHWH! Praise, O servants of YHWH, *praise the name of YHWH! Blessed be the name of YHWH from this time forth and forevermore! From the rising of the sun to its setting, the name of YHWH is to be praised!*
- (And then one more) **Psalm 119...**Turn to me and be gracious to me, *as is your way with those who love your name.*

To hallow God's name means *to trust in his name, to call upon his name, to glory in his name, to give thanks to his name, to reverence his name, to love and to praise his name*, and to do so from the rising of the sun to its setting. And we're to do this because God's name is our life. It's our hope and love. For again, we were made for God's name, to find our name in his name, to find our all in his all...his all-sufficient name, which is his revelation of who he is as God.

But therein lies the problem...the great problem of and for humanity, for none of us have hallowed God's Name faithfully and consistently. For our natural bent, left to ourselves, is to profane and blaspheme God's name...to treat his name disrespectfully, as if his name didn't really matter, as if his name were insignificant to us and our daily lives. For deep within each of us lies **The Sin of Babel**, the sin of seeking to make a name for ourselves apart from God, of seeking to construct and create our own self-identity and meaning, our own significance and satisfaction to the exclusion of God's name. Or if we happen to be religious, the sin of Babel means seeking to manipulate God's name, to bargain with his name in the sense of saying to God...I'll honor your name *if* you'll make my name great. I'll honor your name...

- *if* you give meet my expectations
- *if* you make me happy and comfortable
- *if* you make my children more obedient
- *If* make my spouse easier to get along with
- I'll honor your name *if*...and the list could go on and on

You see, the sad truth concerning each of us, concerning all of humanity from Adam onwards is the reality that we've profaned God's name in numerous ways. And in so doing we've broken the **Third Commandment...You shall not take the name of YHWH your God in vain**. And this commandment isn't just referring to how we speak about God. It's also referring to how we live towards God, for with our lips and our lives we've all taken God's name in vain. We've profaned it. We've not hallowed it. And therefore, we're guilty, for we've all have fallen short of hallowing of God's holy name, and therefore, we deserve his judgement.

So where then is the hope for us blasphemers? Well, it's in the very name we've blasphemed. It's in God's commitment to his name, to his own reputation as God, for God's more committed to his name than we are...and that's good news! For in the end, God's commitment to his own name actually works out for our good...for our forgiveness and restoration. For here's the thing: God's so committed to his name that he, in the Person of his Son, in his Son himself shares fully in the name of God, came into the world and put on flesh. God the Son became a human being for human beings, and as a human being, he bore the name Jesus, which means 'YHWH saves,' for Jesus is the full embodiment of God's name, and therefore he's the proof that God's utterly committed to the hallowing of his name and that he is so for our good. And one place this comes out is in **John chapter 12** when Jesus prays...**Now is my soul troubled. And what shall I say? 'Father, save me from this hour? No, for this purpose I've come to this hour. Father, glorify your name.'** Now what was Jesus praying about? Well, he was praying about his own death. For Jesus went to the cross in order to glorify God's name...to proclaim his name, to declare through his sacrificial death, his death for us blasphemers, that God is indeed...**merciful and gracious, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness, keeping steadfast love for thousands upon thousands, and forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin.** For on the cross, Jesus suffered and was judged for our blasphemy, so that through his death we might know God's name not in judgment, but in salvation.

You see, the claim of the Bible is that if you want to know God's name...if you want to know his good, loving, forgiving and holy name, his name of Father...then the one place and the one person to whom you must look is Jesus. For Jesus is the one who shares in God's name perfectly and who shows God's name beautifully, for in revealing God's name Jesus has shown us that we're indeed loved with a love that doesn't depend on our performance or our success or our looks or on whatever. No, in the manifestation of God's name, Jesus has shown us that our God is a God who comes after us, a God who knows our ugliness and our sin and yet wants us anyway...wants us for his inheritance, his eternally loved and now forgiven inheritance. For in Jesus' death and resurrection, God's name has passed before us and been proclaimed to us, so that in Jesus we might know God as our Father. For through faith in Jesus, we've been brought in the very life and love of God, so that by his grace we might now take our stand with Jesus and begin to pray...**Father, glorify your name. May your name be hallowed.**

PRAYING THIS PETITION

And what does it look like to pray this petition practically? Well, let me give you three ways.

First, praying this petition means praying it...**personally**. And to help us grasp this, let me read what we confessed earlier from **The Heidelberg Catechism**. It asks in **Question 122...What's the first petition of The Lord's Prayer?** Answer: **Hallowed be your name. That is: help us, first of all, to know you rightly, and to honor, glorify and praise you in all your works through which you shine your almighty power, wisdom, goodness, righteousness, mercy and truth. And so order our whole life in thought, word and deed that your name may never be blasphemed on our account, but may always be honored and praised.**

Simply put, praying this first petition personally means asking God to give you a burning desire to see his gracious name glorified in and through your life, so that with your lips and our lives your continual prayer would be...**Be Thou my vision, O Lord of my heart. Naught be all else to me save that Thou art. Thou my best thought by day or by night. Waking or sleeping, Thy presence, Thy name be my light.**

In praying this petition we're saying to our Father, may everything in my life...my thoughts, words and deeds be a reflection of your sacred name, which has been revealed and given in Jesus. May my name show forth your name. Help me, Father, to die to my own supposed self-sufficiency, to die to my selfish name, that your self-giving name might be seen in me...seen in my marriage, in my parenting, in my work, seen in my all. For in this petition we find our chief prayer, the prayer that's to govern and shape all our prayers, for in this prayer we're invited to inhabit a beautiful vision of the true human vocation, the vocation of living for the glory of the God who's loved us into lasting life.

Second, we're to pray this prayer...**corporately**. And by this I mean we're to pray it for this church and for the church universal, praying that the church of Jesus would be a church that above all else longs to manifest the goodness and glory of God, a church that cries out in its worship and service...**To God alone be the Glory**. Is that your longing for Trinity? That we'd be a community that bears witness to God's name...to who he is and all that he's done. For a grace-filled church is a church that prays...**Not to us, not to us, O LORD, but to your name give glory**. You see, we're not here to make Trinity's name great. No, we're here to make THE Trinity's name great. And therefore, the entirety of our lives personally and communally must more and more become an echo of the words of Paul when he writes at the end of **Romans chapter 11...For from him and through him and to him are all things. To him be the glory forever! Amen**. We, as a church, exist for one main purpose, and that is to manifest the strong and saving name of our God in our worship, in our community and in our mission. To God's name be the glory.

And then **thirdly**, we're to pray this prayer...**hopefully**. For in the now time, in our present we don't see God's name hallowed and we ourselves don't yet hallow his name truly and fully. But one day we will. One day we will see his name in all its goodness and glory in the face of Jesus and on that day we'll hallow God's name in way we can scarcely imagine. It's hard to pray this prayer in the present, but even so...don't stop praying it. Pray it with an eye to God's ultimate future when he'll make all things right and new, for one day the knowledge of his glorious and gracious name, as the Prophet Isaiah tells us...**will cover the earth as the waters cover the sea**. One day every knee will bow and every tongue confess the name of Jesus as Lord to the glory of the Father. We're being prepared for that future day as we pray this petition in the present.

Father, hallowed be your Name. Pray then like, says Jesus. And the question is...Are we?