

Hallowed be thy name

Matthew 6:9-13

Feb 28, 2021

A pastor visited a Sunday School class one Sunday morning to meet with the 2nd grade children to see how their studies were going. She asked them as to what they have been learning. They replied they have been learning about God. One little boy said God created the whole world and everything in it. A little girl said that God loves us very much. Another little girl said that God had a son named Jesus who came to earth to save us from our sins. Needless to say, the pastor was quite pleased with all the responses until one little child piped up, "I know what God's name is...it's Harold, same as mine. And we say it every Sunday. "Our Father, who art in heaven, Harold be Thy name.." Another boy jumped in and said, "No, God's name is not Harold, but Howard. We say it, "Our Father who art in heaven, Howard be thy name." Another one said, "That is not the way we say. We say, "Our Father, who art in heaven, how'd you know my name" Hahaha...

Our Father, who art in heaven; **Hallowed be thy name. It is the first prayer Jesus taught.**

Jesus taught us to pray this prayer up front, before teaching us to pray for "Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done". He taught us to pray first "Hallowed be thy name" before teaching us to pray to "Give us this day our daily bread" and to "forgive our trespasses." Why? I think because "Hallowed by Thy Name" is the foremost important prayer for us to learn.

What does this word "hallowed" mean?

If we go back to the Greek text, which is the original language for New Testament, we find that the word we translate "hallowed" means to consider something as sacred or holy. So the prayer "hallowed be thy name" means we treat God's name with holiness. God's name is neither Harold nor Howard. God's name is hallowed, holy, sacred.

Our Jewish ancestors understood the holiness of God in a way we may not. They refused making images of God. They refused even describing God because they knew that God was so high above us that no description would be adequate. They considered God's name too holy to be spoken by human lips. If the name of God needed to be written, the scribes would take a bath before they wrote it and destroy the pen afterward. They treated God's name with deepest reverence and most sincere honor. Yes, reverence and honor were their attitude toward God's name. "Hallowed be thy name" can be paraphrased this way: "May God be given "reverence" and "honor" that God's name deserves."

The name of God (or anyone's name) is more than a means of identification. As far as scripture is concerned, to know God's name means to know what God is like... God's character, God's nature, God's power. Yes, "Name" implies everything that God is and does.

The Old Testament writers used many names to describe God, since they knew no one image or name was adequate. Let me share several names to describe God.

Elohim is the Hebrew word for God that appears in the very first sentence of the Bible. Elohim is the one who began it all, the Creator, creating the heavens and the earth and separating light from darkness, water from dry land, night from day.

Elyon is another name of God. It is translated "God Most High." The name or title "Elyon" emphasizes God's uniqueness and his supremacy above all others.

Adonai is another one. It is translated "Lord," and signifying, "sovereignty or supreme power or authority."

El Shadai is another Hebrew word for God, which means "The Almighty, all-sufficient God."

Jehovar or Yahweh is a proper name of God, well known from the famous interaction with Moses. Moses said to God, "If I come to the Israelites and say to them, 'The God of your ancestors has sent me to you,' and they ask me, 'What is his name?' what shall I say to them?" God said to Moses, "I AM WHO I AM." He said further, "Thus you shall say to the Israelites, 'I AM has sent me to you.'" (Exodus 3:13-14) Yahweh is I AM, who has always existed and will always exist. Yahweh is the Absolute and the Wholly Other.

But as we know from the exodus story, Yahweh, the Absolute and the Wholly Other is not far away distant from humanity. Yahweh has a great interest in us and all the things happening in this world. Yahweh is compassionate and graceful and merciful. So the Psalmist praises, "Yahweh is my Shepherd. I shall not want. My cup overflows." (Ps 23:1, 5c) "Yahweh who keeps you will neither slumber nor sleep. Yahweh is your keeper" (Ps 121:4-5a) Amen. Yahweh is Emmanuel, God with us.

Teach us how to pray. Jesus said, "This is how you should pray (vs 9) "Our Father in heaven, hallowed be thy name." "Our Father in heaven, may YOU be given honor and reverence that YOUR name deserves." Jesus said in fact, using my words, "Acknowledge God, the Creator, the Most High, the Almighty, and Emmanuel. And give proper honor and sincere reverence to God with all your strength and all your heart." Using Martin Luther's famous words, Jesus taught us to "Let God be God. Let God be revered and respected and honored." Period.

I have never forgotten a story told by Dr. Fred B. Craddock about a time he conducted a worship service at the conclusion of a week at a Christian camp. They had made an altar and

placed candles on it to help create an environment of worship. After the service, when the people were waiting to pick up their children, one of the fathers walked up to the altar, took one of the candles and lit a cigarette. Dr. Craddock then shared these thoughts: Was it only tobacco? Was it only fire? Where was reverence and honor that God's name deserves?

So I do have a question for all of us. **What exactly are we doing when we pray, "Hallowed be Thy name?" In another words, how is our reverence and honor to God shown in our daily living?**

Obviously, we praise God. We affirm that God is indeed One who should be considered as One who is supremely holy or different. We recognize that holiness or that difference, and we celebrate it with our praise.

Psalmist invites us to celebrate, saying, "1Praise the Lord! Praise God in his sanctuary; praise him in his mighty firmament! 2Praise him for his mighty deeds; praise him according to his surpassing greatness! 3Praise him with trumpet sound; praise him with lute and harp! 4Praise him with tambourine and dance; praise him with strings and pipe! 5Praise him with clanging cymbals; praise him with loud clashing cymbals! 6Let everything that breathes praise the Lord! Praise the Lord! (Ps 150:1-6) Hallelujah!

Worshipping every Sunday morning at 10 am is a precious time of giving reverence and honor to the Holy God, the Most High, the Almighty and Emmanuel, God with us. We are truly blessed to be able to gather and give reverence and honor to God.

Jesus said, "God is Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth." To worship God in spirit and truth necessarily involves loving God with heart, soul, mind and strength. True worship must be "in spirit and truth," that is, engaging the whole heart. By worshipping in spirit and truth, we acknowledge God and celebrate God's holiness.

Worshipping God is not just Sunday morning thing to do. Worshipping, yes celebrating goes on throughout the week after the Sunday morning worship. We "praise God, praise God, praise God in the morning, Praise God in the noon time. Praise God, Praise God, Praise God when the sun goes down." Monday through Saturday we go on giving praising God and reflecting the holiness of God to others.

How is our reverence and honor to God shown in our living?

Secondly, I believe that giving thanks always is a wonderful way to give honor and reverence that God deserves.

We live by the grace of God. We have been created in the image of God. We have been saved or saved or justified by faith. God has welcomed us unconditionally like Father who welcomes

his prodigal son. God has given us the Holy Spirit who guides and empowers us to live boldly and confidently. All this is what God has offered to us graciously.

There are more. God has provided us all things we need for this life journey. Family and friends who journey with us in this world are God's precious blessings to us. Can you picture yourself without your family members and friends? I know our family and friendship are not good and harmonious and healthy as much as we wish. But I believe God's grace is at work in our midst.

Fairfield Grace church family and friends are God's precious blessings to all of us. Can you imagine your Christian life journey without Fairfield Grace family and friends? Do you deserve all these blessings? Do I? No, all these blessings are freely available to us by God's grace. Thanks be to God.

There are still more. We give thanks not only for our human family and friends, but also all those living creatures, animals and plants, and air, water, sun, moon, rivers, oceans and mountains on earth. Can you imagine your life without all the wonderful creation God has made and is still making? Can I?

One more note - we hallow God's name, we give reverence and honor to God, when we treat God's family - each another - properly.

After all, we take great pleasure when someone honors our children, and we take great offense when someone attacks them. Our children are an extension of us. It is the same with God.

One of the first Bible verses that any of us learned in Sunday School was "God is love." But we also read, "Beloved, let us love one another, because love is from God...Whoever does not love does not know God...Those who say 'I love God,' and hate their brothers or sisters are liars; for those who do not love a brother or sister whom they have seen cannot love God whom they have not seen." We concretely hallow, give reverence and honor to God's name, only when we extend that to God's own children, our brothers and sisters in Christ. Jesus told the twelve on his last night with them, "By this everyone will know you are my disciples, if you have love for one another."

"Our Father, who art in heaven, Hallowed be Thy name..."

May all of us hallow God's name by worshipping God in spirit and truth daily, by living with thanksgiving daily and by treating God's children with the love for them that we say we have for God.

Amen. Amen.