

# The prayer Jesus taught us

## Lesson 3 - Hallowed be your name

### 1 Introduction

We may use the name Father for God, but there must be no careless familiarity. His is a high and hallowed name, one to be employed with reverence and awe.

John Phillips, *Exploring the Gospel of Matthew*, p. 113:

This opens the series of three petitions with regards to God. The characteristic possessive adjective in the second person singular is used in the petitions: "your" name, "your" kingdom, "your" will. The theological passive in the first and third petitions should be noted: "holy be", "be done", implying "by you". The three petitions could therefore be rendered as "sanctify your name", "come and reign", "fulfill your will".

<http://www.christusrex.org/www1/pater/excursus.html>

Third, this God is not a man-made idol. He is the living God, who dwells in "heaven," and longs to see his sovereign and saving rule come to birth on "earth." This is in fact, a prayer for the kingdom of God to become fully present: not for God's people to be snatched away from earth to heaven, but for the glory and beauty of heaven to be turned into earthly reality as well, his very presence – will be held in high honor everywhere. The first half of the prayer is thus all about God. Prayer that doesn't start there is always in danger of concentrating on ourselves, and very soon it stops being prayer altogether and collapses into the random thoughts, fears and longings of our own minds.

N.T. Wright, *Matthew for Everyone*, p. 59

The order is significant. We are not to be so taken up with ourselves that we rush into God's presence and give him a shopping list of our needs. His name is to be hallowed: that is to say, we long for his name, or character, to have top place in the world and in people's hearts. 'Lord, may we make you number One.'

Michael Green, *The Message of Matthew* (IVP, 1988) p. 100

The first petition echoes the opening of the *Qaddish*, a Jewish doxology usually recited following prayer at synagogue services. The *Qaddish* begins, "Exalted and hallowed be his great name." However, there is some controversy as to the date of origin of the *Qaddish*, as reference of its use in liturgy didn't occur until around 600 C.E., well after the Lord's Prayer was included in the Gospel of Matthew. Some scholars still contend the Lord's Prayer does borrow from the *Qaddish*.

<https://mrstorage.wordpress.com/2010/03/18/a-brief-exegetical-study-of-the-lord's-prayer/>

The phrase has a parallel in the Jewish kaddish prayer: "May thy great name be magnified and hallowed." [...] In later Judaism the phrase is used in connection with suffering martyrdom for religious purposes.

Daniel J. Harrington SJ, *The Gospel of Matthew* (Liturgical Press, 2007) p. 95

The intimacy of our Father is balanced and supplemented by the reverent desire that His name, i.e. His nature and being, be treated as holy". The name is the revelation of the character of the person who bore it. (Exodus 3 v14) The Biblical names of God can be listed as general, covenant and special. The prayer is that people may acknowledge and keep holy God's name (Isaiah 29 v.23; Ezekiel 36 v.23) in their lives, in the church and in the world. The children, by the help of the Spirit, start to bear the Father's likeness. (1 Peter 1 v13)

Vivienne Stacey, *Reflections on Surah Fatiha and the Lord's Prayer*, 1986

The Father's name is holy, sacred: we enter into relationship in the "secret place" with a sacred kingdom, one that is holy. God's "name" is like that of a house, such as Herod's or Caesar's. But this is a different sort of a kingdom that has its own rules and laws in which we participate and in whose house we are children by adoption; it is a holy kingdom.

<https://dailyexegesis.blogspot.nl/2011/09/our-father-in-heaven-lords-prayer.html>

The sanctifying of God's name, as in the clause "hallowed be your name" (Luke 11:2// Matt. 6:9), is not a major theme in the Gospels. Where it does occur — as, for example, in Mary's exclamation, "Holy is his name!" (Luke 1:49); or Jesus' prayer, "Father, glorify your name," and the Father's response, "I have glorified it, and will glorify it again" (John 12:28) — it appears as a natural, and typically Jewish, affirmation of God's holiness and majesty. But the hallowing or sanctifying of God's name is thoroughly consistent with the sort of work that Jesus conceived himself to be undertaking.

N.T. Wright, *The Lord's Prayer as a Paradigm of Christian Prayer* (Originally published in *Into God's Presence: Prayer in the New Testament*, ed. R.L. Longenecker. 2001, Grand Rapids, Eerdmans, 132-54. Reproduced by permission of the author.) , on <http://ntwrightpage.com/2016/07/12/the-lords-prayer-as-a-paradigm-of-christian-prayer/>

## 2 Your name

170. What is God's Name?

God's Name refers to his personal being – his nature, his character, his power, and his purposes. The Name God reveals to Moses is "I AM WHO I AM" or simply "I AM" (Exodus 3:6, 14). This Name means that he alone is truly God, he is the source of his own being, he is holy and just, and he cannot be measured or defined by his creatures.

171. Does God have other names?

Yes. Through the person and ministry of Jesus Christ, God's Name is also revealed to be "the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit" (Matthew 28:19).

*To be a Christian; an Anglican Catechism (Canada) pp. 75-76*

The foundation of the kingdom is that the Father's name should be hallowed. [...] Ultimately it is the purpose of the kingdom that the Father should receive all honour.

Michael Goldsmith, *Matthew on Mission*, p. 64

In Hebrew the name means much more than merely the name by which a person is called. The name means the whole character of the person as it is revealed and known to us. Psalms 9:10 says, "Those who know thy name put their trust in thee." That means far more than knowing that God's name is Jehovah. It means that those who know the whole character and mind and heart of God will gladly put their trust in him. (iii) We must note particularly the order of the Lord's Prayer. Before anything is asked for ourselves, God and his glory, and the reverence due to him, come first. Only when we give God his place will other things take their proper place.

William Barclay, *Luke*, p. 143

It is the name among the Semites that which constitutes an individual, at least the aspirations which have been imposed upon and define the quality of the individual. But if among humanity there are many who do no honour to their names, God realizes in full the meaning of His Name. Among the divine names there is also "the Holy One". And God is truly Holy inasmuch as He transcends earthly realities; He is removed from the ineffectual and evil world, for He is absolutely powerful and good. One remembers besides that the Jews speak reverently of the "Name of God" in order to avoid pronouncing explicitly "God" Himself.

<http://www.christusrex.org/www1/pater/excursus.html>

This petition is a call to honour the name of God. In biblical times, one's name was more than just what you were called; it defined your very being. Therefore, the name of God stands for the very character and nature of his being, as he said in Exodus 3:14, "I am who I am."

<https://mrstorage.wordpress.com/2010/03/18/a-brief-exegetical-study-of-the-lord's-prayer/>

In Hebrew the name does not mean simply the name by which a person is called-- John or James, or whatever the name may be. In Hebrew the name means the nature, the character, the personality of the person in so far as it is known or revealed to us. That becomes clear when we see how the Bible writers use the expression.

The Psalmist says, "Those who know thy name put their trust in thee" ([Psalms 9:10](#)).

Quite clearly that does not mean that those who know that God is called Jehovah will trust in him. It means that those who know what God is like, those who know the nature and the character of God will put their trust in him. The Psalmist says, "Some boast of chariots and some of horses, but we boast of the name of the Lord our God" ([Psalms](#)

20:7). Quite clearly that does not mean that in a time of difficulty the Psalmist will remember that God is called Jehovah. It means that at such a time some will put their trust in human and material aids and defences, but the Psalmist will remember the nature and the character of God; he will remember what God is like, and that memory will give him confidence.

Barclay, *Matthew*, pp. 205-210

### **3 Hallowed**

#### **3.1 The verb**

"Hallowed be Thy name"--it is probably true that of all the petitions of the Lord's Prayer this is the one whose meaning we would find it most difficult to express. First, then, let us concentrate on the actual meaning of the words.

The word which is translated hallowed is a part of the Greek verb *hagiazesthai*. The Greek verb *hagiazesthai* is connected with the adjective *hagios* and means to treat a person or a thing as *hagios*. *Hagios* is the word which is usually translated holy; but the basic meaning of *hagios* is different or separate. A thing which is *hagios* is different from other things. A person who is *hagios* is separate from other people. So a temple is *hagion* because it is different from other buildings. An altar is *hagios* because it exists for a purpose different from the purpose of ordinary things. God's day is *hagios* because it is different from other days. A priest is *hagios* because he is separate from other men. So, then, this petition means, "Let God's name be treated differently from all other names; let God's name be given a position which is absolutely unique." But there is something to add to this. In Hebrew the name does not mean simply the name by which a person is called-- John or James, or whatever the name may be. In Hebrew the name means the nature, the character, the personality of the person in so far as it is known or revealed to us. That becomes clear when we see how the Bible writers use the expression.

Barclay, *Matthew*, pp. 205-210

#### **3.2 Adding to God's holiness?**

[When we realise God's holiness, we ] then receive his fear into our mind and lead upright and blameless lives. By this we become holy ourselves, and we may be able to be near unto the Holy God. [...] The prayer is therefore, "May your name be kept holy in us, in our minds and wills." This is the significance of the word "hallowed". If a person says, "Our Father, hallowed be your name", he is not requesting any addition to be made to God's holiness. He rather asks that he may possess such a mind and faith to feel that his name is honourable and holy.

Cyril of Alexandria, *Commentary on Luke, Homily 72*

Krister Stendahl argues this petition is not meant as a call to honour the name of God, but rather is an acknowledgement that his name is already hallowed. This hallowing took place through Jesus' action in stories such as his triumphal entry into Jerusalem, as told in Matthew 21:1-17, among others.

<https://mrstorage.wordpress.com/2010/03/18/a-brief-exegetical-study-of-the-lord's-prayer/>

This clause is not a request. This is not a petition to the King but a statement to the fact. The kingdom citizen is proclaiming the greatness of their sovereign God to all creation to include themselves. Holding the name of the Father in reverence the worshipper demonstrates their God is holy. He is completely other and not like anything to be compared to in all of creation. God is not to be seen as being bigger or stronger than man because it is not a quantitative comparison but a qualitative comparison. He is completely distinct from His creation. The Glory of the Father is to be sought by all of creation therefore it would be appropriate that a worshipper would come to praise even His name.

*Exegesis of The Lord's Prayer* Matthew 6:9-13, online on <http://nilnisiverum.blogspot.nl/2010/11/exegesis-of-lords-prayer-matthew-69-13.html>

### **3.3 Eschatological overtones**

According to the Bible the Name of God could and could not be sanctified (i.e. profaned) by man or God.

Humanity sanctifies the Name by observing His commandments. They profane His Name when they transgress it. Lev 22,31.32 states "Observe therefore my commandments and put them in practice. I am YHWH. Do not profane my Holy Name because I am Holy in the midst of the children of Israel." Note the two parallel forms: the progressive "observe" and "I am Holy"; and the antithetic "observe" and "do not profane".

For God, to sanctify (not profane) His Name is manifested by punishing the Israelites guilty of idolatry in Egypt and then liberating them. In this way the pagan Egyptians could not accuse Him of being impotent in helping His persecuted people oppressed by Pharaoh (Ex 20, 5-12). God also sanctifies His Name (not profane) by intervening to punish the guilty pagans. In this way the idolaters see His power (Ex 39, 1-7).

Finally God will one day sanctify His Name in a definite and complete way when He purifies the Israelites of their sins, giving them a new heart and a new spirit, so that they may observe His laws (Ex 36, 22-28). Christians know that God had already initiated the eschatological era. By intervening salvifically, He reveals Himself as Holy (He revealed the Holiness of His Name) in the Son, and has given us His Holy Spirit. In adhering to God who has revealed Himself as Holy, and awaiting to see Him in all His glory and power, Christians seek to reveal God as Holy, to sanctify Him by observing His Laws and thus rendering Him glory.

<http://www.christusrex.org/www1/pater/excursus.html>

God revealed himself to Moses in the burning bush, speaking his name and giving it as the main reason why he could be trusted to bring the children of Israel out of captivity (cf. Exod. 3:13-16). And it was the honor and reputation of YHWH's name that Moses would subsequently use as the fulcrum in his great prayer for Israel's forgiveness after the episode of the golden calf — a theme that was also picked up by Joshua after the debacle at Ai (cf. Exod. 32:11-14; Josh. 7-9). The sanctifying of God's name, in other words, has to do once more not merely with God's own reputation in, as it were, a private capacity, but with the fact that he is committed to and in covenant with the people of Israel. To pray that God's name be hallowed, therefore, is to pray that the Exodus may not only happen but be followed through to its proper conclusion — that is, that Israel be redeemed not only from the original slavery of Egypt, but also from the sin and rebellion that keeps her from arriving and safely settling in the promised land.

N.T. Wright, *The Lord's Prayer as a Paradigm of Christian Prayer* (Originally published in *Into God's Presence: Prayer in the New Testament*, ed. R.L. Longenecker. 2001, Grand Rapids, Eerdmans, 132-54. Reproduced by permission of the author.) , on <http://ntwrightpage.com/2016/07/12/the-lords-prayer-as-a-paradigm-of-christian-prayer/>

It is encouraging to know that we can ask God to fulfill this need. Behind the passive voice of the "hallowed be" is the active God who is asked to do the hallowing. [...] The first petition means: "may the Holy One secure before the entire world... in a final and decisive way the holiness appropriate to his name (cd. Isa 29:23; John 12:28), to which, then, human beings will respond with praise and exaltation.

Frederik Dale Bruner, *Matthew: A Commentary. Volume 1 The Christbook, Matthew 1-12* (Eerdmans 1987) p. 298

The prayer is a petition (it is not a doxology like "Blessed be your name!"), and the petition asks God in the most reverent possible way, "Please make your real identity known so that we and others will recognize and honor you as you really are." "Please sanctify your dishonored name in the world."

We are not taught to pray: "Let us hallow your name," though by extension this meaning can be present (Jerome, Augustine Chrysostom, and Luther all place believers nearer the center of the petition). But in none of the first three petitions are we mentioned at all; human beings are put one remove away, and we ask the only one who can really hallow God's name, bring God's kingdom, and enable God's will to do so. The prayer is theocentric. We not only ask God to be God; we ask God to cause God to be God.

[...]

"Leave to God the privilege of knowing himself; for it is he only who is able to bear witness [to] himself who knows himself by himself alone. (Hilary of Poitiers)

[...] Each of the petitions, then, [...] asks for the establishment of the Kingdom of God by God for us, not by us for God. [...] [That] the Father reveal himself in his glory. [The prayer] has as its goal the eschatological and universal revelation of God's power and redemptive activity.

Frederik Dale Bruner, *Matthew: A Commentary. Volume 1 The Christbook, Matthew 1-12* (Eerdmans 1987) p. 299

### **3.4 That we treat God as holy**

172. What does "hallowed" mean?

Hallowed means to be treated as holy, set apart, and sacred. To hallow God's name is to honor him as holy.

173. How can you hallow God's name?

God is King of all the earth, and I pray that all people everywhere may revere and worship him, according to his revelation in Christ and the Holy Scriptures. (Psalms 2; 24; 47; 96; 99; Isaiah 40:12-20; John 14:8-9; Acts 4:8-12; 2 Corinthians 4:6; Revelation 1, 21:9ff.)

174. How does God answer this petition?

God gives grace that I may honor his holy Name and Word in private and public worship, and he enables me to walk humbly with him, my God. (Micah 6:8; Matthew 28:18-20)

175. How else can you hallow God's Name?

I can hallow God's Name in word and deed by living an obedient and ordered life as his child, as a citizen of his Kingdom, and as one who seeks his glory. (Hebrews 13:15-16)

*To be a Christian; an Anglican Catechism (Canada) pp. 75-76*

Former Archbishop of Canterbury Rowan Williams explains this phrase as a petition that people may look upon God's name (which is his word, his presence) as holy, as something that inspires awe and reverence, and that they may not trivialize it by making God a tool for their purposes, to put others down or make themselves feel safe. He sums up the meaning of the phrase by saying: "Understand what you're talking about when you're talking about God, this is serious, this is the most wonderful and frightening reality that we could

Rowan Williams, *The Lord's Prayer* ([http://www.bbc.co.uk/religion/religions/christianity/prayer/lordsprayer\\_1.shtml](http://www.bbc.co.uk/religion/religions/christianity/prayer/lordsprayer_1.shtml))

So, then, let us take these two things and put them together. Hagiazesthai (**Greek #37**), which is translated to hallow, means to regard as different, to give a unique and special place to. The name is the nature, the character, the personality of the person in so far as it is known and revealed to us. Therefore, when we pray "Hallowed be Thy name," it means, "Enable us to give to thee the unique place which thy nature and character deserve and demand."

Is there, then, one word in English for giving to God the unique place which his nature and character demand? There is such a word, and the word is reverence. This petition is a prayer that we should be enabled to reverence God as God deserves to be revered. In all true reverence of God there are four essentials.

Barclay, *Matthew*, pp. 205-210

### **3.5 That we become more holy**

We say, "Hallowed be Your name; "not that we wish for God that He may be hallowed by our prayers, but that we beseech of Him that His name may be hallowed in us. But by whom is God sanctified, since He Himself sanctifies? Well, because He says, "Be holy, even as I am holy," we ask and entreat, that we who were sanctified in baptism may continue in that which we have begun to be. And this we daily pray for; for we have need of daily sanctification, that we who daily fall away may wash out our sins by continual sanctification. And what the sanctification is which is conferred upon us by the condescension of God, the apostle declares, when he says, "neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind, nor thieves, nor deceivers, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God. And such indeed were you; but you are washed; but you are justified; but you are sanctified in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, and by the Spirit of our God." He says that we are sanctified in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, and by the Spirit of our God. We pray that this sanctification may abide in us and because our Lord and Judge warns the man that was healed and quickened by Him, to sin no more lest a worse thing happen unto him, we make this supplication in our constant prayers, we ask this day and night, that the sanctification and quickening which is received from the grace of God may be preserved by His protection.

Cyprian, *Treatises, On the Lord's Prayer* 12

The prayer to hallow Gods name corresponds with what Jesus has previously taught: "Let your light so shine before others that they may see your good works and glorify your Father who is in heaven." In effect he is saying, "Enable us to live so purely that through us all may glorify you. It points us again to mature self- control, that we may present to all a life so irreprehensible that every one of those who observe may offer to the Lord the praise due to him for this."

Chrysostom, *The Gospel of Matthew, Homily* 19.4

Therefore is it said, "Hallowed by Thy name." This we also ask of Him that His name may be hallowed in us; for holy is it always. And how is His name hallowed in us except while it makes us holy? For once we were not holy, and we are made holy by His name: but He is always holy, and His name always holy. It is for ourselves, not for God, that we pray. For we do not wish well to God, to whom no ill can ever happen. But we wish

what is good for ourselves, that His holy name may be hallowed, that that which is always holy may be hallowed in us.

St Augustine, *Sermon On the Lord's Prayer* 7.4

It can be reasoned from this clause that blasphemy is against God's holy name. It brings men under further condemnation to slander the only name that brings salvation to them.

Men in their blasphemies drag the name of their saving King in the dirt and their offense only adds to the already existing debt they have incurred. With their blasphemies men have taken God as He has revealed himself and rejected Him. In their rebellion, men have made a battle formation against an incomprehensible force. In anger they sin against the King committing high treason and condemning themselves by their heinous actions.

*Exegesis of The Lord's Prayer* Matthew 6:9-13, online on <http://nilnisiverum.blogspot.nl/2010/11/exegesis-of-lords-prayer-matthew-69-13.html>

You are to understand that your Father's Name is to be "hallowed," or set apart as sacred. Among other things, this means that you trust the Father by obeying His commandments and making daily choices in the light of His reality.

You do not "profane" your Father's Name by witnessing to the world around you that He is not who is really is -- namely, the LORD to whom every knee shall bow and every tongue confess. You are to bear witness to His Name by sanctifying it, by honoring it, and by living in the awe of God every moment of your time of sojourn here on earth. [http://www.hebrew4christians.com/Prayers/The\\_Lord\\_s\\_Prayer\\_1/the\\_lord\\_s\\_prayer\\_1.html](http://www.hebrew4christians.com/Prayers/The_Lord_s_Prayer_1/the_lord_s_prayer_1.html)

### **3.6 Missionary content**

"Hallowed be Thy name": in this first petition of the Our Father "we pray that God may be known, loved, honored and served by everyone and by ourselves in particular." This means that we want "unbelievers to come to a knowledge of the true God, heretics to recognize their errors, schismatics to return to the unity of the Church, sinners to be converted and the righteous to persevere in doing good." By this first petition, our Lord is teaching us that 'we must desire God's glory more than our own interest and advantage.' This hallowing of God's name is attained "by prayer and good example and by directing all our thoughts, affections and actions towards Him" (St. Pius X Catechism, 290-293).

Navarre Bible, *Luke* 11:2

By uttering this petition the person who by grace has been brought into fellowship with the Father calls upon everyone to share this experience with him and to exalt this glorious God. He is saying, as it were, "O magnify Jehovah with me, and let us exalt his name together" (Ps 34:3)

William Hendriksen, *Luke*, p. 609