

Prayer of the Day:

O God, the strength of all who trust in you, mercifully hear our prayers. Be gracious to us in our weakness and give us strength to keep Your Name Holy in all we say and do; through Jesus Christ, your Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

Verse of the Day:

Hallowed be your name

What does this mean?

God's name is certainly holy by itself, but we pray in this petition that we too may keep it holy.

How is God's Name kept holy?

God's name is kept holy when his Word is taught in its truth and purity, and we as children of God lead holy lives according to it. Help us to do this, dear Father in heaven! But whoever teaches and lives contrary to God's Word dishonors God's name among us. Keep us from doing this, dear Father in heaven!

Sermon:

"Hallowed be Your Name." These four words comprise the first of seven petitions that we raise to our Father in heaven as we pray the prayer Jesus taught us. Hallow is simply the fancier King Jamesy way of saying holy. So the prayer is rather simple in itself, "Father, may Your Name be holy."

But therein lies our first question. God is already holy, perfect, without sin. One cannot be holier. As the old saying goes, "Close only counts with horseshoes and hand grenades." Something is perfect or it is not. Something is holy or it is stained by sin. And even if that were not the case, sinful human beings certainly wouldn't be the ones to make something holier. But then that's the point of the prayer, is it not? Luther wrote *God's name is certainly holy by itself, but we pray in this petition that we too may keep it holy.*

Ah, but then we've heard these words before. The Second Commandment as we studied last Summer simply stated it in the negative rather than the positive, "*You shall not misuse the Name of the Lord Your God.*" There we considered "name" not so much in the sense of George or Carl but rather in the wider sense of the reputation which so often associates with the names we are familiar with. In this sense, it's not just Yahweh, Jehovah, Jesus, or one of the countless other names given to God in the Bible but all that God does and is. In a very real way, we can say God's Name isn't just those names and His reputation but the Word of our God then which informs us of Him and directs our lives in Him.

So this prayer is not for an already holy God to somehow be holier, but rather that You and I would recognize all that our God is and does, hold that truth out in the world around us, learn it, speak it, live it! Again Luther wrote, *God's name is kept holy when his Word is taught in its truth and purity, and we as children of God lead holy lives according to it. Help us to do this, dear Father in heaven! But whoever teaches and lives contrary to God's Word dishonors God's name among us. Keep us from doing this, dear Father in heaven!*

So this prayer is for our pastors and our teachers. They need these prayers, trust me they do. For this is a prayer for faithfulness, faithfulness in the fury of the storm which rages around and within.

TEXT: 1st Petition (NIV84)

⁹ "This, then, is how you should pray: " 'Our Father in heaven, **hallowed be your name**,
Matthew 6:9

He said to them, "When you pray, say:
" 'Father, **hallowed be your name**, your kingdom come. Luke 11:2

May the Word be taught in its truth and purity. Sounds so simple but then comes the temptation. I know what the world thinks about the Word of God. In fact, I can point you to every doctrine that causes trouble within it, some you probably haven't even thought about yet. Pastors and teachers in the church, well, we are ambassadors of absolute truths, in a world where only the Sith (the evil dark side of the force in Star Wars) deal in absolutes, and while no one has swung a laser sword at me, to say that hearts and minds, souls don't carry the weight of the baggage of it all would be far less than true. Dear Father, Hallowed be Your Name.

But then we pray not only for those who publicly proclaim God's Name but for all of God's people upon whom God's Name was emblazoned in Baptism. This Father's Day, we pray for the parents who seek to be faithful in the fury of the storm as they raise children in a world that would schedule every event and activity over worship times, who stand on the frontlines of the battle against sin as they shepherd their children day in and day out. Who want nothing more than to see their children happy, healthy, and successful in this world and the world to come. And so Satan twists and pits those twin desires against each other at every turn. We pray for children, who in their innocence and naivete so wonderfully seek to hold out their Savior but who often find the backlash of a world is present even on playgrounds and basketball courts. We pray for every single Christian struggling to carry the Crosses of Christ, wherever and whenever faithfulness would meet the fury of sin.

And then ... and then, it is good for us to acknowledge, that while God's Name is certainly holy by itself, we never are. So often, as I yearn to be faithful, I see failure in the fury of the storm. So often I bare not the burden of the cross but of the guilt which comes from throwing it to the ground in hopes of a moment of worldly acceptance. I sin. But This to is all the more reason to pray this prayer. For as Paul told the Romans in our second lesson this is why the Name is so important to us. It's why we cling to the message of Scripture and proclaim its absolute truth. For the greatest of these truths is simply this, *"Everyone who calls on the Name of the Lord will be saved."*

This was the glory of the lesson from Ezekiel as well. When Israel had utterly failed in hallowing the Name of God, He hallowed it Himself, and how? By taking sin-filled people and cleansing them and calling them His own. By placing His Spirit in them and moving them to follow His decrees and laws. By saving them from their uncleanness, their sin they might be His own granting a new heart, a new spirit, one that would hallow Him.

This God has done for all of us. Through the holy precious blood of Christ spilled on the cross, you are cleansed! In the holy waters of Baptism, God's Spirit took up residence in Your heart and mind! You are God's child! In His Supper, strength, strength as we recall what Christ so willingly did for us, His body, His blood! Strength as we actually receive them in with an under bread and wine granting all that they earned and deserved, forgiveness for my failures at faithfulness, a new life to devote to Him now as I live in a world that needs Him, and hope, the hope of salvation when simply by my presence in heaven, a sinner made saint by the work of God and none of my own, His Name will be Hallowed for all eternity.

Brothers and sisters what an opportunity then. What an opportunity to let our lights shine now. What a prayer for evangelism as God's faithful people faithfully hold out His message of absolute forgiveness to a world that desperately needs it. What a privilege that sinners like us would be made part of the work that as we let our lights shine before humanity, it might see God working in us and praise, glorify, hallow His Name!

Four simple words, but their depth cannot be fathomed. Within them resides the whole of Christian life, the brilliance of God's love for us, the entirety of God's Holy Word, His Name. So we bow our heads and pray, *Our Father, Who art in Heaven, hallowed be Your Name! Amen!*