

## **Robert Vannoy, The Lord's Prayer, Message #1**

“Hallowed be thy name”

It's been some time since I have spoken to you in chapel at this period in the morning. If any of you recall that far back, I began to discuss with you the Lord's prayer contained in Matthew chapter 6 verses 9 and following. I mentioned in that particular chapel period that the Lord gave this prayer as a model to his disciples to guide them in their own prayer life. Verse 9, of chapter 6, says, “After this manner therefore pray ye.” Certainly not that we must always pray only in the words which the Lord has taught his disciples, but that there were certain features in this prayer that we can explore in its content that have meaning as an example for our own praying. And we discussed in the last chapel the preface to the prayer “Our father who art in heaven.” I mentioned that the prayer is beautiful in its structure with that preface and six petitions. Three petitions concerning God: his name, his kingdom and his will. Then three petitions concerning ourselves: our daily bread, our forgiveness, and our deliverance from temptation. Then the conclusion is a praise to God “for thine is the kingdom, the power and the glory forever.” So you have the preface and the conclusion, the two sets of petitions.

This morning I'd like to turn your attention to the first of the set of petitions, expressed in the words in the latter part of verse nine of Matthew chapter six, “hallowed be thy name.” I think that so often when we speak words such as are contained in this very short phrase, we speak them sort of understanding what they mean, but not in any real well thought out clear fashion. We get a certain connotation from the word hallowed, “hallowed be thy name,” but often not in any well-formed idea of exactly what is being said.

When we pray this petition, if we use these words, what are we really asking for-- “Hallowed be thy name”? What does the Bible mean by the name of God? What does that expression mean? What does the word “hallowed” mean?

I'd like to initially look at those two elements of this petition separately then put them together to see what we can come up with as far as the significance of what is being requested in this particular petition. First of all, what is meant by the name of God when

we say, “hallowed be thy name”? Certainly for background for this particular part of the petition we must go to the Old Testament. When we come to the Old Testament, and also the New Testament, we find that in biblical times, in the biblical world, we find that there was a much closer connection to one’s name and one’s person. Today one’s name is a little more than a label, an identification, for many of us. Meaning for names as far as characterizing the person involved is something that we pay little or no attention to. But when we come to the Bible, we find that frequently there is a close connection to the individual person and the name which he has.

Often you find that God takes the name of an individual and gives him a new name; a name that has much greater significance in connection to that person and that person’s function. We think of Joshua whose original name was Hoshea – it was just changed very little to “Jehoshua,” meaning “the Lord is the deliverer.” That is Joshua who led the Israelites in the conquest of the land, it was not originally Hoshea. It was “the Lord who delivered” the people. You think of Elijah, who stood there on Mt. Carmel and challenged the prophets of Baal. His name means “my God is Yahweh.” And you can think of numerous individuals in the Old Testament – Jacob, “the deceiver” is changed to Israel, “one who has power with God.” Then you come into the New Testament – Simon is changed into Peter. There are many indications of this close connection between significance of a name and the person who bears the name in the biblical record.

God reveals his own name in a very solemn way to Moses way back in Exodus chapter three. You will remember that when Moses was out of Egypt in Sinai, the Lord appeared to him and told him to go back, lead his children out of Egypt. He says, “who shall I say has sent me to do this?” And the Lord says “Tell them, ‘I am that I am’ has sent you, you must say unto the children of Israel” (Exodus 3:13f) “I am has sent me unto you.” Certainly we have something there of the significance of that four letter phrase. The proper name of the God of Israel “Yahweh.” He is the God of living reality, of living presence. “I am that I am has sent you,” not some abstract idea, but a personal being who is present with his people is who sent Moses to deliver them.

So there is special significance to names as we find them within the Scripture,

both with individuals, but even with God himself as he gives the name “Yahweh” to his people. Other names for God: “Emmanuel” meaning, “God with us,” “Jesus” coming from the word “to save”, El Shaddai is “God almighty.”

But here in Matthew 6, to get back to our petition, the interesting thing is that the expression is “hallowed be thy name,” but no specific name is given. It just says, “hallowed be thy name.” What is the meaning of that? You will find in Scripture in numerous places references to the name of God. Not a specific name, but to the name of God itself. Berkoff in his *Systematic Theology* says of this “this stands for the whole manifestation of God in his relation to his people. So that it becomes synonymous with God. When we say the name of God, we are speaking of God in his self-revelation to his people. God as we know him – not a title, God in his self-revelation.

You find references “to the name of God” in such places as a few scattered illustrations as in Isaiah 20:37 – “Behold the name of the Lord cometh from far, burning with his anger, and the burden of it is heavy, his lips are full of indignation. And his tongue like a devouring fire.” Here God comes to punish. That is God himself in his self-revelation, and he comes to do that, but the expression is “behold the name of the Lord cometh, burning with his anger.”

In Deuteronomy 12 you have that interesting chapter spoken on the plains of Moab concerning the future building of the temple when the Israelites come to the land of Canaan. And Moses says in Deuteronomy 12:5 “Unto the place in which the Lord your God shall choose out of all your tribes to put his name there even unto his habitation shall ye seek, and thither thou shalt come.” There was to be a place in Israel where God would put his name. In Deuteronomy 12 verse 11: “there shall be a place which the Lord shall choose to cause his name to dwell there.”

If you turn over to 1 Kings chapter eight at the time of the dedication of the temple many years later under Solomon, Solomon offers a prayer to God on that occasion. And in verse 27 of 1 Kings chapter 8 he says, “Behold the heaven of heavens cannot contain thee; how much less this house that I have built? Yet have thou respect on thy servant, and to his supplication, Oh Lord my God, to hearken unto the cry and to the prayer,

which thy servant prayeth before thee today. That thine eyes may be open toward this house night and day, even toward the place of which thou hast said, ‘My name shall be there,’ that thou mayest hearken unto the prayer which thy servant shall make toward this place.” There is a very real sense in which there is a visible manifestation of the presence of the Lord in the temple. God’s name dwelt there. God was there in his self-revelation to his people. His name was there. Proverbs 18:10: “The name of the Lord is a strong tower, the righteous run into it, and are safe.” God in his self-revelation is a strong tower.

And then over in the New Testament in John 17:6, I think is a very significant reference in which the presence of God in Christ involves the manifestation of his name. The fullest manifestation of his name. “I have manifested your name unto the men which you gave me out of the world: they were yours, and you gave them to me; and they have kept your word.” Christ was the manifestation of the name of God, the self-revelation of God himself in Christ. So the name of God stands in relation to the full manifestation of God to his people. It is God in his self-revelation.

Now we come to the other part of the petition “hallowed.” “Hallowed be thy name!” In the Greek you look at the word “hallow,” and you find that it is a member of a family of words that are translated, “to be holy, sanctified, sanctification,” and words of that sort. And here in this petition the word can be translated as “sanctified” or “make holy” your name. Now what do we mean when we say that? What is the sense of that? We usually think of holiness as freed from sin, I believe. Someone who is holy is someone who is free from sin. And certainly that is true, and an important part of its meaning, but it’s only a secondary part. The basic idea of the root “holy” is “separation, or apartness.” Apartness from evil or sin, yes that is one aspect of it. God is certainly holy in that sense. But more basically I think when we speak of the holiness of God, we are speaking of his apartness, his separation from the creature, from the created reality. God is the creator. Everything else is created. God is separate. He is apart from that which is created. So God’s holiness is all that by which he is distinguished and distinct from creation. In its most fundamental sense, the holiness of God is all that by which he is distinguished and distinct from his creation.

Therefore holiness you might say is an attribute of attributes. When you speak of the attributes of God, you speak of all his attributes. God is holy in his love, he is holy in his justice, he is holy in his goodness, his glory, his truth. He is holy in all those things; he is totally set apart. It is the totality of his majesty and glory that is referred to when we speak of the holiness of God. So that to say that God is holy means that he is uniquely God. He is the exalted one.

Now, we come back to our petition: what does the phrase, then, “hallowed be thy name” mean? It certainly is not that we can add anything to the holiness of God. There is no way in which we can add to the holiness of God. But I believe that what is being said here in this petition “hallowed be thy name” is “set yourself apart as God before men.” “Reveal your power, show your righteousness, show your love and mercy, show yourself to be God.” In all of his works, God shows himself to be the holy one, the exalted one. And in doing that, he sanctifies himself. He sets himself apart as God. And I think that is the fundamental idea in this petition “hallowed be thy name.”

Is this petition saying something that takes place completely outside of ourselves? When we pray this petition are we to be merely spectators? Doesn't this involve us in any way? I don't think that's a necessary conclusion either because man's possibility to “hallow” or “sanctify” God's name comes as a reaction to God's action. God sanctifies his name in his works. We sanctify his name by recognizing, or helping others to recognize God in all his works by obeying and submitting to the word of God; and by keeping his commandments. I think in that sense, God's name is either hallowed or desecrated by our daily conduct.

In Romans 2:24, Paul is there speaking of the Jewish people, and he says, “thou that maketh a boast of the law, through breaking the law you dishonor God, for the name of God is blasphemed among the Gentiles through you.” The Jews prophesied to be God's people, but their lives blasphemed and desecrated the name of God. We certainly sanctify God's name by recognizing and helping others to recognize God in all his works and being obedient to his commandment and obeying his will. So that when we pray this petition “hallowed be thy name” we are saying I believe first of all “show your majesty

and holiness to the world.” And secondly, “let us be instruments through which honor and praise and you glorify your name as it is manifested in your works in us.”

I think there is a real lesson in this in itself for your praying. Jesus said “after this manner, pray ye”. Our first petition is “let thy name be hallowed.” And not just first in order of the prayer. It is that, and I think that’s significant, but first in our whole outlook on things, in our whole world view, our whole concept of things. Because this asks for that which is first in importance. It asks for God’s glory, not for our daily bread, for peace on earth, for certain interests which we have. “Hallowed be *thy* name.”

Now certainly Christ is our great example in this, at the time of his great trial. In John 12:27f, Jesus says, “Now is my soul troubled; and what shall I say? Father, save me from this hour, but for this cause I came to this hour. Father, glorify thy name. Then came there a voice from heaven saying both I have glorified it and will glorify it again.” Christ’s concern in the hour of his trouble was that the name of the Father be glorified. We pray so often in the wrong manner. Our need is I think to see life theo-centrally. It is difficult. We are so concerned with our own situation, with our own lives, perhaps with our own church, our own family, our own country, that things tend to revolve around us. We need always to put first the name of God, and his glory. When we truly pray this then, we must be prepared for the results.

We find when we look in the Scripture that God does “hallow” his name. Look at the history of the people of Israel. Look at the history of the church. God hallows his name in judgment on his people when they turn away from him and at times in giving success to the enemies of God’s people as they become his instruments of judgment. He also hallows his name in blessing and redemption to his people when they obey him in judgment on their enemy. Now there are a couple possibilities involved in this, there’s a double line crossed. When God’s people turn away, there’s a judgment because God then hallows his name in that way. Think of the period of the cycles of turning away that resulted in judgment. Then Psalms, turning back to deliverance. Think of the captivity, Nebuchadnezzar, think of the threat of Assyria on Israel where God used the Assyrian as the rod of his anger to bring judgment on his people. And when the church today turns

away from God, or we as individuals turn away from God, and we pray this petition: “hallowed be thy name,” we can expect God’s hand of judgment upon us.

May we all sincerely ask God to hallow his name in our lives, realizing what we are saying, and experience in our own lives that reality of God’s presence within us as seen both in his blessing and in his judgment, and may God help each of us to respond in praise and in thanksgiving to the work of God in our own lives. Let us pray:

*Our Father, we thank you this morning that you are God, that you are holy in all your ways, in all your doings. We pray that you would give us a new vision of yourself, and give us a new perception of our own selves before you. And help us in our lives to respond to you in a way that is pleasing that we may experience your blessing and your peace. And we ask this in Jesus’ name, Amen.*

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