

## Teach Us to Pray: A Series Through the Lord's Prayer

### *Hallowed Be Your Name* (Matthew 6:9)

Preached by Pastor Jason Tarn at HCC on June 26, 2016

#### Introduction

- ❖ In the past few weeks we've been in a series on prayer looking at the Lord's Prayer. And we've mentioned already how the Lord's Prayer is intended to be a model prayer. It offers a pattern on which all our prayers should be based on. **The elements and priorities found here ought to be reflected in the prayers we pray.** Now most commentators divide the Prayer into six unique petitions: 1) Hallowed be your name. 2) Your kingdom come. 3) Your will be done. 4) Give us our daily bread. 5) Forgive our debts. 6) Lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil.
  
- ❖ **It's been pointed out by many that, in the Lord's Prayer, God and his concerns are given the priority.** Note how the first three petitions are Godward in their focus. Notice the repeated pronoun – *your* name, *your* kingdom, *your* will.
  - ▶ Of course it doesn't mean our needs are in any way ignored. Notice the shift in pronouns in the last three petitions – give *us*, forgive *us*, lead *us*, deliver *us*. There's nothing wrong with praying for *us* or even for *me*, so long as praying for *your* comes first. We just have to get our priorities straight when we pray.
  
- ❖ And that's convicting. Because if we're honest, most of us, when we pray, don't start off this way. **Our prayers usually fail to reflect the same priorities.** We start off with a litany of requests, usually personal but sometimes for the sake of others. So we petition. We intercede. We supplicate. It's all focused on us, on the pronoun *us*. And then at the very end, we suddenly shift to *your*. In *your* name we pray, Amen. And that's how we conclude. **But it seems as though we have it backwards. Our prayers start with us and end with God, when Jesus taught the exact opposite.**
  - ▶ In his book titled *Praying Backwards: Transform Your Prayer Life by Beginning in Jesus' Name*, Bryan Chapell address the concern and recommends we make a habit of starting our prayers focused on Jesus' name. In other words, **pray backwards**. He says, "*To pray backwards means we back away from making ourselves, our wishes, or our wants the primary concern of our prayers.*"<sup>1</sup> **It means to put the purposes of Jesus first.** And in the Lord's Prayer he make it clear that his highest priority, his greatest concern, his primary purpose – is for God's name to be hallowed.
  
- ❖ **That's consistent with the second most famous prayer Jesus ever prayed.** In his High Priestly Prayer in John 17, Jesus prays on behalf of his disciples just hours before he's betrayed and arrested. He already explained to them that he's going away (16:28), but he's leaving them in the world – a world that hates them (15:19), that'll persecute them (15:20) and possibly kill them (16:2). But he also promised to pray to his Father and to ask him to send another Helper, the Holy Spirit (14:16).

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<sup>1</sup> Bryan Chapell, *Praying Backwards* (Baker Books: 2005), pg. 27.

- ❖ So now in John 17, Jesus lifts his eyes to heaven and begins to pray for his disciples. And they're thinking, "Wow, Jesus is about to pray for me. He's about to ask his Father to help me and protect me in this evil world. He's so thoughtful. He's so considerate. He's so loving."
  - ▶ **But then he goes on for five verses without even mentioning his disciples. Instead he focuses on himself, asking to be glorified.** "*Father, the hour has come, glorify your Son that the Son may glorify you. . . . I glorified you on earth . . . now Father, glorify me in your own presence with the glory that I had with you before the world existed.*" (Jn. 17:1-5)
- ❖ That's how Jesus prays for those he loves. He starts with his glory and the glory of his Father. **So how does that match up with the way you pray for those you love?** What do you start with? Is it God's glory? Is it for his name to be hallowed? And what does that even mean? *Hallowed* sounds so archaic. We're not even sure that it means to hallow something, much less to hallow the name of God.
  - ▶ So I've broken down this message into three sections. First, we'll try to **apprehend** the meaning of this first petition. Second, we'll try to **appreciate** its significance and impact. Third, we'll try to **apply** this practically to our own prayer lives.

### Apprehending this Petition

- ❖ Let's begin by trying to apprehend, to comprehend, this petition. What is it actually asking for? **First consider the name.** Look at v9 again, "*Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name.*" Remember, that in ancient days, names were more than mere labels. Names weren't chosen for their novelty or for how cool they sound. Names were representative. By your name, we're really talking about your character, your reputation.
  - ▶ So to have a good name was greatly desired. That's why we read in Proverbs 22:1, "*A good name is to be chosen rather than great riches*". They didn't have credit ratings or police records or watch-lists back then. They was no other metric by which to judge your reliability or character besides your name. If you could maintain a good name in your community, it was more precious than gold. **So the focus on God's name has to do with his reputation. How he's viewed.**
- ❖ **Now what does it mean to hallow God's name, his reputation?** We don't use the word very often. You might hear someone speak of hallowed ground. That's how people describe Arlington cemetery or some other memorial. Or you've heard it used for a sports stadium that has a rich history. That's where Babe Ruth played. It's hallowed ground. In other words, regard it and treat it with a proper degree of respect or reverence.
  - ▶ **So to hallow a name (or a reputation) means to treat it with proper respect.** To give it its due honor. To literally make it holy, to set it apart. Now consider this as well, ancient Jews were so careful not to take God's name in vain that it was common to refer to him simply as "The Name" (cf. Lev. 24:11, 16). **So to ask for the Name to be hallowed is ultimately a petition for God himself to be hallowed.** For God, in all of his perfections, to be made holy.

- ❖ Now think about it. Obviously God is already holy whether we ever pray this prayer or not. **So instead of making him holy, it's better to say we're asking for God to be regarded as holy.** To be treated as holy. To be glorified and exalted as the most valuable, most precious, most cherished thing in all creation because that's who he is and what he deserves.
  
- ❖ **I find John Piper's illustration of a microscope and a telescope helpful to understand what it means to hallow God, to glorify God.** Piper says to think about how a microscope and telescope are similar in that both magnify objects, but they magnify in different ways.
  - ▶ How does a microscope magnify? It does so by distorting the image of an object to make something little look bigger than it really is. You look at an amoeba through a microscope and it suddenly looks huge. But in reality it's small.
    - Now how does a telescope magnify? It does the opposite. It magnifies by making huge things – that look little to the naked eye – look more like they really are. A star looks really small to the naked eye, but in reality it's huge! Only a telescope allows you to see more of that reality for what it really is.
  
- ❖ That's what we want when we pray for God and his name to be hallowed. To the naked eye, God looks small and insignificant. All the time people are going about their day without noticing him, without giving God a second thought. But in reality he's huge. He's immense. He's the most glorious, most beautiful being in all of reality. We just don't see it.
  - ▶ **So when we pray "Hallowed be your name" we're praying for God and his name to be magnified in our eyes – like in a telescope.** We're praying for the eyes of our hearts to be so opened that we see God more and more for who he really is. In fact, we want the whole world to have a clearer view of who God is. To finally regard him and to treat him as the Holy One above all else. That's our prayer.
  
- ❖ Now notice as well that in this petition we're not saying, "Let *us* hallow your name". As if it were our duty, our responsibility. **No, when we pray, "Hallowed be your name" we're asking the Father to hallow his own name. For God to do what only he can do.** Yes, we want to be part of his work in hallowing his name, but only he can make that happen.
  - ▶ And the fact is God is more than glad to do it. God is zealous for his holy name (Ezk. 39:25). **He is passionate about vindicating the honor of his name.** Let me give you a couple of examples in Scripture. In **Isaiah 48**, God tells Israel why he's been delaying punishment in spite of all their rebellion and idolatry. He make his reasons very clear in v9, "*<sup>9</sup>For my name's sake I defer my anger, for the sake of my praise I restrain it for you, that I may not cut you off. . . . <sup>11</sup>For my own sake, for my own sake, I do it, for how should my name by profaned? My glory I will not give to another.*"
    - Or consider **Ezekiel 36**. There God tells Ezekiel why he's going to bring the Israelites back from their exile. Listen to his reason in v22, "*<sup>22</sup>Therefore say to the house of Israel, Thus says the Lord God: It is not for your sake, O house of Israel, that I am about to act, but for the sake of my holy name, which you have profaned among the nations to which you came. <sup>23</sup>I will vindicate the holiness of my great name . . . and the nations will know that I am the LORD.*"

- ❖ **It's clear from Scripture that, above all else, God is passionate for his name.** He is committed to never let his name be profaned. And these verses demonstrate that nothing keeps him from hallowing his name. No degree of sin. No amount of rebellion. **No will of man could ever hinder God or dissuade him from doing whatever it takes to vindicate the holiness of his great name.** To hallow it as it deserves to be.
  - ▶ That means this is a prayer you can pray with complete confidence, knowing it will be granted exactly as you request. You can't say that about every prayer request. We know it's presumptuous – it's childish really – to think we'll get from God whatever we ask. But not so with this request. **To pray this first petition with complete confidence is actually a mark of maturity.**
    - If you pray hallowed be your name *in my work*; hallowed be your name *on my campus*; hallowed be your name *in my home, in my marriage*; hallowed be your name *in my ministry, in our church* – you can be sure that God will do it. **Because God is more committed and more zealous to hallow his name than you and I could ever be.**

### Appreciating this Petition

- ❖ The significance of that still might not sink in for you. I understand, so let's move on to our next section. Let me try to help you appreciate this petition and the impact it has on the rest of your prayer life and the Christian life as a whole.
  - ▶ Let's keep thinking about the priority here of this petition for God to hallow his name, and how it comes before you start asking for him to give us daily bread or to forgive us our sins. It comes first chronologically but also theologically.
    - **It's just another way of saying that, in our prayer life, adoration has to come before confession and supplication.** You've probably heard of the acrostic ACTS. It describes the four traditional elements of prayer: (A)doration, (C)onfession, (T)hanksgiving, (S)upplication.
- ❖ There's a good reason why adoration comes first. A good theological reason. **I think an explanation for why you're frustrated in prayer or why your prayer life feels tepid or dry is because of a lack of adoration.** Your jumping straight into confession or supplication, and you're only giving adoration a passing glance. "Hallowed be your name" has become little more than a way to introduce a prayer. As "In Jesus' name" is merely a way to close.
  - ▶ Think about it. Think about the man who struggles with viewing pornography but struggles even more with forgiveness. He prays, "Forgive me my debts", but he finds it hard to believe God would actually do it. What's the problem? He's skipped over adoration. **Before confession he first needs to reorient his heart, his priorities, his motivation to pray – around God and his glory.**
    - This is what I mean: If the hallowing of God's name becomes my greater desire, if it frames my prayer to be forgiven, then even if I struggle to believe God would ever forgive what I've done for *my* sake – at least I know God will forgive me for *his* sake, for the sake of his holy name that I bear as his child.

- ❖ And then there are those who say, "I know I failed. I know I've sinned. I've repented. I've asked God for forgiveness. And I'm pretty sure he has, but I just can't shake this guilty feeling. I can't seem to forgive myself."
  - ▶ The problem here is a failure of adoration. God is not hallowed in your heart. God and his pardon is not cherished above all else. There's something else you're hallowing. **You hallow something more than God, and it won't forgive you.** You know you've got God's forgiveness, but until this thing you've hallowed forgives you, you still feel guilty and unworthy.
  
- ❖ So for example, let's say the most important thing for you is your career, to achieve career success, to be greatly respected for what you do for work. Then that's what you truly hallow. Now imagine you do something that compromises your integrity because, in a moment of weakness, you're tempted to cheat or play dirty to get ahead of others at work, and let's say you're exposed. It backfires on you and you lose it all. You might confess and believe God forgives you, but if you still hallow your career and career success, then you can't shake your guilt because your career has yet to forgive you. And our careers can be very unforgiving.
  - ▶ **My point is that the reason you can't forgive yourself is because you've yet to hallow God.** Your career needs to be dethroned from its central place in your heart. Give that seat to God and God alone. When he's finally the most important, when you can honestly pray, "Hallowed be your name" because that's the true cry of your heart, then you'll have no problem saying, "Forgive us our debts". **You'll receive his pardon, and that'll be enough because that'll be what matters most to you.**
  
- ❖ Do you see how this works? Do you see the theological reason why adoration has to come first? It applies equally to supplication. **I think the frustration we face when our prayer requests go unanswered often comes down to a failure of adoration.** We just straight into prayer with our list of requests, and we don't spend enough time praising God and aligning our hearts to God's great passion to hallow his name.
  - ▶ Let me explain what I mean. There are a few places in Gospels where Jesus says something like, "Whatever you ask in my name, you'll get." Let me read you one. This is **John 14:13-14**, *"<sup>13</sup>Whatever you ask in my name, this I will do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. <sup>14</sup>If you ask me anything in my name, I will do it."*
  
- ❖ Now that's a great promise! We love to hear that. **But we're so focused on the promise to answer that we overlook Jesus' reason to answer.** I'll read it again, *"Whatever you ask in my name, this I will do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son."*
  - ▶ **Why will Jesus do whatever you ask in his name?** So that his Father is glorified. So that his name is hallowed. Do you see? **Adoration not only comes before supplication – it's the very goal of supplication.**
    - Is that your goal? When you bring your supplications to God in prayer – is the hallowing of his name your goal? Is that on your mind, in your heart?

- ❖ The frustration you feel when it comes to prayer could be due to a failure of adoration. **By that I mean the reason why your requests have gone unanswered is because you're asking for the wrong reasons, with the wrong goal in mind.** James says in chapter 4 of his epistle, “*You ask and you do not receive, because you ask wrongly, to spend it on your passions.*” (Jas. 4:3)
  - ▶ **Perhaps the problem is that the concern in your prayer life has mainly been for your name.** We're so preoccupied with promoting our own little names. We're so excited to see it plastered on a wall or website or headline. And we're so quick to defend our names against the slightest criticism. **So when we pray with our litany of requests, our name (our reputation) ends up in focus.**
- ❖ Jesus is trying to shift that focus. That's why he starts the Lord's Prayer the way he does. If we become the kind of disciples who adore God, who hallow God above all else, if the greatest concern in our prayer lives is for *his* name and not our own – for God's name to be hallowed and magnified like a telescope – then whatever you ask he will do.
  - ▶ And that's because your prayers will begin to sound a whole lot different. What you'll be praying for will change. The nature and content of your supplication can't stay the same. **There'll probably be a number of things we won't be asking for any more because we know they have little to do with hallowing God and his name.** And what you do ask for will be tied to God and the glory of his name.

### Applying this Petition

- ❖ Let's think about this more and try to get practical. Let's move into our third and final section where we attempt to practically apply this petition. We have to think carefully. Remember, we've said before that prayer is not a form of magic. It's not about saying the right words, the right incantation. So just adding the phrase, “For your glory” or “For your namesake” to all of your prayer requests is not the solution.
- ❖ **We have to honestly evaluate what we typically pray for and ask whether or not it contributes to the hallowing of God's name.** In his book *Praying Backwards*, Chapell recommends we test our prayers by literally praying backwards and place "in Jesus' name" before every supplication. Then listen to how it sounds. Judge for yourself.
  - ▶ In Jesus' name, help me ace this exam.
  - ▶ In Jesus' name, help me get that promotion.
  - ▶ In Jesus' name, help me not get sick.
  - ▶ In Jesus' name, give me a relationship.
  - ▶ In Jesus' name, grow my church.
- ❖ Don't get me wrong. I'm not saying it's inherently selfish to pray these requests. Sure, you might be selfish. You have to face that possibility. **But I think you could legitimately pray for these things. You just need to go further and examine your motives.** How does your prayer request for good health or for healing hallow God's name? How does it advance God's glory and not just your personal comfort?

- ❖ How does that prayer for your exam or project or for those career aspirations hallow God's name? How do those kind of prayers advance God's glory and not just your ambitions?
  - ▶ How does the prayer for your relationship, marriage, or family hallow God's name? How do they advance God's glory and not just your own dreams and aspirations?
  
- ❖ Whose name, whose glory, is your real concern? That's the big question. In his prayer, Jesus teaches us to first and foremost desire for God to hallow his name. And that frames the rest of the prayer. **When we get to the three petitions that focus on us, we discover that their ultimately about God.**
  - ▶ "Give us our daily bread" is no longer a request simply for our satisfaction. It's a petition that seeks to hallow God's name as the All-Sufficient, All-Satisfying Provider.
    - "Forgive us our debts" is not just about our consciences being cleansed, our guilt being assuaged. It's a petition that seeks to hallow God's name as Just and the Justifier of sinners through the blood and righteousness of Christ.
      - "Lead us not into temptation" is no longer just a request to keep us pure and righteous. It's a petition that seeks to hallow God's name as our Greatest Delight and Treasure. We want our resistance of the fleeting pleasures of sin to communicate that Jesus is better. Far better.
  
- ❖ I want to conclude by reading from **Daniel 9:16-19** because it's a great example of a prayer steeped in adoration and rooted in an earnest desire to see God hallow his own name. Daniel is praying for his own people, an exiled people who long to return home to Jerusalem, who long for this dark night of exile to be over.
  - ▶ Listen to how God-centered Daniel is: *"<sup>16</sup>O Lord, according to all your righteous acts, let your anger and your wrath turn away from your city Jerusalem, your holy hill, because for our sins, and for the iniquities of our fathers, Jerusalem and your people have become a byword among all who are around us. <sup>17</sup>Now therefore, O our God, listen to the prayer of your servant and to his pleas for mercy, and for your own sake, O Lord, make your face to shine upon your sanctuary, which is desolate. <sup>18</sup>O my God, incline your ear and hear. Open your eyes and see our desolations, and the city that is called by your name. For we do not present our pleas before you because of our righteousness, but because of your great mercy. <sup>19</sup>O Lord, hear; O Lord, forgive. O Lord, pay attention and act. Delay not, for your own sake, O my God, because your city and your people are called by your name."*
    - May our prayers reflect such God-centeredness, such as desire to see his name hallowed in and through us.