

Sermon on Matthew 6:9b: Thy Kingdom Come

Introduction

We continue this morning to look at and think about Jesus' teaching on prayer. I want to remind you, again, that Jesus began His teaching on prayer by first saying, in effect, "Here are two ways of praying that you should avoid." In both cases He pointed to the wonderful fact that for everyone who has come into a saving relationship with God through knowing Christ, that person comes to God in prayer as to a Father who is ready and willing to listen. We must both respect that Father in regard to the fact that prayer is a personal interaction with Him and consider His desire and eagerness to have our company.

I want you to notice some things about the Lord's Prayer. First, when Jesus, after having taught HOW NOT TO PRAY goes on to say, "Pray, then, in this way," **He is giving us a MODEL for prayer.** It is true, of course, that Luke's version indicates that this is a Prayer in its own right, a prayer that gathers up in summary form much or most of what our praying should look like. It is perfectly legitimate to use it as a prayer in private or public. But it is also definitely given us as a model. Each of the parts of the Prayer is not JUST a PART of this PRAYER, but a MODEL for SOME PARTICULAR SORT OF THING THAT SHOULD BE A CONCERN FOR US IN PRAYING TO GOD.

Secondly, as I mentioned in the sermon two weeks ago, the Lord's Prayer has the same general shape as the Ten Commandments. In both cases there is a "preface," that reminds us of Who God Is. Before the commandments we hear, "I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery," a reminder that the God who commands is the Savior God, THE GOD OF THE COVENANT, and that our OBEDIENCE IS A RESPONSE TO SALVATION. Who brought Israel out of slavery in Egypt. Similarly, Jesus taught us to pray, **Our Father Who Art in Heaven.** That reminds us that we pray to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus. This is a prayer FOR CHRISTIANS, FOR PEOPLE WHO KNOW JESUS AS THEIR LORD—ONLY SOMEONE WHO IS A CHRISTIAN CAN ADDRESS GOD AS FATHER. Something you may not know—the Early Church did not allow unbaptized people to USE THIS PRAYER!

But **THIRD, with BOTH THE COMMANDMENTS AND THE LORD'S PRAYER, THE ORDER OF THINGS IS IMPORTANT. Both the Ten Commandments and the Lord's Prayer teach us that PLEASING GOD AND WANTING TO PLEASE GOD SHOULD BE OUR HIGHEST PRIORITY.** The first four of the Ten Commandments teach us our DUTY TO GOD, and the remaining commandments teach us OUR DUTY TO OUR FELLOW MAN. Similarly, the WORDS, "HALLOWED BE THY NAME, THY KINGDOM COME, THY WILL BE DONE ON EARTH AS IT IS IN HEAVEN," come before "GIVE US THIS DAY..." AND THE OTHER REQUESTS WE MAKE FOR OURSELVES." One of my professors at seminary pointed out that the grammar, the language here suggests that these three are really different ways of praying for ONE THING—**THE GLORY OF GOD.** AND WHEN WE CONSIDER THE ORDER, THAT THE GLORY OF GOD COMES BEFORE EVEN OUR NEEDS, THAT TELLS US NOT JUST HOW WE SHOULD PRAY, BUT WHAT WE SHOULD WANT!!! **EVEN OUR NEEDS ARE LESS IMPORTANT THAN GOD'S GLORY. NOW, AS IT HAPPENS, GOD IS GLORIFIED BY MEETING OUR NEEDS, BUT WE SHOULD THINK ABOUT THIS ORDER! THE PROPHET ISAIAH SHOWS US THAT GOD WILL NOT SHARE HIS GLORY WITH ANY**

CREATURE. THE PROPHET EZEKIEL SHOWS US THAT EVEN OUR SALVATION IS FOR the GLORY OF GOD. LET ME TELL YOU SOMETHING. NON CHRISTIANS CANNOT CALL GOD “FATHER.” AND NON-CHRISTIANS NEVER CAN AND NEVER WILL DESIRE OR TRULY PRAY FOR THE GLORY OF GOD. EVEN FOR YOU AND FOR ME IT IS SOMETHING TOTALLY UN-NATURAL, TOTALLY SUPERNATURAL! RIGHT AT THE OUTSET THIS SHOULD TELL US, “YOU ARE WALKING ON HOLY GROUND.”

This morning we look at the **FIRST of the petitions** of the Lord's Prayer, “**Hallowed be Thy Name.**” Many churches use this prayer, word for word in worship. There's nothing wrong with that, but IF AND WHEN YOU PRAY THIS PRAYER WITHOUT THINKING AND MEANING WHAT YOU'RE PRAYING FOR, YOU WOULD BE DOING JUST THE OPPOSITE OF WHAT THIS FIRST PETITION TEACHES US TO ASK FOR AND DESIRE.

This morning I'm going to do what Reformed pastors and teachers have done for centuries—my plan for teaching and preaching is to ask and then answer several questions about our text. That is how our catechisms work. I should tell you that there is a rich body of literature that explains the catechism, and I have found several author's works on this question in the shorter catechism helpful.

I. What is meant in Scripture by “the Name of the Lord?”

There are three main ways that Scripture uses the idea of the Name of the Lord.

Everything by which God Has Revealed or Represents Himself

The first of these three is represented well by the opening and closing verses of Psalm 8:

NAS Psalm 8:1 O LORD, our Lord, How majestic is Thy name in all the earth,
Who hast displayed Thy splendor above the heavens!

When David wrote this poem it was evidently a reflection—David had been studying the beauties and intricacies of the natural world. But let's not call it “Nature.” It is God's Creation. And David saw the majesty of God, the wisdom of God, the goodness of God, the power of God and the knowledge of God displayed in the things God has made. God is REVEALED in His Creation. We call that “NATURAL REVELATION.”

But the Scriptures go on to show us that GOD IS MUCH MORE FULLY REVEALED IN HIS WORD—GOD HAS SPOKEN, AND GOD HAS SEEN TO IT THAT WHAT HE SAID, WHAT HE INTENDED, GOT WRITTEN DOWN. THAT REVEALS GOD EVEN MORE FULLY AND CLEARLY THAN NATURE—OF COURSE IT'S NOT THAT THERE'S ANYTHING WRONG WITH NATURE, BUT THERE IS WITH US IN OUR ABILITY TO SEE WHAT'S THERE.

FINALLY, AS A PART OF GOD'S SPECIAL REVELATION, WE SEE ALL OF THE WAYS THAT GOD IS REVEALED IN EVERYTHING HE HAS DESIGNED FOR US AS ASPECTS, PARTS OR CIRCUMSTANCES OF HIS WORSHIP. ALL THOSE THINGS THAT ARE CONNECTED WITH WORSHIP ARE PART OF WHAT IS MEANT BY “NAME,” BECAUSE THEY ARE DESIGNED TO TELL US ABOUT OUR GOD.

The special Presence of God

The second main way that Scripture speaks of the Name of God has to do with what we could call HIS SPECIAL PRESENCE. In the Book of Deuteronomy it speaks repeatedly of the Name of the Lord, and this is what it means. For example, in chapter 12, verse 5, it reads:

But you shall seek *the LORD* at the place which the LORD your God shall choose from all your tribes, to establish His name there for His dwelling, and there you shall come.

God is EVERYWHERE, but in some special way He promised His Presence there at the Temple in Jerusalem. BUT THIS POINTS US TO THE THIRD USE.

God Himself

In the same passage in Deuteronomy 12, having instructed that sacrifice and special worship should be done in Jerusalem, Moses went on to say that those sacrifices, and the sacramental enjoyment of them there at the special place would be “before the LORD your God.” 's special presence is GOD HIMSELF. And in many places where the Scriptures speak of the Name of the Lord, it is a way of speaking of God Himself.

II. What does it mean to “hallow” or “sanctify” the Name of the Lord? (Or, How Do We Do This?)

I fear that when we say, “hallowed be thy Name,” many of us may not know what that means. Some of you may have heard the joke in which someone did not hear the prayer correctly, and they thought that it said, “HOWARD BE THY NAME,” but I fear that many of us who know what it says don't know what it means. Something that is hallowed is something that is holy. When Moses saw the burning bush and heard his name being called, he also heard, “Do not come near here; remove your sandals from your feet, for the place on which you are standing is holy ground. ♦ And what made the dirt under Moses' feet holy was the presence of God.

In his teaching series on the holiness of God Dr. Sproul points us to two episodes in the Old Testament that are hard for us, and perplex us. When Aaron and his sons were first consecrated as priests, the special presence of God came down, and for all of Israel, it was an amazing experience. But two of Aaron's sons tried to duplicate the experience, and took censers of incense into the tabernacle, and FIRE FROM THE ALTAR CONSUMED THEM. A few centuries later, when David wanted to bring the Ark of the Covenant to Jerusalem, they put it onto a wagon that was being pulled by oxen. And at one point it looked as though the Ark was about to fall off the cart, and a man named Uzzah grabbed a corner of the Ark to steady it. And he died.

Everything in Israel's experience with God was designed to teach, including these things. And everything in Israel's experience was to teach that human beings, all of us, are sinful, and that God, on the other hand is holy. Holiness is hard to explain. We understand the difference between right and wrong. We also don't even have too much trouble understanding that from time to time each of us does what is wrong. But it is VERY HARD to

get a hold of the idea that God NEVER DOES ANYTHING WRONG, THAT GOD IS ABSOLUTE MORAL PERFECTION. Some theologians say that God's holiness is the Beauty of All of His Perfections together. Whatever else it is, we know that HOLINESS IS NOT OUR NATURE, AT LEAST AS WE ARE BORN, AND GOD'S HOLINESS IN RELATION TO OUR SINFULNESS IS OUR SINGLE BIGGEST PROBLEM.

So what would it mean then to “hallow” or “sanctify” God's Name?

When it comes to particulars, there is no end of things that have to do with this. The great Puritan preacher Thomas Watson, in his book on the Lord's Prayer lists 15 different ways that we hallow the Name of the Lord.

I HAVE A HARD TIME REMEMBERING ALL OF THOSE THINGS MYSELF, SO LET ME TRY JUST TO SUMMARIZE:

We hallow the Name of God, we treat His Name as Holy when we act toward God Himself with **Awe**, even with **FEAR**, with **UTMOST RESPECT**. WE HALLOW HIS NAME WHEN WE **RECOGNIZE THAT HE IS OUR CREATOR, THAT HE IS GOD, AND THAT WE ARE MERE CREATURES**. THEN IT ALSO MEANS THAT WE DO ALL WE CAN TO HONOR AND OBEY GOD, AND TO TREAT WITH REVERENCE, WITH RESPECT, EVERYTHING THAT HAS TO DO WITH GOD, BECAUSE ALL OF THAT IS INCLUDED IN THE IDEA OF HIS NAME.

THIS IS WHAT THE THIRD COMMANDMENT IS ALL ABOUT—SHOWING DUE REVERENCE AND RESPECT FOR GOD AND EVERY WAY IN WHICH HE HAS REVEALED HIMSELF.

BUT IT GOES EVEN BEYOND THIS— I AM GOING TO TRY TO DRAW THIS OUT BY ASKING MY THIRD QUESTION:

III. Why Does God want us to pray for this PRAYER?

WHY IS IT GOD WANTS US TO PRAY THIS? DO YOU REMEMBER HOW MUCH WE SAW IN CHAPTER 5 THAT JESUS EMPHASIZED THINGS OF THE HEART—THE INNER OBEDIENCE? That is a central issue in our praying this prayer, and in praying these first three petitions in the Lord's Prayer. Do you remember the difference between outward obedience and Obedience from the Heart?

Children, you may know there are times that you obey Mom and Dad, even though you really don't want to, and your heart isn't in it. It is the same with God. And He knows the difference.

Jesus is teaching us that when we pray WE SHOULD ACTUALLY DESIRE THIS THING THAT HE IS TELLING US WE SHOULD PRAY FOR. WE SHOULD DESIRE THAT GOD'S NAME BE HALLOWED IN US, FIRST, BUT ALSO IN OTHERS.

YOU CANNOT PRAY THIS PRAYER HONESTLY WITHOUT WANTING YOURSELF TO BE

HOLY, WITHOUT BEING SERIOUS ABOUT BECOMING HOLY.

GOD DOESN'T NEED US TO PRAY THIS PRAYER. HE WILL SEE TO IT THAT HIS NAME IS HONORED IN ALL THE EARTH NO MATTER WHAT WE DO. BUT HE WANTS US TO LOVE HIM WITH ALL OUR HEARTS, and TO CARE ABOUT THE THINGS THAT MATTER TO HIM.

NOW THE GOOD NEWS IS THAT WHEN WE PRAY THIS WE ARE ALSO PRAYING FOR GOD TO MAKE US HOLY. AND THAT BRINGS ME TO MY NEXT QUESTION.

IV. How is it possible? & Who Can Do It?

I actually have a pair of questions-- How is it possible? & Who Can Do It? Paul wrote that the natural man, our natural heart and mind are bent away from God—Paul says it: **“the mind set on the flesh is hostile toward God; for it does not subject itself to the law of God, for it is not even able to do so.”**

That tells us that naturally speaking, NO ONE CAN DO THIS. NATURALLY SPEAKING, NO ONE CAN PLEASE GOD. IF YOU ARE NOT SAVED, YOU CANNOT PRAY THIS PRAYER. HOWEVER MUCH PEOPLE MAY RECITE THE LORD'S PRAYER IN SOME WORSHIP SERVICE OR OTHER, NO ONE REALLY PRAYS IT WHOSE HEART GOD HAS NOT CHANGED.

THIS IS THE VERY FIRST THING, & AS SUCH, ARGUABLY THE HIGHEST PRIORITY IN THE MODEL PRAYER THAT JESUS SAID WE SHOULD PRAY. AND IF YOU HAVE NOT BEEN BROUGHT LOW, HAVE NOT BEEN COME TO KNOW YOURSELF A SINNER, A DEBTOR TO GOD, YOU ARE NOT HONORING HIS NAME AND YOU CANNOT HONESTLY PRAY THAT OTHERS DO WHAT YOU YOURSELF DON'T DO. YOU ARE TAKING HIS NAME IN VAIN BY HEARING SERMONS LIKE THIS, AND ADDING TO THE MOUNTAIN OF GUILT YOU ALREADY POSSESS. WILL YOU GO ON LIKE THAT? OR WILL YOU CALL ON GOD FOR MERCY, AND LOOK TO HIS SON, TO THE PERFECT LIFE OF JESUS OFFERED ON YOUR BEHALF, AND THE PERFECT AND PAINFUL DEATH, IN WHICH HE OFFERED HIMSELF A SUBSTITUTE FOR YOU? GOD'S MERCY IS ON OFFER NOW, BUT IT WILL NOT BE FOREVER- WHAT WILL YOU DO?

CONCLUSION

God the Father will answer this prayer when we pray it in earnest. This prayer, the concern it voices should be the heartbeat of our missionary concern, as missions is as much or more about giving honor and glory to God as it is about the destinies of those we hope will be reached for Christ. We are praying that those who do not yet know Christ and consequently are incapable of honoring God will come to the saving knowledge and give glory to God. It is not accidental that Peter, for instance, even speaks of people getting saved in the language of giving glory to God (1 Peter 2:12). And the glory of the Lord, and the knowledge, the acknowledging of that glory will indeed cover the earth. But let your heart attitude, your heart prayer be, "Lord, work in me that I so love you that I want to honor you in my own life, and that the honor of your name is truly a driving concern in me." Oh Lord, make it so in all of us. *Amen.*