

Warriors in Prayer – Hallowed Be Your Name

Matthew 6 v. 9

Shortly after Linda and I were married in 1967 we moved to Cyprus and lived there for just over 3 years. Our Fellowship group was very mixed with a few older people, lots of young couples and young people, and some from the Island who were in the main Armenians. One such older gentleman, Mr Sam Pambakian, attended regularly and one of our young men greeted him one day as 'Sam.' The look he received was telling!

Culturally deficient in the way he was addressed. 'Mr Sam' would have been near the mark but ideally he was known as Mr. Pambakian.

Years later, when our Daughter Rachel and her Husband Andrew were called to serve in Cameroon at the Hopital de Meskine, we were able to visit and became very friendly with many of the staff in the hospital. One such man was Dieudonne the carpenter.

Some years later, when Dr John and Lesley Baigent were serving there we made another visit by which time Dieudonne was married and his wife had just had another baby. Invited to their home, we were surprised when Dieudonne made a phone call to his mother in Bamenda and then announced that she had approved that a Naming Ceremony was to take place and the little baby girl was to be named Linda. She's now grown up but we are told that she still uses her English name.

Generally, we in the West do not place too much importance on our names, although we might do a bit of name dropping if we come across someone who is well known. A couple of Carol Services ago we had a lady from the Guinness Family in attendance and of course that name is known worldwide and especially in the Republic of Ireland. There's a story about Michelle Guinness who was on her way to speak in Dublin at a Women's Luncheon Club, when the strap of her sandal snapped.

She called into the first shoe repair shop she could find and asked the assistant if the repair could be carried out ‘now, this minute?’

The assistant shook her head and declared that there was a long waiting list and it would take 2 days. ‘But it only needs a stitch’ declared the one sandaled lady, but the appeal had no effect.

‘Name?’ the shop assistant asked. ‘Guinness’ she responded. Then without looking up the assistant said, ‘Your shoes will be ready in 5 minutes, Mrs. Guinness.’

The scriptures have a much greater emphasis on the use of names and particularly when we consider God’s Name. His Name stands for all that He has revealed to us, through His written Word, about Himself, about His being and about His many attributes.

Let’s read those well-known verses from Matthew Chap. 6 verses 9 – 13.

Invite all to stand.

This morning our remit is to consider that phrase: ‘*Hallowed Be your Name.*’

Friends, maybe today we approach our subject with some apprehension. Maybe it’s something we have pondered over and wondered about how we approach the One who’s Name is Holy.

Perhaps for some of us we work in an environment where God’s name is used repeatedly. It rolls off the tongues of our colleagues without them having any thought about what they are saying.

I worked with a Christian friend at the college many years ago and, if Mike heard God’s Name being used inappropriately, he would say to them, “So you know Him Too?”

In our Bibles there are many references to His Name.

David brings us in Psalm 138 v. 2. *‘I will bow down towards your holy temple and will praise your Name for your love and faithfulness, for you have exalted above all things your Name and your Word.’*

It’s significant to notice that God’s Name comes first.

We listen to Jesus as He teaches us this prayer. We see how He starts with the Person to whom we are to address this prayer followed by the place where our Father dwells. Then immediately the request goes heavenwards, *‘Hallowed Be Your Name.’*

Now, had we the time, we could spend hours getting to know the various names of God and their meaning. God reveals Himself in the Scriptures generally by means of His Names, those amazing pronouncements which signify to us His glorious Titles and attributes.

We don’t have that luxury but, just to whet our appetites, here are just a few.

To His chosen people, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, He declares Himself as El Shaddai – ‘I am God Almighty’ (Gen. 17:1)

As Moses was tending the flock that belonged to Jethro his father in law (Exodus C. 3) he was amazed to see the burning bush. He subsequently had a conversation with the Lord, standing there on holy ground in front of a bush that was not consumed. The Lord announces that his mission was to go to Pharaoh and bring the sons of Israel out of Egypt. And Moses ‘freaks out’ at the very thought of such a task.

Moses wants to know what to say to the Israelites and God’s response is this. “I AM WHO I AM.” Tell them “I AM has sent me to you.” What a privilege for Moses to have God proclaiming His Name – the LORD – to him. Here we have God declaring His sovereignty, His absolute goodness, His character, His flawlessness. Moses, He says, tell them “The Lord, the God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God

of Jacob, has sent me to you.” “This is My Name forever, and this is My memorial - Name to all generations.”

His Name ‘I AM’ directs us to His perfect, eternal existence. That which has characterised Him from eternity past, He still possesses, and that will never diminish. He has neither beginning nor end. What He promises He will always fulfil.

Elsewhere in Scripture He is known as Jehovah – Jireh, ‘The LORD will provide’ (Gen. 22:14),

Jehovah – Nissi, ‘The LORD is my Banner.’ (Ex.17:15),

Jehovah – Rohi, ‘The LORD is my Shepherd.’ (Psalm 23:1),

and Jehovah – Shalom, ‘The LORD is Peace’, (Judges 6:24).

God’s Name is bound up with His identity, who He is. He is Yahweh, the ‘one who is’, the great I AM. This God of glory is jealous for the honour of His Name and all that we, His people, say and do should reflect His honour and reputation.

‘Hallowed Be Thy Name.’

God’s fatherhood draws us closer to Him. His holiness separates Him from an unholy creation, keeping us from presuming upon His fatherhood. There is no universal acceptance of us from our own schemes or from our concoctions of religious behaviour.

Men and women travel on many roads with an assumption that they are heading in the right direction. They move with misguided conceptions usually buried in history or the result of clever indoctrination from the lives of men intent of prospering themselves or projecting themselves above all others.

But those not willing to accept His holiness, not willing to move in His direction, not wanting to accept the purpose and power of the Cross of Christ will not experience his love, never experience His forgiveness nor have the certainty of Him welcoming them into His family.

When we pray, as Jesus taught so succinctly, *'Hallowed Be Your Name,'* we make a petition that God's Name is kept holy.

Go back to the Old Testament and hear those angelic voices proclaim "Holy, Holy, Holy is the Lord of hosts." Isaiah's vision caused him to appreciate that the quality of God which most causes worship is His holiness. That, more than anything else sets Him apart from His creation. There are no faults in His character, no flaws in His perfection and no weakness in His faithfulness.

Let's endeavour to catch Isaiah's vision afresh. As children of the living, holy God of the universe if we act in a manner that is not fitting as believers then we give Him a bad name. We don't change one jot of His character but we can defile His name. When we with our actions, our conversations, and our manner of living do not sanctify the Lord's name the folks around us think very little about our God.

'Hallowed Be Your Name,' or 'Let Your Name Be Holy,' or 'Let Your Name Be Treated With Reverence.'

Jesus, in Matthew 6 v. 9, is telling us to ask God, who is absolutely certain about the honour of His name, to ask Him to see to it that His name be hallowed. The reason for this is that v.9 is not an ascription of praise to the Father but the verb 'hallowed' is an imperative and therefore it is essential that God's name is hallowed.

John Piper remarks that that there are 2 things that this request teaches us. God has every intention to cause His name to be hallowed. Nothing is higher on God's priority list.

The other is that prayer is God's way of bringing our priorities into line with His. God wills to make great things the consequence of our prayers when our prayers are the consequence of His great purposes.

By bringing our hearts into line with the utmost desire of God to hallow His name we will know effective prayer.

Let our first and all determining prayer be for the hallowing of God's name, and our prayers will plug into the power of God's first and foremost intention to guard His name.

The questions therefore arise:

What does it mean to 'hallow'?

Then what are we asking our holy God to do when we pray as Jesus teaches us and ask Him that His name be hallowed?

Another word for 'hallow' is 'sanctify' meaning to make holy or to treat as holy.

Let's digress for a minute and turn to **Ephesians Chap. 1 vs. 3-4.**

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ, just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before Him.

Paul writes that we praise and bless our God for what He has done for us in Christ.

He has granted to us every spiritual blessing that is obtainable from His bountiful store in heaven because we belong to Christ. Not that He will at some stage in our lives drip feed these blessings. Not that we have to do something remarkable to obtain them. Not that we might reach a certain mark, as we progress in our Christian lives, and they will be granted to us.

When we come to Christ those blessing are ours!

Paul then goes on to state that **'He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world.'**

There are some who would want to stop there and make of this verse a proof that God has 2 lists. One list for those whom He has chosen to be His and the other a list of those He rejects.

Personally, I do not take that view although I have come across Believers who would hold to that.

We read on; **‘He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before Him.’**

During part of my career in the Royal Air Force I specialized in Aircraft Oxygen Systems and in particular those aircraft that use Liquid Oxygen. This stuff is very cold – minus 183 degrees, has no smell, and when it gases off it produces 800 times its liquid volume in gas. If an aircraft oxygen system had been serviced then the whole system was purged through with air and then filled with either gaseous or liquid oxygen. The test, to see if the system was fit for use, was to do a ‘sniff test.’ Some gas would be released and you would inhale it. If there was no smell then it was OK.

Do you remember the Old Testament sacrifices where the aroma from the altar was a pleasing smell to God? Move into the New Testament and there we view the final altar when Christ died at Calvary.

In the King James version *Hebrews C. 1 V.1-3* read like this:
God, who at sundry times and in diverse manners spoke in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, Has in these last days spoken to us by His Son, whom He has appointed heir of all things, by whom also He made the worlds; Who being the brightness of His glory, and the express image of His person, and upholding all things by the word of His power, when He had by Himself PURGED our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high.

The question of sin and its stench was dealt with once and for all. Therefore, when we accept Christ on the grounds of His sacrifice on the cross, God does a ‘sniff test’ on us.

And because of what His beloved Son suffered, and because He has dealt with the stench of our sin there is no aroma left. God smells nothing of our sinful past. Salvation’s work is complete

and God can, through His Son, declare that we are holy and blameless before Him.

We might ask, “When did God chose to do this?” The answer is right in our text – ‘Before the foundation of the world.’

Logically, if that’s our position before Him, holy and blameless, then does He not have the right to have us request in our prayers that His name is holy? *‘Hallowed Be Your Name.’*

There are some passages in Scripture that we should consider to consolidate this point.

In Numbers c. 20 we read how Moses was told to speak to the rock in order to obtain water for the thirsty Israelites. Moses is impatient and ‘loses it’ giving the rock a mighty blow, not just once, but twice with the rod the Lord had given him.

Now let’s consider the Lord’s response to his actions. Verse 12 says this: *“Because you have not believed me, to treat me as holy in the sight of the sons of Israel, therefore you shall not bring this assembly into the land which I have given to them.”*

v.13: Those were the waters of Meribah, because the sons of Israel contended with the Lord, and He proved Himself holy among them.

Here we see the Lord’s evaluation of Moses in that he failed to take God at His word and therefore did not treat Him as holy or did not sanctify Him by his actions. We treat God as holy when we believe what He says. When we trust Him implicitly, when we trust His Word. God’s method of obtaining water by telling Moses to ‘speak to the rock’ was sufficient but Moses failed.

1 John 5:10 spells it out for us in this way: *‘the one who does not believe God has made Him a liar.’* That unbelief profanes His name and is directly opposite to hallowing Him or treating His name as holy.

Another passage gives us some understanding **in Isaiah c.8 vs. 12-13.**

‘You are not to say, It is a conspiracy!’ In regard to all that this people call a conspiracy. And you are not to fear what they fear or be in dread of it.

It is the Lord of hosts whom you should regard as holy. And He shall be your fear. And He shall be your dread.’

Where do we stand with this? Do we fear what others fear or do we hallow His name by having a rightful fear of our God. When we pray *‘Hallowed Be Your Name’* we are asking Him, *‘Father, let your name be feared.’*

At the end of **Leviticus c.22** we read these words: **v. 31, ‘So you shall keep My commandments, and do them: I am the Lord.**

V. 32, And you shall not profane My holy name, but I will be sanctified among the sons of Israel: I am the Lord who sanctifies you.’

Simply put we hallow his name when we obey His commandments, but profane His name when we break them. *‘Hallowed Be Your Name’* or *‘Father cause your commandments to be obeyed’*

Finally, again in **Leviticus**, we read in **Chapter 10** about Nadab and Abihu who took it upon themselves to offer unauthorised fire before the Lord which resulted in death for both of them. Then God spells it out to Aaron through Moses. **V. 3 “This is what the Lord has said, ‘Among those who are near me I will be sanctified, and before all people I will be glorified.’ ”**

Be sanctified...be glorified. Nadab and Abihu were guilty of violating God’s absolute standard. God demonstrates His holiness and when we pray *‘Hallowed Be Your Name’* we also make that wonderful request, *‘Glorified Be your Name.’*

We hear much about the love of God. Thankfully it is faithfully preached from this platform as is the grace of God. Where would we be without His love, His grace and His mercy? But perhaps the holiness of God is not a subject we cover too often. Well we've got it this morning.

Given that God is holy, the Holy One, should we not then acknowledge that He is also One who embodies righteous judgement as part of His character. If we grasped the reality of the whole gamut of God's character then there would be a surge of reverential fear amongst us, an awe of God that we seem to have lost.

Certainly the church in the West has a lot of work to do to bring back the awesome, magnificent, and unmistakably unique nature of our God.

God loves us more than we can ever imagine. He desires that we live a superior life, grants to us His Holy Spirit to fill us, equip us and make us different from the world. The indwelling Spirit of God enables us to conquer sin and live above the filth and degradation that surrounds us and all this for His glory – for the hallowing of His name.

When we recognise the holiness of God, the Holy One who is, and was, and is yet to be then we will be filled with awe and reverential fear. Sadly, we hear so often of sin amongst God's people, of things that ought not to be. He is to be revered and treated more than just a friend.

God means business and for that His grace is new every morning, great is His faithfulness! Have we really captured that? Are we serious in our service for Him?

Or are we just content to turn up here, Sunday by Sunday, enjoy some great songs, relish the blessings from His Word and get something of a warm feeling inside us whilst the rest of the world around us perishes.

We are a sanctified, holy people, set apart for a special purpose – for His use.

We belong to God, to Almighty God, to Our Father in and through the saving work of His Son. Let's hone our desire as we come before Him and have His Name to be Hallowed for His Glory and His alone.

Having brought us within the Father's presence, the prayer makes three petitions about God and His glory followed by three about ourselves and our needs. 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 our Number One.' What a marvellous note of adoration with which to begin a time of prayer!