

“Hallowed Be Thy Name”

April 10, 2022

Daniel 9

Psalm 111

John 12:12-50

Daniel 9 is a great example of a prayer that prays “hallowed be thy name.”

“O Lord, the great and awesome God, who keeps covenant and steadfast love
with those who love him and keep his commandments.” (9:4)

Daniel acknowledges who God is—he is the covenant-keeping God.

But there is a problem,

because Israel has sinned.

And so Daniel confesses, “we have sinned and done wrong.”

He details the sins of the people in rebelling against Yahweh,
and admits that God’s judgment against them is just.

Moses had promised that Israel would go into exile

if they continued to rebel,

and sure enough, in Daniel’s day, Israel is still in exile.

But now, Daniel recognizes that the promised time has come.

The faithful, covenant-keeping God has said that he would restore Jerusalem,
and so Daniel prays that God’s holy name would be vindicated:

“We do not present our pleas before you because of our righteousness,
but because of your great mercy.

“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.”

Daniel sees the broken-down church in his day –

much as we look at the broken-down church in our day—

as the city of God appears to lie in bondage to the false glory of the city of man—

we must pray that God’s holy name would be vindicated.

“O God, have mercy upon your people,

not because of our righteousness,

but because we are called by your name!

Your reputation—the sanctity of your name, O God, is at stake!

Let your name be regarded as holy!

And this will only happen as the nations are converted to your will,

and as your church grows in the grace and wisdom of Christ!”

We need to have the same confidence as Daniel.

Daniel remembered God’s promises,

and he prayed that God’s *name* would be glorified.

He was confident that God would act, because

1) God had promised

and 2) “your city and your people are called by your name.”

We are now citizens of the heavenly Jerusalem.
And more than that, we are children of our heavenly Father.
 We should therefore pray with boldness and confidence
 that what he has promised, he will do,
 because we are called by his name.
God has placed his name upon you in your baptism.
The reason why God will answer your prayers is not because of how good you are.
 It is because you are called by his name.
 His reputation is at stake.

Our Psalm of response is Psalm 111 –
 a song that likewise highlights the holiness of God’s name!

Sing Psalm 111
Read John 12

Jesus came so that the name of God would be glorified.
 “For this purpose I have come to this hour – Father, glorify your name!”

 And a voice came from heaven, “I have glorified it,
 and I will glorify it again.”

The name of God – the name of the Father –
 is glorified in the death of Jesus.

Our Father, who art in heaven, *hallowed be thy name.*

The Heidelberg Catechism, question 122, puts it this way:

Hallowed be Thy Name. That is: Grant us first of all that we may rightly know You, and sanctify, glorify, and praise You in all Your works, in which shine forth Your almighty power, wisdom, goodness, righteousness, mercy, and truth. Grant us also that we may so direct our whole life - our thoughts, words, and actions - that Your Name is not blasphemed because of us but always honored and praised.

Hallowed be thy name.
 To hallow is the verbal form of holy.
 So it’s not quite accurate to translate this as “holy be your name.”
 It would be better to say, “may your name be *made* holy.”
 May your name be sanctified.

After all, it’s exactly the same word used to refer to *our* sanctification.
 So I want you to connect these two things –
 God’s name being sanctified,

and *you* being sanctified.
“Hallowed be thy name”
and “hallowed be thy people”!

Because of God’s sanctified name,
you are a sanctified people –

Why?

because God’s holy name rests upon God’s holy people.

“Sanctification is the work of God’s free grace
whereby we are renewed in the inner man after the image of God,
and are enabled more and more to die unto sin and live unto righteousness.” (SC 35)

In other words,

sanctification is the *hallowing* of God’s people –
making us holy is making us *like* God –
as the apostle Peter will say,

God has “granted to us his precious and very great promises,
so that through them you may become partakers of the divine nature,
having escaped from the corruption that is in the world
because of sinful desire.” (2 Peter 1:4)

And then Peter goes on to talk about “more and more”
dying to sin and living to righteousness.

“For this very reason, make every effort to supplement your faith with virtue,
and virtue with knowledge,
and knowledge with self-control,
and self-control with steadfastness,
and steadfastness with godliness,
and godliness with brother affection,
and brotherly affection with love.

For if these qualities are yours and are increasing,
they keep you from being ineffective or unfruitful
in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.

For whoever lacks these qualities is so nearsighted that he is blind,
having forgotten that he was cleansed from his former sins.” (1:4-9)

When we pray “sanctify your name” we are praying that God
would enable us and others to glorify him in all that whereby he makes himself known;
and that he would dispose all things to his own glory.

That’s what Jesus prays for in John 12 –
that God’s name would be glorified in him.

And Jesus says that when he is lifted up – when he is hung on the cross –
he will draw all people to himself.

The cross will be the glorification of Jesus.

The cross will be where the holiness of God is revealed.

We often think of the holiness of God in terms of how God is pure and exalted.

And that's right.

But God's holiness is also that which impels him to draw near to us!

That's why I quoted the 2 Peter passage –

God has “granted to us his precious and very great promises,
so that through them you may become partakers of the divine nature,
having escaped from the corruption that is in the world
because of sinful desire.” (2 Peter 1:4)

God's purpose has always been to unite a people to himself,
so that we might become partakers of the divine nature.

In the incarnation, God became all that we are by nature,
so that we might become all that he is by grace!

That's why our *first* petition is *hallowed by thy name*.

122. Q. What is the first petition?

A. Hallowed be Thy Name. That is: Grant us first of all that we may rightly know Thee, and sanctify, glorify, and praise Thee in all Thy works, in which shine forth Thy almighty power, wisdom, goodness, righteousness, mercy, and truth. Grant us also that we may so direct our whole life - our thoughts, words, and actions - that Thy Name is not blasphemed because of us but always honored and praised.

When you pray,

how much time do you spend praying for God's *name* to be sanctified?

The Heidelberg Catechism reflects a bit on what this looks like.

‘That we may rightly know Thee’

Lord, I want to know you!

And the power of his resurrection!

And the fellowship of his sufferings!

Do you want to know God?

Then pray for it!

God, grant that I might know you!

And if you want to know God – then praise him for his great works –
both his deeds of creation and providence –
his great works of salvation

When we were going through the ten commandments,
we saw that God’s name is holy.
The third commandment warns us not to take the name of the LORD our God in vain,
because God’s holy name reveals his character and his attributes.

Throughout the Old Testament he revealed himself by various names:
To Abraham he proclaimed himself El Shaddai–God Almighty–
the God who has the power to do all that he promises.
To Moses he revealed himself as Yahweh–I AM who I AM–
the God who remembers his promises and is faithful to his covenant.

But when Jesus teaches us to pray “hallowed be your name”
which name is he referring to?

He just addressed God in this name:

“Our Father who art in Heaven.”

God had revealed himself to be the Father of Adam, of Israel, and of David’s seed,
but he had not yet revealed fully what that meant.
In the same way, it appears that Abraham and the patriarchs
knew that God’s name was Yahweh,
but God did not fully reveal the power and meaning of the name, Yahweh,
until he revealed it to Moses.
Only at Mount Sinai do we discover fully what Yahweh means.

Likewise, while Israel had known that God was “Father,”
they did not understand the power and glory of that name.
Only in Jesus do we learn the true meaning of “Our Father Who Art in Heaven,”
because here we discover that our God is the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

The Sermon on the Mount is Jesus’ first sermon in Matthew’s gospel
after he was baptized by John in the Jordan.
And at the Jordan River, when John baptized Jesus,
“behold the heavens were opened to him,
and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove
and coming to rest on him;
and behold, a voice from heaven said,
‘This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased.’” (Mt 3:16-17)

Jesus has already been revealed as the Son of God.
He is the true firstborn of the Father
In the incarnation of Jesus Christ, we finally understand what it means to call God
“Father.”

In Jesus Christ we discover that God has been Father from all eternity.

Indeed, Jesus himself declares to us this most marvelous name of God
at the end of Matthew’s gospel,
when he commands that we baptize “in the *name* [singular]
of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.”

And so when we pray, “Our Father who art in heaven,”
we immediately add, “hallowed be thy name!”
Because in this name – in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit–
we have been incorporated into the family and kingdom of God.

You were once aliens and strangers,
but now you are not only citizens of the kingdom,
you are children of the heavenly Father–you have been united to his Son, Jesus Christ,
and so all that belongs to Jesus is now yours.
The inheritance that he has received, sitting at the right hand of the Father,
has now been promised to you–
and in your baptism you have received the firstfruits of that promise
in the gift of the Holy Spirit.

I’d like you to turn back to Psalm 111 – the Psalm that we sang earlier.
The Psalms are useful for helping us learn how to pray,
so I’d like to just walk through Psalm 111 as an example of how to pray,
“Hallowed be thy name”

Many of the Psalms speak of the holiness of God’s name.
Psalm 111 does so in an acrostic of 23 lines,
each line starting with a successive letter of the Hebrew alphabet.

Praise the LORD!
I will give thanks to the LORD with my whole heart,
in the company of the upright, in the congregation. (v1)

When we pray “Hallowed be thy name”
this is not merely a personal and private thing.
We are to love the Lord our God with *all* our heart,
and we are to demonstrate our love and thanks to him before his people.

The scriptures could not imagine a Christian who is detached from the congregation.

Hallowed be thy name
comes in the context of saying *our* Father.
We come to God together with all his people –
but of course we also come giving thanks to him, “with my whole heart.”

Why do we come with a whole heart?
Why do we give thanks in the company of the upright?

Because of God’s works.
The Name of God is revealed in what he has *done*.

The heart of Psalm 111 consists of seven couplets
that celebrate the works of the Lord.

As we’ve seen, God revealed his name to Abraham and to Moses –
and the revelation of his name came in the context of his mighty deeds.

And so Psalm 111 reflects on this:

*Great are the works of the LORD,
studied by all who delight in them. (v2)*

First, the Psalmist declares the importance of studying God’s mighty deeds.
Do you like to study?

Some of you might say no –
but that’s because you are thinking about school.
But if I asked you about the Marvel universe –
or the details of your favorite novel –
you know *everything* about it!

When you are playing a computer game, you study all the details!

It turns out that when we *really care* about something,
we like to study it!

So if you love God, then you will study him.
You will want to know what he says – what he has done!

Studying the word of God is first and foremost
studying what God has *done* in history.

When you study the mighty deeds of the LORD,
you *are* studying theology – because his deeds reveal who he is!
and you *are* studying ethics – because he calls you to a certain sort of life.

Verses 3-4 show us this:

*Full of splendor and majesty is his work,
and his righteousness endures forever.
He has caused his wondrous works to be remembered;
the LORD is gracious and merciful. (v3-4)*

Because You, O God have revealed your splendor and majesty in your works,
therefore I know something about you: your righteousness endures forever.
And because you has caused your wondrous works to be remembered,
I know that you are gracious and merciful!
I learn who you are from what you do.

*He provides food for those who fear him;
he remembers his covenant forever.*

God is faithful to his promises – he does what he says he will do.

*He has shown his people the power of his works,
in giving them the inheritance of the nations.*

You have shown us, O God, the power of your works!
You showed us this by giving our fathers the inheritance of the nations.
You showed us this – you revealed your power –
by giving Jesus the inheritance of the whole earth –
the fulfillment of all that you had promised to Abraham, Israel, and David.

We learn our theology from history.
We also learn our ethics!

“Hallowed be thy name” starts by asking God to sanctify his name in our understanding –
that we might study and know the mighty deeds of God –

but we are also praying that we might *live* in a way that sanctifies God’s name!

Verses 7-8 of Psalm 111 give us this transition:

*The works of his hands are faithful and just;
all his precepts are trustworthy;
they are established forever and ever,
to be performed with faithfulness and uprightness. (v7-8)*

You might think that you should study his commandments in order to learn ethics.
But the Psalmist here says to look at the work of his hands.

The Psalmist assumes that you know the commandments of God.
(He is speaking to Israelites, after all!)
But if you want to see how to live,
look at what God has done in history.

The reason why you do what God says is because the works of his hands are faithful and just.
You see, God's ways and his works go together.

When you live the way that God commands,
you are living in tune with the way God made things!
I can trust your precepts, O Lord, because the works of your hands are faithful and just!

The whole Psalm comes to its crescendo in verse 9:

*He sent redemption to his people;
he has commanded his covenant forever
Holy and awesome is his name! (v9)*

When we pray "Hallowed be thy name"
we are declaring that God's name is holy –
which is to say that we are celebrating who he is and what he has done.

And we want our lives to reflect that holiness!
Lord, I want to be holy – as you are holy!
I want to know you –
I want to live as your child forever!

In verse 10 the Psalmist then turns to us and addresses us:

*The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom;
all those who practice it have a good understanding.
His praise endures forever.*

Even as the Psalm as a whole calls us to get our theology and ethics from history,
even so the Psalm concludes with this in summary.
As verse 9 concludes our theological lesson: Holy and awesome is his name!
(that is true about God regardless of whether we do anything about it!)

So also verse 10 concludes our ethical lesson:

The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom.
What we think about God is at the foundation of how we live.
If you would know how to live in God's world,
then you must fear God.
And you must *practice* the fear of the LORD.
How?

Our Father, who art in heaven, *hallowed be thy name*.

It is more than a prayer – it is a way of life.

When we pray “hallowed be thy name”

we pray that *we* might be sanctified as well.

We pray that God would re-orient *our* hearts to sanctify his glorious name!

As you can see from all these prayers,

prayer is not primarily “about” us.

We do not pray that *our* name would be set apart.

We do not ask that we would receive glory and honor.

We pray that God’s name would be set apart.

We pray that he would receive glory and honor.

That’s one reason why we have a prayer of confession at the beginning of every worship service.

We need to turn away from ourselves and be reminded who we are in Jesus Christ.

We begin our worship by remembering that we are not the center of the universe.

Jesus is!

In the later petitions we will begin to learn how to speak about ourselves,

but the first lesson of prayer is that we must learn how to speak about God.

We must be more concerned for the holiness of *his* name than for our own.

If we learn how to pray from the Scriptures,

then our prayers will begin to change.

Our prayers will be less self-centered.

Our prayers will focus more on what God has done –

and therefore, who God is,

and his call upon our lives.

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