

Matthew 6:9-13, Psalms 96

The Glory of His Name

Introduction:

At last week's staff meeting, we read Psalm 103 and discussed the meaning of 'praise and worship.' Personally, I was feeling rather discontent and full of complaints because Covid-19 cases have been on the rise again. I have just been so frustrated. But I was really blessed and encouraged as I heard each of the staff offer up not just one, but many many praises to the Lord.

When was the last time you stopped to praise God? Our world is certainly filled with sin, but it is also full of God's glory!

How often is praise a part of your prayer life? According to the prayer Jesus taught us, what is the very first thing we should pray? The first thing Jesus instructs us to pray is "hallowed be your name." I think this is the key to powerful prayer that is consistent with the will of God.

Matthew 6:9-13

- ⁹ Pray then like this: Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name.
¹⁰ Your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.
¹¹ Give us this day our daily bread,
¹² and forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors.
¹³ And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.

Psalm 96

- ^{96:1} Oh sing to the Lord a new song;
sing to the Lord, all the earth!
² Sing to the Lord, bless his name;
tell of his salvation from day to day.
³ Declare his glory among the nations,
his marvelous works among all the peoples!
⁴ For great is the Lord, and greatly to be praised;
he is to be feared above all gods.
⁵ For all the gods of the peoples are worthless idols,
but the Lord made the heavens.
⁶ Splendor and majesty are before him;
strength and beauty are in his sanctuary.

⁷ Ascribe to the Lord, O families of the peoples,
ascribe to the Lord glory and strength!
⁸ Ascribe to the Lord the glory due his name;
bring an offering, and come into his courts!
⁹ Worship the Lord in the splendor of holiness;
tremble before him, all the earth!

¹⁰ Say among the nations, "The Lord reigns!
Yes, the world is established; it shall never be moved;
he will judge the peoples with equity."

¹¹ Let the heavens be glad, and let the earth rejoice;
let the sea roar, and all that fills it;
¹² let the field exult, and everything in it!
Then shall all the trees of the forest sing for joy
¹³ before the Lord, for he comes,
for he comes to judge the earth.
He will judge the world in righteousness,
and the peoples in his faithfulness.

So, today, let's focus our attention on this first line in the Lord's Prayer, "hallowed be your name." To pray "hallowed be your name" means to pray that God's name will be glorified. From this line we will, first, examine the very top priority in prayer. More than praying for ourselves, our priority in prayer is God himself. Next, we will think together about what it means for us to praise God and worship his name. And, finally, we will talk about what grace there is to be received, what are the effects of prayers that seek after the glory of God's name.

1. Our Priorities in Prayer

You might be surprised to hear that there are priorities and a proper order when it comes to prayer. Aren't we free to choose the way we pray? However, when Jesus taught his disciples how to pray, he showed them the very best, most important order of prayer, based on his own thoughtful, practical prayer life.

The first thing we ought to pray is "hallowed be your name." This is a prayer that prays for God to be glorified. The Lord's Prayer continues seeking the things of God, "your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven." After that, it moves on to secondarily pray for our own needs, saying "Give us this day our daily bread, and forgive us our debts [sin]... And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil." So, the first three points of the prayer concern God and his glory, and the second three or four points concern us and our problems. This is how Jesus taught his disciples to pray. But what about us? What kind of prayer do we prioritize?

The principle we can draw out here is that we, first, turn our hearts to our Father in heaven, and pray in relation to him and his glory. This kind of God-prioritizing prayer that Jesus taught probably clashes with the kinds of prayer that come naturally to us.

You probably have a tendency to jump right into the things that are troubling you, to ask for healing for sickness, for success at work, for the restoration of rocky relationships, for resolution to discord and fighting in your marriage or dating relationships. You may even have really important spiritual requests like your family's salvation, or that your friends would have an encounter with Jesus. Of course, these are necessary and important prayers that we should absolutely pray!

However, according to Jesus, no matter what situation we find ourselves in, we should first seek the glory of God's name. Even when we pray for our family and friends, for other people's suffering and troubles, our first priority should be to concentrate our

hearts and pray that God's splendor and beauty would be revealed, that his name would be hallowed.

Of course, this doesn't mean that Jesus is making light of our needs at all. He walked on this earth just like us and experienced pain and suffering himself. Hebrews 4:15 says this.

4:15 For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin.

However, we are by nature greedy and selfish. Are we not prone to covet God's authority and power, liable to ignore God and strive to accomplish our own devices? Our number one concern is our own success, our own satisfaction, our own reward, our own happiness, our own blessing; and in our attempt to be God, we plunge down a destructive path, making a mess of everything.

In Genesis 3, the first humans were tempted with the words "you will be like God," and they stumbled down the dangerous road of self-actualization. This becoming 'like God' meant prioritizing themselves first, and doing as they pleased. The way of living that continually prioritizes my own needs, my own happiness, and my own desires, is a way of living that prioritizes prayers for myself over God himself.

Therefore, Jesus urged us to turn our eyes to the Father and to pray first that he would be glorified. And what do you think will happen when God is glorified? Isn't it that everything will return to its original radiance and beauty? Sin and evil will be eradicated, and our world will become the very best it can be. Your life will be filled with purpose and joy, and love will gush out from you like a spring.

I would go so far as to say that if you seriously pursue the glory of God in your prayers, you are bound to receive far more good from the Lord, for your heavenly Father longs to bless you with far better things than anything you could ask for yourself. Because of this, if you turn your heart to God and seek first *his* glory and *his* honor, your life and this world will be filled with even more good and wonderful things.

2. Prayer that Seeks After the Glory the God

Let's look again at the first request we find in the Lord's prayer, "hallowed be your name." I think we tend to make light of God's glory, and it often ends up on the backburner in our minds. If you want to improve your prayer life and experience the true power and blessing of prayer, I'm convinced the key is to seek after God's glory.

"Hallowed be your name" means "may your name be worshiped and revered." To hallow something, to make something holy, originally carried the connotation of separating or differentiating it. God, who created the whole universe, is completely differentiated from every other created person and thing. He is a savior far more wonderful than any other good thing we can imagine. For this reason, he is consecrated, he is sacred, he is exalted, and he is to be honored and revered more than anyone or anything else. He is to be worshipped and adored and extolled.

When we hallow God's name, we are hallowing and revering God himself. So why is it phrased this way? This is because ancient Jewish people, in an attitude of worship and

reverence, talked about God very politely and indirectly. Because of their sacred sense of God's majesty and greatness, they avoided directly referring to God or calling him by his unique name, Yahweh.

When Moses asked God what his name was, God responded "I AM," or "Yahweh" in Hebrew. But ancient Jews had such a sense of awe at God's greatness and such an awareness of their smallness and sinfulness, that they hesitated to call him directly by his name.

"Your name" points to every aspect of God's wonderful character, and all the astonishing, powerful, and gracious things he has done. God has revealed himself to us in Scripture, and he is also at work right in the middle of our reality today. If you open your spiritual eyes and ears, I'm certain you will perceive God's glory in our midst.

Today, we also read Psalm 96, where we are encouraged to sing a new song to the Lord and praise his name. The Hebrew word we translate as 'God' in Hebrew is El or Elohim. This name reveals the Creator God's power and majesty, and the magnificence of his great dominion.

Recently I went to Tokushima to perform a wedding, but I also took the chance to visit a pastor friend who lives in Naruto. He took me on a drive, and as we drove, I kept involuntarily exclaiming about the beautiful scenery, "Wow, that's amazing!" "How beautiful!" Feeling the refreshing breeze off the ocean, gazing up at the bright blue sky expanding above the mountains, my heart was struck at the greatness and beauty of God the Creator. The melody of a worship song we often sing together on Sundays came naturally pouring from my heart. "You were there in the beginning, the Word of God, Creator of the stars and moon and sun. Your voice sustains the whole earth, the sky and sea and land sing for joy. Jesus is Savior, Creator of the world, his voice echoes across creation."

I really desire that you all will train in the art of praising God's glory, too. When your heart is moved by nature or beauty in the world, when you witness something great or awe-inspiring, please direct your thoughts to the ultimate Creator of all things! Ponder how superior he is, and praise him. This will be great practice in glorifying God's name in prayer.

Of course, I'm not suggesting that we forget the creativity, special skills, and talent of human creators. Please admire those people and their work! But we should also praise the glory of the name of the God who is the source of all things. Many times, we forget who is behind it all.

Additionally, the psalmist in Psalm 96 praises God's promised salvation and great grace. God first revealed his name, 'Yahweh,' when he accomplished salvation for the Israelites through Moses. So the psalmist encourages us to "tell of his salvation" and "declare his glory among the nations." The salvation that God accomplished for Israel is brought to fulfillment in Christ, and then announced to all the peoples of the world.

Jesus himself always prayed, over and above his own needs, that the glory of God's name would be praised. In John 17, Jesus prays an intercessory prayer known as the

'High Priestly Prayer,' and there we see him declare that he is seeking after God's glory first, more than anything else.

17:4 I glorified you on earth, having accomplished the work that you gave me to do. 6 I have manifested your name to the people whom you gave me out of the world. Yours they were, and you gave them to me, and they have kept your word.

Jesus longed more than anything else for God's name to be glorified. Let's pray that the whole world will come to know God's glory, that they will praise and honor his name. And let's praise his name in our own prayers as well.

3. The Efficacy of Prayers that Praise

I'm guessing that praising the glory of God's name is probably one of the hardest parts of prayer for us today. Perhaps even more challenging than confessing and repenting of sin.

About 20 years ago, I held a seminar at my church on doing daily devotions. During that time, I realized that prayers simply praising God were few and far between. We started with "Heavenly Father," calling on the name of God, and then continued by praying prayers of thanks for the good things he had done. "Thank you, God. I'm so thankful for x, y, z." Then we would pray for our requests. However, there were hardly any prayers of praise at all. It was very rare to hear a prayer asking that God would be revered and praised.

So what should we do? Let's look at Psalm 96. How is God praised here?

96:6 Splendor and majesty are before him; strength and beauty are in his sanctuary. 7 Ascribe to the Lord, O families of the peoples, ascribe to the Lord glory and strength! 8 Ascribe to the Lord the glory due his name; bring an offering, and come into his courts! 9 Worship the Lord in the splendor of holiness; tremble before him, all the earth! 10 Say among the nations, "The Lord reigns! Yes, the world is established; it shall never be moved; he will judge the peoples with equity."

Here, the psalmist directly calls on people and tells them to praise the Lord. This is evangelism, and it is worship.

Please learn from the Psalms how to seek after God's glory in prayer. You could ponder a Psalm, and then pray it exactly as it's written. Or, you could use a Psalm as inspiration and praise the Lord in your own words. This might feel really challenging at first, but in the power of the Spirit, I think that praising God will become a really fun part of prayer. As you ponder and reflect on who God is, you will draw even closer to him. You will feel his nearness, and you will experience what it is like to be filled with the Spirit. You will come to know God more deeply and intimately.

If you want your prayers to be more meaningful, and if you want to receive even more blessing from the Lord, then seek God's glory through your prayers. Like the psalmist, pray that God's name will be hallowed, and that his glorious name will be praised throughout the earth.

When you pray that God's name will be praised, you will be filled with true wisdom, you will receive blessing and prosperity, you will be guided in joy and peace (shalom), and you will live a life with purpose and value. When you seek after God's glory in your prayers, every need you have will be met through being captured by God's holiness and glory and honor and majesty.

And we are filled with the hope that Jesus will come again. Verse 13 says, "for he comes, for he comes to judge the earth. He will judge the world in righteousness, and the peoples in his faithfulness." When Jesus returns, we know the world will be filled with the glory of his name.

If you feel that you are lacking in wisdom, blessing, and prosperity, joy, peace and hope, purpose and value, pray along with Jesus that God's name will be hallowed and praised.

Praying that prayer will certainly come at a cost. Prioritizing the things of God over your own needs requires self-sacrifice. However, Jesus has led the way as the perfect sacrifice. He prayed, served, and died on the cross, that God's name would be glorified. He was raised from the dead and lives now, praying intercessory prayers for us. Let's pray, on the basis of Christ's sacrifice, offered for the glory of God, that the Lord's name would be hallowed and praised in all the earth.

Prayer

Father in Heaven, we praise your holy name. You are the all powerful Creator. Please reveal the glory of your name, which is full of grace and truth. We pray that all the people of the earth will sing a new song in praise of your salvation that you accomplished by the work of your Son. We praise the love of the Holy Spirit, who fills the world with your life. Please give us hearts that seek your glory above all else. Please fill us with wisdom and truth to know just how truly wonderful you are. We repent of praying only for our own needs. May our prayers be, instead, overflowing with praise for your great name. We pray that those who do not yet know you would hear the gospel and fall prostrate before you, offering their worship only to you, the powerful God and eternal Father.

In Jesus name, Amen.