

Wellspring – Life & Teaching of Jesus **(38) Sermon on the Mount – Honour His Name (Matt 6:9)**

This, then, is how you should pray: 'Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven.' (Matt 6:9-10)

A Pattern for Prayer

We have already seen that prayer is not about vain repetition, but about communicating with God from our heart. We focussed last time on the words “*Our Father*” and saw that prayer is not about method or technique, but it is first and foremost about a relationship with our heavenly Father – a relationship that is conducted in the intimacy of the secret place – and the power of prayer lies in the power of the relationship of a son to a Father.

Many people treat the Lord’s prayer as a form of words that is there to be recited by rote, but this was not Jesus’s primary intention. He tells us to pray “in this manner” or “like this” – in other words this is a pattern for our prayer rather than a liturgy to be quoted word for word. The power of the Lord’s prayer lies not in the exact form of words but in the heart attitude of the one praying and the relationship we have with our Heavenly Father.

Many people find it helpful and indeed powerful to repeat the words of the Lord’s prayer – and that is fine provided it is expressing the desire of their hearts. God looks not on the outward form but on the heart. What is really important for us is that we understand the principles that lie behind the words and that we learn to pray out those principles from the heart, so we’re going to take some time to focus on the words and see what we discover.

Today we’re going to look at the phrase “*hallowed be Your name.*”

The honour attached to His Name

In Bible times the name that was chosen for a child carried great significance – a name was an indicator of prophetic destiny. Sometimes people were renamed as a sign that God was speaking a fresh prophetic destiny over their life – Abram > Abraham, Jacob > Israel, Simon > Peter. The name of the Lord therefore is of great significance and speaks of his character, his nature and his glory.

The third commandment: *You shall not take the name of the Lord your God in vain, for the Lord will not hold him guiltless who takes His name in vain.* (Exod 20:7)

We are not to dishonour or misuse his name by “taking it in vain.” Jesus is giving the positive side of that command – we should “hallow” his name signifying that we hold his name in great honour and respect.

The name of God

The most general Hebrew word for God is *Elohiym* and this when used in reference to the supreme God this word is simply translated God – *in the beginning God created the heavens and the earth (Gen 1:1)* – but it can also be used to refer to other gods – *You shall have no other gods before me (Ex 20:3).*

EI is the root of *Elohiym* and this is also used with various suffixes to describe God:

El Olam – “Everlasting God” (*Gen 21:33*); **El Elohe Israel** – “God, the God of Israel” (*Gen 33:20*); **El Shaddai** – “God Almighty” – the name with which God appeared to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob (*Exod 6:3*).

However the most important name for God in the Old Testament is Yahweh, or Jehovah, signified by the four letter Hebrew word YHWH - the name by which God revealed himself to Moses at the burning bush in Exodus 3.

Moses said to God, "Suppose I go to the Israelites and say to them, 'The God of your fathers has sent me to you,' and they ask me, 'What is his name?' Then what shall I tell them?" God said to Moses, "I AM WHO I AM. This is what you are to say to the Israelites: 'I AM has sent me to you.'" God also said to Moses, "Say to the Israelites, '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 for ever, the name by which I am to be remembered from generation to generation. (*Exod 3:13-15*)

YHWH comes from the verb “to be” and simply means “I am who I am,” and “I will be who I will be.” This Hebrew word is generally translated LORD in English translations such as NIV and NKJV. God is often referred to as YHWH Elohiym – the LORD God. In Judaism YHWH is generally considered too sacred a name to pronounce, so Jews refer to God as “Adonai” (my Lord) – combining YHWH and Adonai resulted in the name Jehovah.

His "I am" expresses the fact that He is the infinite and original personal God who is behind everything and to whom everything must finally be traced. This name, “I am who I am,” signals the truth that nothing else defines who God is but God Himself. What He says and does is who He is. The full significance of God’s name, Yahweh, was only fully revealed to Moses and the people of Israel through the Exodus experience. In Exod 6:3 God says that he revealed himself to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob as *El Shaddai* but only now was showing his people the full significance and power of his name, Yahweh.

Various other names are used in honor of the Lord in the Old Testament that stem from Yahweh or Jehovah:

Jehovah-Jireh – “The-LORD-Will-Provide” commemorating the provision of the ram in place of Isaac for Abraham's sacrifice (*Gen 22:14*).

Jehovah-Nissi – “The-LORD-Is-My-Banner” in honor of God's defeat of the Amalekites (*Exod 17:15*).

Jehovah-Shalom – “The-LORD-Is-Peace” the name Gideon gave the altar which he built in Ophrah (*Judg 6:24*).

Jehovah-Shammah – “The-LORD-Is-There” referring to the city which the prophet Ezekiel saw in his vision (*Ezek 48:35*).

Jehovah-Tsebaoth – “The-LORD-of-hosts” or “armies” was used in the days of David and the prophets to signify God as a warrior God surrounded by the armies of heaven. This phrase is translated “*the Lord Almighty*” (NIV), “*the LORD of hosts*” (NKJV) or “*the LORD of heaven’s armies*” (NLT).

Open up, ancient gates! Open up, ancient doors, and let the King of glory enter. Who is the King of glory? The Lord of Heaven's Armies – he is the King of glory. (Ps 24:9-10 NLT)

Hallowing or honouring His name is not merely a matter of showing respect of deference – the declarations we make that honour his name position us to experience the “I am” of God in our daily lives – to know his provision, his victory over our enemies, his peace, his presence, his invincible power.

Establishing a Culture of Honour

A culture of honour starts with the honour of God’s name, and results in answered prayer! In Psalm 66 David begins with a cry of “*Shout with joy to God, all the earth! Sing the glory (or honour) of his name; make his praise glorious!*” and goes on to extol all the great things that God has done, to praise Him for the way he disciplines us and deals with us in our lives, and to offer himself afresh to God – finishing with “*God has surely listened and heard my voice in prayer. Praise be to God, who has not rejected my prayer or withheld his love from me!*”

But this culture of honour does not finish there – it extends to all people – everyone made in the image of God.

Honor all people. Love the brotherhood. Fear God. Honor the king. (1 Peter 2:17)

Our honour and love for God, will extend to everyone he has made. In fact the Bible says that we cannot say we love God who we have not seen, unless we love our brother who we have seen (*1 John 4:20*).

In the church, this culture of honour is particularly important when it comes to honouring the gifts and ministries that God has established in the church for our edification (*Eph 4:11*). Jesus illustrated this in *Matt 10:41* when he said “*Anyone who receives a prophet because he is a prophet will receive a prophet's reward, and anyone who receives a righteous man because he is a righteous man will receive a righteous man's reward.*” In other words, the principle of honour of someone gift or ministry enables us to partake of and enjoy the fruits of that gift or ministry.