



Sermon, September 25, 2016
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The Prayer that Changes Us, # 4: "Hallowed Be Thy Name"

Matthew 6:9-13 (Jerusalem Bible)

- ⁹ So you should pray like this: Our Father in heaven, may your name be held holy,
¹⁰ your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as in heaven.
¹¹ Give us today our daily bread.
¹² And forgive us our debts, as we have forgiven those who are in debt to us.
¹³ And do not put us to the test, but save us from the Evil One.

Additional Scripture References:

"Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts; the whole earth is full of his glory." (Isaiah 6:3).

"Holy, holy, holy, the Lord God the Almighty, who was and is and is to come." And whenever the living creatures give glory and honor and thanks to the one who is seated on the throne, who lives forever and ever, the twenty-four elders fall before the one who is seated on the throne and worship the one who lives forever and ever; they cast their crowns before the throne, singing, "You are worthy, our Lord and God, to receive glory and honor and power, for you created all things, and by your will they existed and were created." (Revelation 4:8b-11)

First, a joke: Grandpa and granddaughter were sitting talking when she asked, "Did God made you, Grandpa?" "Yes, God made me," the grandfather answered. A few minutes later, the little girl asked him, "Did God make me too?" "Yes, He did," the grandpa answered. For a few minutes, the little girl seemed to be studying her grandpa, as well as her own reflection in a small mirror. Her grandfather wondered what was running through her mind. At last she spoke up. "You know, Grandpa," she said, "God's doing a lot better job lately."

Because of what God "does" and who god is, we call god "holy." But what do we mean by the word "Holy?" (*Get responses from people.*)

Three questions: How is God Holy? How do we hallow God's name or hold it to be holy? If we were to truly practice hallowing God's name, what would that look like in our lives?

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In order to answer these three questions, let's look to see what it says about God's holiness in the Bible. There are two pre-eminent places in the Bible where God is proclaimed to be holy: Isaiah 6:3 and Revelation 4:8-11. I want you to open your Bibles to these two places and put your fingers to hold your place in addition to the reading from Matthew 6:9-13.

(Read from Isaiah 6:3 and Revelation 4:8b-11, as above)

How is God Holy? God is thrice Holy in these writings because:

- The earth is full of God's glory
- God is eternal and everlasting
- God is the source and creator and willer-into-being of all things.

The heavenly host in the vision from the Book of Revelation tell us that God is holy, holy, holy because God is eternal and everlasting (something we are not). God is also worthy to be called holy and to be praised because God is the source and creator of all things, the fount of their being, the eternal origin of everything that is.

We cannot be holy as God is holy in this manner. Rather, we must be beholders and witnesses to God's holiness, and allow that beholding and witnessing to change us. This is what it means to hallow something: to behold and witness to its sacredness.

So, how do we hallow God's name or hold it to be holy? First off, we need to see what the heavenly host surrounding God's throne in Isaiah tell us to see: the fact that the whole earth is full of God's glory. God's glory is everywhere. We need to open our eyes to behold it. But how?

In order to get at this question, I want to quote a short little excerpt from a secular work by Luis Urrea's book, *The Hummingbird's Daughter*, which is a story about his great-aunt, Teresita Urrea, who became a great religious healer, a *curandera*, as well as an inspiration for one of the political revolutions in Mexico. She was called the Joan of Arc of Mexico. In this scene in the book, she has gone to learn about healing from another great healer, Huila. In this scene, Huila is trying to impress upon Teresita how to find and see God in everything.

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This was pretty strange talk, in Teresita’s opinion.

“In a rock.”

“Yes.”

“In a...in a bee?”

“Certainly.”

“In a taco?”

“You think you’re funny.”

Huila was irked. A tortilla, made of holy corn, corn made of rain and soil and sun, that tortilla, round as the sun itself! Was God not in the rain? Did the corn not come from God? What of the sun? Was the sun simply some meaningless accident in the sky? Some ball of light meaning nothing, signifying nothing? No! Only a heretic would fail to see God in the sun!

And the meat of the goat, and the flowers the goat ate, and the chiles in the salsa, and the guacamole, and the hands of the fine woman who slapped the tortilla into shape then laid the sizzling meat into it, and the fire, and the fire ring, and the house in which the fire ring burned, and the ancestors who raised the generation that led to the woman making the taco. Only an idiot would fail to see God in a meal!

"If you are too blind to see God in a Goddamned taco," she exclaimed, "then you are *truly* blind!"

Teresita said, "Then everything is God?"

"Don't be a heathen," Huila said. "God is everything. Learn the difference." [Luis Urrea, *The Hummingbird's Daughter*, 2005:95]

Here is the important lesson for us: In order for Teresita to become a healer like Huila, she needs to be able to access the healing power of God. But if she views God as being in a box, or stuffed away in a drawer in the sky, or totally removed from this world, this life, this moment, then healing won't happen. The same is true of us. If we shut God off in some room, some drawer in some cabinet, or in a book or off in a corner of unreachable space, then we will have no access God's power to bring wholeness to our lives, to guide us in the midst of our

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lostness, to change one iota of our lives. There is no point to prayer, no practicality to faith and no chance for any Biblical promise to be fulfilled.

Hallowing God’s name, then, means to look for God in the things God has created, to find the Creator’s signature everywhere.

Question to consider: If we were to truly practice hallowing God’s name, what would that look like in our lives?

God’s name is God’s essence and power, and that powerful essence is holy. It is this name that we are baptized into. In Matthew 28, Jesus commands the disciples to “go make disciples of all nations and immerse them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.” We are immersed in the power of God’s name, which is holy. I say “we,” because Jesus directs us to immerse *nations* – *ethnoi* in Greek, whole peoples, societies. When we call God holy – “hallowed be thy name” – the very next step is to endeavor to make our world holy and just as well.

How do we cultivate a sense and apprehend a clue of what God’s holiness is at like? Shouldn’t the idea of seeing God in everything elevate our appreciation of all things, rather than reduce God to ordinary, mundane levels? How do we experientially move God from being a concept to a lived experience, and thus opening ourselves to holiness around us, and a greater sense of the sacramentality of all things?

As I think about hallowing God’s name by perceiving God’s presence and glory in all of creation, I realize that I am my own biggest block to having this sense of the presence of God’s holiness. I have been raised in a materialist culture that preaches and practices a despiritualized materialism that views the cosmos as merely a continuous cascade of physical events. Our economy is based on the accumulation of material goods, and the worth of persons or artwork or music or trees or landscapes or lakes or rivers is measured strictly in terms of the amount of money they can add to the Gross National Product or our personal pocketbooks or some corporation’s bottom line. How can I Hallow God’s name by seeing that all of creation is full of God’s glory?

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By looking for it. By setting our hearts desire upon seeing God in the creation around us. God wants us to find God. God wants to be found by us. When you pray “Hallowed be thy name,” let it be a prayer that says, “Holy, Holy, Holy Lord God, Almighty, I desire above all things to see you everywhere around me. I desire to be in that company of the heavenly host who perceives your glory in all creation. I desire to see you in the people I meet, in my family members, my neighbors, and in the people irk me and tick me off. I hallow your name because you are eternal and everlasting and have created all things. I hallow your name because you are Love.”

I invite you all to stand. Turn to one or two persons next to you. Open the eyes of your heart to see God in the people standing next to you. Now, as you look at them, repeat after me:

“Holy, Holy, Holy, /Lord God Almighty,/ Heaven and Earth/ are full of your glory! /Amen.”

Now, go out and do the same in the world out there.