

PP ‘Breathing Life Into Prayer’: *Becoming a People of Prayer series*

Illus There is a word that Hawaiians use for those from the mainland, *haoli* (HA-OH-LEE). Sometimes it is used with disdain as a word for white people! One particular application of the word formed for me the title of this sermon:

PP *“Before the missionaries came, my people used to sit outside their temples for a long time meditating and preparing themselves before entering. Then they would virtually creep to the altar to offer their petition and afterwards would again sit a long time outside, this time to ‘breathe life’ into their prayers. The Christians, when they came, just got up, uttered a few sentences, said Amen and were done. For that reason my people call them haolis, “without breath,” or those who fail to breathe life into their prayers.”*

One of the symptoms of a weak prayer life is a darting in and out of God’s presence with little thought or consideration

The bible addressed this thousands of years ago:

PP *“Guard your steps when you go to the house of God...Be not rash with your mouth, nor let your heart be hasty to utter a word before God, for God is in heaven and you are on earth. Therefore let your words be few.” Ecclesiastes 5:1-2*

It is almost as if Jesus referred to this when He opened His teaching on prayer with “Our Father in heaven, hallowed by Your name.”

Guard your steps when you go to pray, draw near to listen, be not rash in your prayers, do not be hasty, let your words be few

Why? Because God is in heaven, He is greater than us

We are the creature He is the creator

That distinction must be maintained

How? Jesus teaches us how when He said: ***‘Hallowed be Your name’***

But what does this really mean?

Again, because we have said the Lord’s prayer so much, we are in danger of familiarizing ourselves out of true knowledge and understanding

For instance, did you realize that ‘hallowed be Your name’ is not a declaration of praise, but rather a petition or request?

It is the first of several petitions that we are taught to pray

This is a foundational petition; the first order of priority

It is a request for God to see to it that He makes His name Holy in all the world, especially in our own lives

This morning, we will look at two of the key words in this powerful phrase and then combine them to look at its significance:

PP 1-What does ‘hallowed’ mean?

When is the last time you actually used the word ‘hallowed’ in a sentence?

The problem is that we probably only say this word when saying this prayer

It is a word that has largely disappeared from our culture

In short, it means to make holy, to purify or set apart for sacred purposes

The words sanctify and saint are from the same word

PP But there are two basic meanings of the word 'hallow' in the Greek:

PP a) It means to make an ordinary secular thing holy, by certain rituals or bringing it into contact with things which are holy

Objects and things which are declared 'hallowed' are made *different* from other objects of things

A temple is holy because it is different from other buildings

This is obviously *not* the meaning here since nothing that man can do can make the name of God holy; His name is holy to begin with

PP b) The second meaning is to treat as holy, or rather to hold something as sacred

When God sanctifies us, He *makes* us holy

When we sanctify God, it means we *treat* Him as holy

To hallow His Name is to recognize and treat Him as such

But what does that mean?

I think the best way to answer that is to remember that the basic idea behind 'hallowed' is the idea of *different*

That which is hallowed is different from the ordinary

That is why God is supremely the Holy One, because He is eternally in a class of His own, different from everyone and everything else

The commandment to keep the Sabbath day holy is to *regard it as different* than the rest

The idea that God's people are holy, is that we are *different and set apart* from those who belong to the world

PP To hallow God's name is to be in awe of His name, to revere His name because God is set apart, different, greater than any other

Reverence is the result of hallowing God's name

Reverence guards our steps into and out of His presence

Without hallowing God's name, we have no reverence and our prayer-life is breathless

To hallow is to be in awe that we give to that which is different and greater than us

So, when we pray '**Hallowed be Your name**', we are praying that we will treat God's name as holy, different and hold to Him in supreme reverence

We are asking God to breathe the life of awe into our praying hearts

PP 2-What is significant about the word 'Name'?

A 'name' is more than just a label that identifies someone

PP To a Jew, names indicated the character, nature and personality of the person in so far as it's been revealed

In Bible times, Adam meant 'man', Eve meant 'life-giver'; Abraham meant 'father of multitudes, Jacob meant 'cheater' while Peter meant 'rock' for his strong faith

Names still mean a great deal today and they capture the character of a person

If someone mentions Hitler, we think horrible mass murderer

Mother Theresa invokes thoughts of compassion and service, Abe Lincoln honesty or
Bruce Geleta the strength of an ox
When I ask you what you think of so and so, it is their character, nature and personality
that comes to mind
Names are associated with a person's character, nature and personality

God's names reveal aspects of His being that create our perception of Him:

PP *"And those who know your name put their trust in you," Psalm 9:10*

PP *"Some trust in chariots and some in horses, but we trust in the name of
the LORD our God." Psalm 20:7*

This doesn't mean that in a time of difficulty the people of God will remember the
particular name of Jehovah, but rather in that difficulty, the faithful people of God will remember what
God is like and that memory will give them confidence and trust
It is not enough to merely memorize all the names of God revealed in the bible
We need to know what character, nature and personality of God is revealed to us in those
names and put our confidence in Him
There is no greater name for God than Jesus Christ
He has been given the name that is above every other
It is in Christ that we see the clearest and fullest picture of God's character, nature and
personality

PP *"I have manifested your name to the people whom you gave me out of the world."*
John 17:6

We can detect a jealousy God has for His name when we pray '*hallowed be your name*'
It matters very much to us that the quality of our 'name' is preserved, and it matters to
God ever more so because His name is perfect, He is perfect
Have you ever been falsely accused of wrongdoing?
Do you not want very much to clear your name, your reputation, how others perceive
your nature, character and personality?
God greatly desires that His name be protected because when His people sully His name,
it distorts others' perception of Who He is
We saw a few weeks ago from Ezekiel 36 that God is very jealous and very zealous about
protecting His name

PP *"It is not for your sake, O house of Israel, that I am about to act, but for the sake of my
holy name, which you have profaned among the nations to which you came. And I will
vindicate the holiness of my great name, which has been profaned among the nations, and
which you have profaned among them." Ezekiel 36:22-23*

So we see that the name of God means more than telling us Who He is, His name tells us
what He is like, revealing His nature, character and personality

PP 3-So what does it mean to pray 'Hallowed be Your name'?

PP One commentator says it is to pray: *"May You be given that unique reverence that
Your character, nature and personality, as You have revealed them, demand."*

It is praying that God's perfect, righteous, loving character be seen in this world, and that His name would be made great and above all others and be given His rightful due. It is to pray that we would see God as He is and respond to Him in the way we ought

PP John Piper says it is to ask God to '*cause His Word to be believed, cause His displeasure to be feared, cause His commandments to be obeyed, and cause Himself to be glorified.*'

PP a) *We hallow God's name through our speech*

Friends, do you take God's name in vain?

PP "*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.*" **Exodus 20:7**

Our family cringes when we watch a movie with swearing in it, but nothing irritates, angers or bothers us more than when the name of God is used as a curse word or a byword

The root meaning of 'vain' is *emptiness*

It means to empty out the significance and meaning of God's name

Thoughtless, profane utterance of His name is the opposite of hallowing His name

'*Oh my God*' can be as empty as it gets when used as an exclamation of surprise or excitement

Hallowing God's name is to bring the ears of God into every conversation we have

It is to learn to evaluate our words by the pleasure or disapproval of God as He hears them

Are my words springing from my reverence for God and are they lifting up His nature, personality and character producing honor for Him?

God is listening to my words...is He pleased?

PP b) *We hallow God's name through our beliefs*

Again, the names of God reveal His unique nature, character and personality

Therefore, when we pray 'Hallowed be Your name' we are asking Him to enable us to regard Him as different, above and more significant than any other person or thing

And that this hallowing would enable us to worship Him with all of our beings

Hebrews tells us that we must believe that He exists and that He rewards those that seek Him

We revere Him when we trustfully place our lives in His caring hands, believing Him to be both willing and able to care for us and those we love

Hallowing His name is occurring when we think of Him constantly throughout the day, when His Words run through our minds and guide us in our decisions and behavior

When we believe that He is our constant companion and all that we do, say and think is ever visible before Him

This has the power to alter the way we live

PP c) *We hallow God's name through our lives*

There can be no more appropriate and powerful prayer than ‘Hallowed be Your name’
especially here in the 21st century

God’s name is not revered as more than a million babies are killed through abortion
each year

His name is not revered as God’s people entertain themselves the same way as the world
Or when we use His name in vain

His name is not revered as homosexuality is celebrated as a natural, normal and God-
pleasing way of life

Or His people worship on the golf course instead of in His house with His people
His name is not revered when we gossip about the sin of others instead of mourning over
our own

And His name is not revered when we pursue the world’s riches while people all around
us are suffering

PP Martin Luther answered the question of how God’s name is hallowed among us by
saying “*When both our life and doctrine are truly Christian.*”

This petition is a both a challenge to Christian living and at the same time an invitation to
Christian commitment

Have you begun to develop the discipline of living in reverence of God?

Do you believe and practice the awareness that God is always right next to you?

When you are in front of that computer, in that theater, in that break room, in that car or
Hotel, as you are writing out that check to the church

God, are you pleased with me?

Are my actions, my thoughts, my speech reflecting Your nature, personality and
character?

If a Christian under pressure loses his temper just like a non-Christian does, or if he is
just as nervous or anxious, or greedy and cruel and as materialistic as the one next door, he shouldn’t be
surprised that he is not effective in bringing his neighbors to Christ

The same is true for our witness with our co-workers, or our classmates

PP William Barclay wrote that “*The very essence of this petition is that in it we pray that
God may enable us to show that we are redeemed, so that in our lives He may be glorified...that we may
be enabled to show Christ to men that men may desire Christ.*”

Closing:

Friends, breathe life into your prayers, let us not be guilty of being *haolis*
Hallow God’s name, revere Him

**Pray Lord, hallowed be Your name! Help me to live in such a way that Your
name is great in my life. May Your reputation be increased in the world by the way I live my life!
Hallowed be Your name in my business
Hallowed be Your name in my financial stewardship
Hallowed be Your name in my friendships
Hallowed be Your name in my family
Hallowed be Your name in my thought life
Hallowed be Your name in my neighborhood**

Hallowed be Your name in my church

Hallowed be Your name in my service

Hallowed be Your name in my speech

Amen!