

Happy Mothers' Day! Today and always we give thanks to God for moms and indeed for all the women who have been such a blessing our lives. I mean, where would we be without the women in our lives, and without the women of this church, amen? A very special shout-out to my wife Jan, who is truly the hero of our family and of my ministry at Cornerstone as well.

(Do I get romance points for that? That's pretty romantic, right—a shout-out? Please pray for me...)

Speaking of prayer, we're in a series called *Pray Like Jesus*, and it's all about the Lord's Prayer.

There was something so compelling about Jesus' daily prayer life that in Luke's gospel his disciples approach him and ask, "Lord, teach us to pray."

So Jesus does just that. He says, "When you pray, say..." and then he goes on to teach his disciples this prayer that's meant shape and guide the way we pray, the way we see God, and the way we live in this world day by day.

Today we'll read the Lord's Prayer as it appears in Matthew's gospel. But instead of starting with the prayer itself, we'll back up a little bit and read the verses that precede it, because as you'll see later, those verses are especially relevant to the part of the Lord's Prayer that we're going to focus on this morning.

So please follow along as I read Matthew 6:5-13. I'll be reading from the New International Version. Verse 5 is where Jesus begins his teaching about prayer, saying:

"And when you pray, do not be like the hypocrites, for they love to pray standing in the synagogues and on the street corners to be seen by others. Truly I tell you, they have received their reward in full. But when you pray, go into your room, close the door and pray to your Father, who is unseen. Then your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you. And when you pray, do not keep on babbling like pagans, for they think they will be heard because of their many words. Do not be like them, for your Father knows what you need before you ask him.

"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.
Give us today our daily bread.
And forgive us our debts,
 as we also have forgiven our debtors.
And lead us not into temptation,
 but deliver us from the evil one.¹

So far in this series, we’ve lingered on the opening address of the Lord’s Prayer— *Our Father in heaven*:

The word *Father* calls us into intimacy with God, whose love for us is unconditional and boundless. This gives us the security we need to live a life of mission, sharing the love of the Father with others that they too might become part of God’s family in Christ.

The word *our* calls us into community with each other as God’s children, as members of God’s family in Christ.

And as we saw last Sunday, the phrase *in heaven* speaks not of God’s distance, as some have imagined, but rather that God is near, and God is able.

Today, we come to the first petition of the Lord’s Prayer, *Hallowed be your name*.

So once we’ve addressed who we’re actually praying to—*our Father in heaven*— the first thing Jesus teaches us to get to in prayer, the first thing he tells us to ask, is for God’s name to be hallowed.

Hallow is an old English word almost never used anymore. I mean, how many times in the past week have you used the verb “to hallow”? Exactly. Apart from the traditional version of the Lord’s Prayer, about the only other time the word “hallow” comes up in our culture is when? I’ll give you hint: October 31st—Halloween. What does *that* have to do with what it means to pray *hallowed be your name*? Not much!

¹ Matthew 6:5-13 (NIV)

Interestingly, though, the translators of the New International Version of the Bible—even though the NIV tries hard to stay up-to-date—still use that old English word. It seems they couldn't find better words in English to capture the meaning of the original Greek term, so they stuck with *hallowed* be your name.

In the time that remains I'd like to explore two questions about what it means to hallow God's name: *What's the point of it?* And *what's the proof of it?* Because to know and live the answers to those questions is life-changing.

To hallow God's name: *What's the point of it? What's the proof of it?* First:

1. What's the point of "hallowing" God's name?

What does it mean to *hallow* something? To hallow something means to treat it as sacred and ultimate.

It means to make something your ultimate concern—the most important thing, the most sacred thing, the supreme beauty of your life.

By teaching us to pray, *Father, hallowed be your name*, Jesus wants to cultivate in you and in me a desire that God's name would be treated as holy above all else— as highly precious, as infinitely valued. Therefore, "to hallow" includes the sense of to praise, to adore, to honour, to magnify, to revere, to exalt, to glorify.²

To pray, *Father, hallowed be your name* is to pray that God would be treasured and loved, that God's name "would be regarded with the utmost possible respect and endearment."³

Because in the world of the Bible, a *name* is never just what you call someone. In the Bible, a name points to the reality of who a person is. It points to their essence. It points to their core qualities and true character.

In the Lord's Prayer, Jesus shows us that hallowing the Father's name— God and everything he is— should be our first concern in prayer. All of prayer— indeed all of life— should flow out of the praise and adoration of God—out of seeing and knowing God as ultimate, as the All-Important One.

² Darrell Johnson, *Fifty-Seven Words That Change the World: A Journey Through the Lord's Prayer*, p. 31.

³ Dallas Willard, *The Divine Conspiracy: Rediscovering Our Hidden Life in God*, p. 258.

Theologian Dallas Willard explains that the prayer *hallowed be your name* is based on humanity's deepest need. Because nothing goes right as far as human life in this world is concerned until the greatness and goodness of life's ultimate source—God—is truly grasped and appreciated. Until God's name is hallowed—held in highest regard—“the human compass will always be pointing in the wrong direction, and individual lives as well as history as a whole will suffer.”⁴

The world's problems—including yours and mine—are rooted in a failure of adoration—a failure to hallow God's name, a failure to love God as our heart's ultimate treasure.

So in teaching us to pray, *Father, may your name be hallowed* as the lead-off petition in his model prayer, Jesus is calling us to grow in valuing God as the ultimate treasure of our *own* hearts—the most important and sacred thing in our *own* lives. I'll talk about that more when we get to the next point.

But what I'd like to focus on now is that by teaching us to pray, *Father, hallowed be your name*, Jesus is at the same time calling us to grow in our desire for God's name to be known and loved *throughout the world* by those who *do not yet* know and love his name.

So in answering the question, “What's the point?” of hallowing God's name, we must speak of God's name being *made known*—manifest, revealed, made real. The spirit of the petition is:

*Father, may your infinitely precious name be made known on earth as it is in heaven. May people come to know who you really are and treasure, honour, praise, and adore you above all else. Because you alone are the source of all life, and apart from you, people are lost. So make your name known as only you can Father. Make real your character, your love, your beauty, your goodness, your greatness. Enhance your reputation, we pray—in our homes, in our churches, in our schools and workplaces, in our communities, our countries, and in all the earth.*⁵

You see, as his followers, Jesus wants to develop in you and in me a passion for our Father's name to be made known and experienced for all that it truly is.

Think of it this way. Our son Ryan, our youngest, has always had very loving and sweet spirit. When he was younger, and hadn't yet crossed that threshold when a son no longer

⁴ Ibid, p. 259.

⁵ Phrasing inspired by Johnson, *Fifty-Seven Words*, p. 30.

thinks his father is cool, at least once a week, usually more, Ryan would tell me, “You’re the best dad ever.” Because in his experience, he found that to be the case.

Now I’m pretty sure I’m not *actually* the best dad ever. Okay, I *know* I’m not. Not even close.

But try telling that to Ryan back in the day! He would rise to my defense and passionately seek to convince you that I truly am the best dad ever. Why?

Dallas Willard puts it this way:

How a child's heart is wounded to hear its parents, mother or father, dishonored or to see them attacked. Such an attack shakes the very foundations of the child's existence, for the parents are its world.⁶

Is God *your* whole world? So much so that you’re passionate about his name, his reputation, his glory in *this* world?

To pray for God’s name to be hallowed is to become like an adoring child who gets alarmed when others don’t admire his parents like he does, because his parents are his whole world.

To pray *hallowed be your name* is to long for our heavenly Father—our *Abba*—who unlike me actually *is* the best—to be recognized and loved and enjoyed and honoured as such by everyone. Because we know that just like us, *their* only hope, *their* greatest benefit and *their* highest well-being can only ever be found in the name of the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Let me give you an example. Sometimes parents get especially concerned about whether their kids will grow up to be engineers or doctors, lawyers or architects, Olympic athletes or pro ball players. And if that’s what they’re gifted and called to be, great.

But as Christian parents—or grandparents aunties or uncles or youth counsellors or children’s ministry workers— such concerns should pale in comparison—they should *pale*— next to our passion for the name of God the Father to be hallowed in the lives of our young people—that they would come to know him and his matchless love in Jesus personally and experientially, that they would come to know him as precious and incomparably wonderful—that they would honour and treasure his name above all else—that the God and Father of Jesus Christ would be their whole world, their *everything*.

⁶ Willard, *The Divine Conspiracy*, p. 259.

What do you think might happen if we had that kind of heart for our kids, for our young people, and prayed for them accordingly—for God’s name to be hallowed in their lives? And what do you think would happen if we had that kind of heart for our other relatives, friends, co-workers, and neighbours, and prayed for them accordingly?

Do you think God would delight to answer our prayers, and bring more and more people to the knowledge and love of his name? He gives you and me the unspeakable privilege of being his partners in this, first through our prayers, and then through the way we live and serve and tell others the Good News about Jesus— so your part matters; my part matters.

And this is one of the main reasons Jesus teaches us to pray Father, *hallowed be your name*.

Of course, as I said before, Jesus wants God’s name to be hallowed not just in other people’s lives, but *in your own life*, too. That’s where it has to begin. In fact, if God’s not being hallowed in your own life, you’re not going to be much of a partner with God in bringing others to hallow his name.

So let’s turn a corner and bring this closer to home. Let’s make it a little more personal.

So far, we’ve asked: *What’s the point* of hallowing God’s name. Now we must ask:

2. What’s the proof of “hallowing” God’s name?

What’s the proof of it in your life? How can you know that you’re growing in your own desire for God’s name to be hallowed? Is there a *sign*, some *indicator* that shows God is becoming your ultimate love— the most important, the most sacred thing, the supreme desire of your heart and life—the one you treasure above all else?

Jesus tells us that a key proof of this can be found in **your private prayer life**.

Earlier, we read about this in Matthew 6, in the verses just before Jesus gives us the Lord’s Prayer. He says:

“And when you pray, do not be like the hypocrites, for they love to pray standing in the synagogues and on the street corners to be seen by others. Truly I tell you, they have received their reward in full. But when you pray, go into your room, close the

door and pray to your Father, who is unseen. Then your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you.⁷

The religious hypocrites Jesus is talking about here do *not* hallow God in spite of the fact that they come across as pretty spiritual people. Why? Because what they want most is to be *seen* as spiritual people. So when they pray, they pray in public, because this gets them the attention and admiration their heart desires.

They get no acclaim for their secret prayers, so they rarely pray in secret. That's because they've made the praise they get from others their ultimate thing, rather than God himself.

Now, let me be clear: in and of itself, it's a *good thing* to pray when others are present. In fact, it's important for followers of Jesus to learn to pray aloud with others, and for others, and to be able to lead others in prayer.

But in this passage Jesus points to the fact that *we all hallow something*. Praise and adoration is inevitable for everyone, including you and me. It's not a question of *whether* we will praise and adore something, but of *what* that's going to be.

And if you want to know what that is for you, **look at what you do in secret.**

What you do in secret says a lot about what you actually hallow— about what you count as ultimate. It says a lot about who or what your functional god really is.

When you're alone, and there's nothing else to do, what tends to fill your thoughts? Do you daydream about financial success, professional acclaim, sex appeal, fashion, getting buff, hobbies, entertainment, food, or other things beside God that you look to for a sense of self-worth or comfort?

Are you someone who only tends to pray when you're in trouble? It's when things go bad that you get back into praying. But when things get better, you stop. What's that all about?

Well, if you hallow something other than God, you'll find that you only pray when that thing is at stake. And therefore, your prayer life is inconsistent.

Sure, you'll pray when there's trouble—when your family's in trouble, when your finances are in trouble, when your health is in trouble, when your career is in trouble, when your

⁷ Matthew 6:5-6 (NIV)

reputation is in trouble. But otherwise, you don't really have a private prayer life to speak of.

You see, one of most unmistakable ways to tell that you have a vital Christian faith is to look at your prayer life. Do you pray consistently in secret? Do you praise and enjoy God in secret?

Why is private prayer such important proof that we're learning to hallow God?

Pastor Tim Keller explains that apart from our private prayer lives, we can engage in almost every other aspect of Christianity for the sake of receiving selfish rewards that have nothing to do with devotion to God's name.⁸

For example: You attend church. You serve in one or more ministries. You live a moral life. And let's be clear, all those things are essential. But you can go about them in a selfish way. You can do the right things for the wrong reasons often without realizing it.

You can do such things so others can give you kudos for being such a spiritual person, or such a talented person.

You can do such things just to please people, to keep them happy with you, liking you.

You can do such things simply because you like being part of a supportive group.

You can do such things because you love the feeling of being a religious insider.

You can do such things because they make you feel superior to others who don't believe or behave as you do.

We might even be tempted to pat ourselves on the back for how well Cornerstone is doing, instead of being careful to give all the glory and thanks to God, recognizing that apart from him, we can do nothing.

You see, there can be external rewards for our involvement in church life that have nothing to do with devotion to God himself, with the hallowing of God's name.

⁸ Tim Keller sermon, *Adoration: Hallowed Be Your Name*, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mfuBKyrU-mw>.

But if you have a growing private prayer life—not a perfect one—but a real one that grows over time in its consistency and robustness— it’s a sign that you’ve come to hallow God’s name— that you’re seeing and pursuing him as the ultimate thing in your life. Why? Because your private prayer life doesn’t come with all these potential external rewards attached to it. Which is why Jesus simply says:

But when you pray, go into your room, close the door and pray to your Father, who is unseen. Then your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you. ⁹

Reward you with what? With kudos? With riches? With a problem-free life? No! He rewards you with more of *himself*, because *he’s* become your heart’s truest desire. *He’s* the one you want! The reward of a rich private prayer life is more of *God himself*.

The religious hypocrites, on the other hand, “have their reward in full,” says Jesus. They prayed in order to gain a reputation as spiritual people. Why? Because that’s what they hallowed. And they got what they wanted. They had their reward in full.

But would such a reward sustain their heart in the long run? Not a chance. Only God can do that—which is precisely why we need to hallow his name—to make God our heart’s true treasure— because our heart’s truest need is for God. And so there’s no greater reward than to have more of God himself. And in him, Jesus says we also have everything else we could ever need.

When in your private moments you think thoughts like, “I’ve just *got* to have *this...*” Or, “If I don’t get *that*, my life might as well be over,” or, “If I were ever to lose such and such, I’d just fall to pieces,” then guess what? You’ve found what you hallow. And the thing you hallow is the thing that runs your life— for better or for worse.

So as you pray, *Father hallowed be your name*, some of you will need to demote other things from the hallowed places that you’ve given them in your life. You might need to demote your job, or your kids, or your culture of origin, or your financial or social ambitions, maybe even your ministry. What is it that you need to demote so that the hallowed place in your life goes to God alone?

Only in praising and adoring God for who he is does your perspective on life get healed. Only in hallowing God’s name does everything comes back into proper focus.

⁹ Matthew 5:6 (NIV)

That's why, in his model prayer, Jesus teaches us to pray for God's name to be hallowed before we ask for anything for ourselves—that God would be treasured and loved above all things—in us, through us, and throughout the world.

And one of the most vital means for becoming a person who hallows God's name is to cultivate a growing, dedicated (and in due time a) flourishing secret life of prayer and praise.

www.cornerstonechurch.ca/lordsprayerguide

To that end, many of you have been using The Lord's Prayer Guide resource that we're making available throughout this series. Each day the prayer guide offers a short reflection based on the Lord's Prayer, some related prayer points you can pray through, as well as some suggested worship songs to listen to that connect with the day's theme. You can access a free copy at the link you see on the screen.

Another tool I would recommend to help you cultivate your private prayer life is a free app called **Lectio 365**.

So many Cornerstone people have told me that they find this app really, really helpful, and I too have found it helpful for my own prayer life. There are beautifully written morning and evening prayers each day, along with rich scripture meditations and helpful reflections. You can read the prayers, or use the audio version which allows you to pray along as you listen with meditative instrumental music in the background.

So look it up in your app store—Lectio 365— as a means of cultivating a secret life of prayer that will enable you grow as someone who hallows the Father's name—as someone who gives God the ultimate place in your heart and in your life.

Maybe you heard today's message, and you feel heavy-hearted. You're thinking, "Man, when I look at my private prayer life—or lack thereof—it seems pretty clear that I have not given God the ultimate place in my heart and in my life."

But there's a difference between conviction and condemnation. The Holy Spirit convicts you of where you need to change and grow, and invites and encourages you to draw closer to God. The devil whispers not words of conviction, but lies of condemnation: "You should be ashamed of yourself. Your prayer life is a joke. What kind of Christian are you? Why bother trying?"

But the Bible says,

there is no condemnation for those who belong to Christ Jesus.¹⁰

So if you feel condemned right now, then you can be sure it's not coming from God. God is simply calling you back to himself today. He's saying, "Yes, you've been wandering, but come. Come into your room and close the door and pray to me in secret. And I'll meet with you there, and change your heart and your life, so that it will be your joy and highest pleasure to hallow my name."

But here's the most important thing about hallowing God's name:

God the Father's name is ultimately and fully hallowed in and through the name of his Son, Jesus Christ.

From first to last, and at every point in between, Jesus lives, prays, and dies to see the Father's name hallowed on earth as it is in heaven.

It turns out that Jesus—the one who teaches us to pray so earnestly for the Father's name be hallowed—is himself the answer to that prayer. And so, when the name of Jesus is lifted up, the name of God the Father is hallowed.

And so at this time, the worship team is going to come back up, and right after we give our tithes an offerings, together we are going to lift up the beautiful name of Jesus in song.

Closing Prayer

¹⁰ Romans 8:1 (NLT)