

***A Holy Prayer:
Your Name Be Holy...
And Our Lives***

**Catechism Q/A 119, 122
Genesis 39:1-23**

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Another season of ministry has begun at Calvin Church. And a new set of tasks to perform for our pastoral elders. One of which is visiting the various Sunday School classes. Now, I may be wrong, but it seems to me that one of the elders learned something last season.

She entered the gr.1&2 class. The teacher had stepped out for a moment. So the elder began to ask the kids what they had learned. One little boy said God created the whole world and everything in it. A little girl said that God loves us very much. Another little girl said that God had a son named Jesus who came to earth to save us from our sins.

The elder was very pleased. Looks like our Reformed emphasis on a sound theological basis for our covenant youth is truly taking hold. And then it came. The hand waving from the corner -"I know what God's NAME is...it's Harold, same as mine."

Oh?

"Sure, we say it all the time.

"Our Father, who art in heaven,

Harold be Thy name..."

Of course, I may be wrong... but seems to me that is what I heard :-)

Misunderstanding a common phrase of the church.

It happens more often than we think.

When we've been in the faith for some time, it is very easy to slip into "church lingo." We begin to use terms that are part of the Christian culture, and have a general idea what we're talking about. But what, really, do we mean?

A good exercise, at least once in a while, is to try and replace the "church lingo" with terms that anyone shopping at Food Basics would understand.

So - how would you rephrase the first petition of the Lord's Prayer?

Hallowed be your name.

"Let your name be holy, Father in heaven."

There's the start.

Take it another level though.

"Let your name be..."

Well, what?

What is "holy"?

"Holy" - it's root meaning comes from an ancient Hebrew term meaning,

"set apart and set above."

That which is holy is different from everything else; more important and valuable than common or "profane" items or people. It is a "cut above" other ordinary things.

I was visiting with a member of the congregation this week who was very concerned about a lost pendant. It was a family heirloom - with many memories attached to it. It was far from ordinary. Of great worth to the family. Special. Set apart. It had to be recovered.

That's holy.

We're praying about the name of our Father in heaven.

A far from ordinary name.

Of great worth.

Special.

Set apart.

To be treasured.

There is nothing that is comparable in greatness or grandeur or importance to Him; on the ladder of importance he is many, many rungs above the nearest rival.....

..... **many** cuts above!

"Hallowed be Your name."

Not that God isn't already holy.

He is.

And always will be.

Isaiah 6 peels back the cover of heaven, and gives us a glimpse -

1 In the year that King Uzziah died, I saw the Lord sitting on a throne, high and lofty; and the hem of his robe filled the temple.

2 Seraphs were in attendance above him; each had six wings: with two they covered their faces, and with two they covered their feet, and with two they flew.

3 And one called to another and said: "Holy, holy, holy is the LORD of hosts; the whole earth is full of his glory."

4 The pivots on the thresholds shook at the voices of those who called, and the house filled with smoke.

5 And I said: "Woe is me! I am lost, for I am a man of unclean lips, and I live among a people of unclean lips; yet my eyes have seen the King, the LORD of hosts!" (v.1-5)

Or,

to use the language from the heavenly worshipers in *Revelation* -

to Him who sits on the throne and to the Lamb be praise and honour and glory and power for ever and ever!

Indeed, God **IS** holy!

"Hallowed be... your **name**."

You've probably already noticed that I've blurred the distinction between the holiness of God himself, and the holiness of his name.

That's because the name represents the person.

The name carries the reputation of the person.

It does for God.

It does for us.

This hits most of us when we choose a name for our child. Know many sons named Adolph? Any daughters named Jezebel? We want names of honour. Names that reflect, perhaps, a heritage of which we are proud. Or a trait for which we are praying.

When someone does something well and establishes a reputation we say that they "*make a name for themselves*." They acquire a certain prestige.

When we pray, "*Hallowed be Your name*" we're praying not for a change in the actual stature of God.

We're praying that God be **treated** as Holy;

treated with the respect He deserves.

with a respect that is a cut above anyone else's.

And - notice - we pray for that before we pray for anything else.

As in the 10 commandments, so also in the Lord's Prayer.

God's needs first. Ours second.

And so in our lives.

Can you hear the echo of Psalm 37:4?

"Delight yourself in the Lord,

and He will give you the desires of your heart."

Or, just after the Lord's Prayer in Matthew 6?

"Seek first His kingdom and His righteousness;
and all these things will be given to you as well."

God first.

It's the attitude of Psalm 145

Let's read the entire Psalm of David together.

Psalm 145:1 I will extol you, my God and King, and bless your name forever and ever.

2 Every day I will bless you, and praise your name forever and ever...

21 ...My mouth will speak the praise of the LORD, and all flesh will bless his holy name forever and ever.

Really?

Or is just that nice liturgical language which will go back up on the shelf till next Sunday?

That's the question I have to ask of myself.

And which I'd invite you to ask of yourself here tonight.

Our Father in heaven - hallowed be your name.

A petition of four small words.

And yet one of the most powerful and difficult petitions that could spill off our lips.

Calvin paraphrases the prayer this way:

Lord, let anything in my life

that obscures or impairs peoples' vision of your glory;

anything in my actions or speech that distracts people from you,

or is an insult to your reputation

let any such thing

cease.

Andrew Kuyvenhoven said -

*The worst thing my life can be is an obstacle between anybody and God. And the **best** thing I can be is a stepping stone by which someone reaches the Father's house.....*

What we are asking the Holy Spirit to do to us when we pray "Hallowed be Your name" is to reshape our lives so that they act like a stunning arrangement of flowers which so impresses people who see it that they immediately inquire about who did the arranging and where they could get an arrangement like that.

So, what sort of "bouquet" is your life?

Would you be embarrassed if someone posted a video documenting what went on in your life last week?

and

Would that video look any different than anyone else's video?

I can't help but be inspired by Joseph.

He lived in a whirlwind of injustice, power and intrigue.

Strange culture and language

An unknown commodity.

How should, how could, how **WOULD** Joseph conduct himself?

Here's one litmus test - as every fibre of his young male self is tempted by a woman of prestige and power.

If he does, she's happy. May well surround him with favours of all sorts.

If he doesn't, he risks her spite and wrath.

What guides his response to her come-on's?

What serves as his moral compass?

We see it in the stunning statement:

*"How could I do such a wicked thing and sin against.....
not Potiphar
not Mrs. Potiphar
but God.*

"Hallowed be thy name."

Lord, let my words and actions put a shine on your reputation.

Not throw dirt on it!

Even if no one but you sees the video.

So that you can, as it were, give the angels a holy nudge, and say as you said about your servant Job -

"There, do you see how he serves and loves me?"

Last week I suggested that one of the best things we can do is think of heaven as very, very near.

As just around the corner.

As existing right around us, but in another dimension, or on another plane of reality.

Tucked into a corner of the epistle to the Philippians is this powerful phrase -

The Lord is near. (Phil 4:5)

The Lord is near.

Does that refer to the return of Jesus; that it is near at hand?

Or, perhaps, that Jesus is physically much closer to us than we think?

I suspect that to be what Paul is hinting at.

The Lord is near.

The One whose vision Isaiah saw in chapter 6, and John in Revelation

The Holy One.

What does he see in our lives?

- In the way we carve, or don't carve out, space in our daily routine to spend time with him in Scripture reading, meditation and prayer?

- In how eager, or reluctant, we are to gather with other saints in weekly public worship?

- In how we are proud or embarrassed of carrying the name of Christ in our life?

- In the vocabulary that tumbles out of our mouth?

- In how we steward the creation, and the reasons we give to others for WHY we position ourselves ecologically the way we do?

- In how we engage or shun the political process

- In the choices we make as we educate our children

What does he see?

And what will others see this coming week?

Holy - *set apart, and set above.*

.....are we?

I can't help but be reminded of the great prayer of St. Francis -

Lord, make me a channel of your peace....

I know that my life will be a channel.

A living billboard, if you will.

It will say something.

The question is, "What?"

It's my prayer that the fingerprints of God would be all over our lives.
His hand firmly on us.
His influence visible.

Will you join me in that prayer? Saying it? And living it?