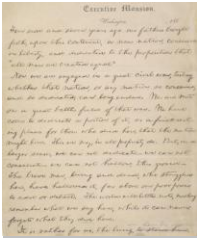


# "Hallowed Be Your Name"

The Lord's Prayer—Part 2

TEXT: REVELATION 4



Rev. Jon Dunning  
April 11, 2010

Oak Hills  
Presbyterian Church,  
Overland Park,  
Kansas

## EVERYTHING

I have a working assumption about the Lord's prayer that shapes my reasoning for preaching through this prayer in 2010: in this prayer, Jesus is naming fundamentally what it means to be human. In the Lord's prayer, Jesus is addressing the major themes of Scripture, and therefore teaches us to ask God, the Father, to meet the greatest needs that we have as His people. In Luke 11, Jesus teaches His disciples this

simple six-line prayer: "Father, hallowed be your name. Your kingdom come. Give us each day our daily bread, and forgive us our sins as we ourselves forgive everyone who is indebted to us. And lead us not into temptation."<sup>Lk 11.2-4</sup> Spotting our specific needs are easy: we all need "bread" (food) to live; without it we'd die. But we might remember Israel in the wilderness and God providing manna,<sup>Ex 16</sup> but also Jesus feeding thousands with a few loaves of bread.<sup>Mt 14.13-21, 15.32-39; Mk 6.32-44, 8.1-10; Lk 9.10-17; Jn 6.1-13</sup> What about the others? We'll come back to "hallowed". God's kingdom? God's ruling over His creation is a key theme in the Old Testament,<sup>1 Sam 8.1-9; Ps 47.2, 103.19; Mal 1.14</sup> as well as in Jesus' preaching.<sup>Mt 1.17, 23-25, 20.1-16, 22.1-14, 25.1-13</sup> The law of God is an expression of God's kingly rule over His people given for their good.<sup>Ex 20.1-21; Mt 5-7; Rom 7.7-12</sup> "Forgiveness" is a theme running throughout Scripture as well, both in terms of our need for forgiveness by God, and toward each other.<sup>Ps 32, 51; Is 53.4-6; Mt 18.15-35</sup> Finally, the temptation to trust in everything but our Creator is a constant for us.<sup>Gen 3; Mt 4.1-17; Rom 1; 1 Cor 10</sup>

Today we look at the first request of this prayer: "hallowed be your name." The word 'hallow' might trip us up—most of us haven't used it since reciting Lincoln's "Gettysburg Address" in the 8<sup>th</sup> grade. In describing the battlefield, Lincoln says: "We have come to dedicate a portion of that field ... But in a larger sense, we cannot dedicate, we cannot consecrate, we cannot hallow this ground. The brave men, living and dead who struggled here have consecrated it far above our poor power to add or detract." Lincoln uses the word "hallow" alongside "dedicate ... consecrate" as he describes setting apart a place of remembrance and honor. Humanly speaking, that's what it is to "hallow" something, "to set it apart for honor." In biblical terms the word used most often is "holy." So, this morning, we consider together our need that God's name would be holy.

To do this, we turn to Revelation 4. Somehow, in the volumes that have been written to seek out an understanding of this book we have lost the intended impact of its message. Revelation is a collection of prophetic visions given to the Apostle John, so that they would be written down, passed along as a letter, read aloud by God's people as they gathered for worship, and followed.<sup>cf. Rev. 1.1-11</sup> Whatever your familiarity with Revelation, and approach to this book has been or is, it was written to be read and applied both in its original context as we as for us today. It was written, in part, to have in immediate impact on its audience. Put yourself in John's place, and imagine seeing what he saw.

## REVELATION 4

'After this I looked, and behold, a door standing open in heaven! And the first voice, which I had heard speaking to me like a trumpet, said, "Come up here, and I will show you what must take place after this."<sup>2</sup> At once I was in the Spirit, and behold, a throne stood in heaven, with one seated on the throne.<sup>3</sup> And he who sat there had the appearance of jasper and carnelian, and around the throne was a rainbow that had the appearance of an emerald.<sup>4</sup> Around the throne were twenty-four thrones, and seated on the thrones were twenty-four elders, clothed in white garments, with golden crowns on their heads.<sup>5</sup> From the throne came flashes of lightning, and rumblings and peals of thunder, and before the throne were burning seven torches of fire, which are the seven spirits of God,<sup>6</sup> and before the throne there was as it were a sea of glass, like crystal.

And around the throne, on each side of the throne, are four living creatures, full of eyes in front and behind:<sup>7</sup> the first living creature like a lion, the second living creature like an ox, the third living creature with the face of a man, and the fourth living creature like an eagle in flight.<sup>8</sup> And the four living creatures, each of them with six wings, are full of eyes all around and within, and day and night they never cease to say,

"Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord God Almighty,  
who was and is and is to come!"

<sup>9</sup> And whenever the living creatures give glory and honor and thanks to him who is seated on the throne, who lives forever and ever,<sup>10</sup> the twenty-four elders fall down before him who is seated on the throne and worship him who lives forever and ever. They cast their crowns before the throne, saying,

"Worthy are you, 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."

## THE SONGS OF HEAVEN

Can you imagine being in John's sandals? By now, he's an old man. He is serving a sentence of exile for his proclamation of belief in Jesus.<sup>Rev 1.9</sup> Tradition has it that nearly all of his peers—the 12 disciples, and Paul, would have died or been put to death by this time. The churches to which he writes, have been around long enough for some to develop a comfortable apathy, while others suffered.<sup>cf. Rev 2-3</sup> What would you do to encourage John to keep going, and how would you direct him to lead those churches in his care? For John, it's the voice of Jesus Himself that calls John to stand in the place of the men of history who have in one way or another known God's holiness: Moses,<sup>Ex 19-40</sup> Isaiah,<sup>Is 6.1-13</sup> and Ezekiel.<sup>Ez 1</sup> This experience of the holiness of God is so bright he can barely look much less describe it in detail. We have sketch of what he saw, what he heard, and what he felt being in the very presence of God. It's tempting to walk through this passage verse-by-verse, image-by-image, and number-by-number to unfold the import and depth of this chapter of Scripture, but for the purpose of our time together this morning, I want to let it stand on its own.

But do you hear the song of the four living creatures – those that remind him of earthly creatures, but only by comparison, not direct correspondence?<sup>4,8</sup> They sing of the One on the throne as if mere words could never be enough. They begin with a declaration of God’s holiness—repeated 3 times as a display of absolute emphasis. If in earthly terms “holy” means separate or dedicated, in biblical terms to speak of God as “holy” is to speak of Him as the “immortal, invisible, the only God”<sup>1 Tim 1.17</sup> who Himself asks: “To whom will you compare me, that I should be like him?”<sup>Is 40.25</sup> To think of this as saying “separate, separate, separate” hardly does the scene justice. He is the All-powerful One. He is the eternal One. He is Holy.

The elders, clothed as royalty, each a king in his own right, respond in a way completely unbecoming those of such stature. They do not offer polite applause or a modest ovation; they are undone. They fall down at the feet of the One who is holy and rip off their crowns. Their song puts into words what their actions display more clearly: this One alone is worthy of a crown and a throne. The strongest, wisest, and richest are but servants of the One who in holiness created all things. They too cannot stop their singing. He is holy.

## PRAYING THIS PRAYER

Jesus teaches us to pray “hallowed be your name.” God’s name is His reputation, His fame, but it extends to all of the ways, word and action, by which He has made Himself known to us. God is holy; our prayer is not that He would become anything other than what he already is and ever will be. Instead it is the prayer that we would know His holiness, and that He would continue to reveal His holiness in His ways in this world.

In Revelation 4, two at least two ways to pray this specifically come to mind. First of all, we are to pray that we (individually, as families, as a church) would find only He who is holy to be worthy of our unflattering and unrestrained devotion. Pray that your understanding of God would grow in such a way that you would know more of His holiness. Pray that this vision of God—the almighty, eternal, worthy, Creator would be enough for you. A second thought on praying “hallowed be your name” is to ask God to order your life such that His holiness is on display—and to help you and others to see His work in this. This is different from praying for perfection in your own life.

## OUR NEED

Returning to where we began, how is it that “hallowed be your name” addresses one of our core needs? What’s happening in Revelation 4 and that to which Jesus directs us in Luke 11 is not distraction from real life to calm us down. God’s holiness is the only thing that allows us to fully engage with our world—because it’s His world. Nor is it as simple as calling us to reorient our priorities from selfish things to God things. One of the themes of Scripture is that we are a people in great need, and that we are a people who rebel against the very idea that we are in need. So how do we come to know that need? We need to be conquered. We need to behold truth and beauty to see our need. I hear variations on the thought somehow sin and evil are ‘necessary’ in this world because only when we see the bad stuff can we truly appreciate the good. No. We need to know the holiness of God, because only when we behold His Truth, Wisdom, Beauty, Power, and Eternity are we driven through our despair into Hope through our Savior, who meets our need with holiness and declares us holy. May we see His holiness. Lord, teach us to pray.

## Notes: