

# TEACH US TO PRAY THROUGH PRAISE

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By Pastor Stan

Matthew 6:9

## PASTOR STAN WEESE

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## INTRO.

-- North Center's vision is to be a disciple-making church, and we often use a diagram called "The Disciple's Cross" to illustrate what it means to be a disciple.

-- Each year we take a different part of the cross to emphasize throughout the year, and for 2015 we are emphasizing the discipline of prayer. To start this year's emphasis on prayer I'm beginning the year with a series of sermons examining the Lord's Prayer. There are two different places in the Gospels where you find the Lord's Prayer. One is in Luke 11 where Jesus has been praying and the Disciples ask Him to teach them in prayer and in response Jesus gives them the Lord's Prayer as a model or guide to prayer. The other location for the Lord's Prayer is in Matthew 6, where Jesus gives the Lord's Prayer as a part of the Sermon on the Mount. Although the prayers in Luke and Matthew are very similar, it's the version in Matthew 6 that most closely resembles the wording that most of us know as the Lord's Prayer, and that's the passage that we're using for this series. So turn in a Bible to Matthew 6.

Matthew 6

-- The Sermon on the Mount covers chapters 5-7 of Matthew. Jesus' primary purpose is to teach us about discipleship - how to live as members of His Kingdom. He gives us the Lord's Prayer Jesus to teach us how we are to pray.

The first thing that Jesus emphasizes is that prayer is to focus not on us but on God. When most of us think about prayer, we envision our asking God for something - to give us something or to help us to do something. But in the Lord's Prayer Jesus teaches us that prayer is not first and foremost about us but about God. Prayer is directed to and centered on God.

## I. The Disciple's Address (v. 9a)

-- In the first sermon in this series we looked at how Jesus teaches us to address God.

v. 9a, "Pray then like this: 'Our Father in heaven...'"

-- This way of addressing God holds in balance what would appear to be two contrasting truths about God: His immanence and His transcendence.

A. God Is Immanent ("Our Father")

-- On the one hand, when we address God as "our Father," we are emphasizing that He is immanent, that He is a God who is personal, caring and approachable, a God with whom we can have a close, even intimate, relationship.

B. God Is Transcendent (in heaven")

-- On the other hand, when we say that He is "Our Father in heaven," we are reminding ourselves that He is also transcendent - that He is the exalted, majestic and sovereign Lord of all. While we may approach Him intimately, we must never do so casually or irreverently. While we are invited into His presence, we must come with humility and awe.

## II. The Disciple's Desire (v. 9b)

-- Today, I want us to focus our attention on the Disciple's desire that is declared immediately following the prayer's address:

v. 9b, "Hallowed be your name."

A. "Name"

1. In the Bible

-- Throughout the Bible great significance is attached to a person's name. Biblical parents would choose a name because of its meaning and in hopes that the child would grow up exhibiting

the characteristics of that name. For example, when Isaac's wife Rachael gave birth to her last son, she knew she was about to die and named the son "Ben-oni," son of my sorrow, but Isaac later changed the name to "Ben-jamin" (son of the right hand).

## 2. The Puritans

-- The Puritans in colonial times did much the same thing. Hoping that their children would live up to their names, the Puritans gave their daughters names like Charity, Hope, Patience, and the one that I like best of all - Silence.

## 3. The Burning Bush

-- Remember when God spoke to Moses from the burning bush and called him to deliver Israel from its bondage in Egypt, Moses asked God:

**Exodus 3:13, 14-15** Then Moses said to God, "If I come to the people of Israel and say to them, 'The God of your fathers has sent me to you,' and they ask me, 'What is his name?' what shall I say to them?" <sup>14</sup> God said to Moses, "I AM WHO I AM." And he said, "Say this to the people of Israel, 'I AM has sent me to you.'" <sup>15</sup> God also said to Moses, "Say this to the people of Israel, 'The LORD, the God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, has sent me to you.' This is my name forever, and thus I am to be remembered throughout all generations.

-- God's name represents who God is and what He's like - His nature and attributes.

So when we pray "hallowed be your name," we're talking about the person and character of God.

### B. "Hallowed"

1. But what do we mean by "hallowed?" That's not a word that we use very much. Other than the Lord's Prayer, I associate the word "hallow" largely with Lincoln's Gettysburg Address. Four and a half months after the Battle of Gettysburg, President Lincoln travelled to the site of that great battle to participate in a dedication service for the cemetery of those who had died in the battle. In his brief but profound and memorable remarks the President made this statement:

"But in a larger sense, 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."

-- When Lincoln talked about "hallowing" that ground, he was talking about setting it apart and honoring its specialness. Lincoln was saying that the ceremony being held that day to dedicate the battlefield as a cemetery was not what made that ground special. Rather, it was the bravery and sacrifice of the soldiers who fought and died there that set it apart. The battlefield had already been "hallowed," set apart and made special by the actions of those soldiers. Lincoln and the others there were just recognizing its specialness. Before the battle those fields had been used for farming. They would never be used that way again - they had been hallowed, set apart from ordinary uses.

2. Jesus is saying something similar here in the Lord's Prayer. For God's name to be "hallowed" means that God is set apart.

HCSB, "May your name be honored as holy."

NLT, "May your name be kept holy."

The word translated "hallowed" comes from the root word meaning "holy," and the basic idea in that word is something set apart to be honored as special. For God's name to be "hallowed" means that God is set apart and to be honored for who He is - the exalted, majestic, awesome and loving Heavenly Father. As with Lincoln and those dedicating the battlefield, we are not the ones who hallow God's name - it is already hallowed, already set apart, exalted, made special by God Himself - we just recognize and declare that truth.

## III. Prayer as Praise

-- The act of recognizing that God's name is hallowed - recognizing and declaring God's exaltedness is what we call praise or adoration.

### A. Richard Foster's Definition

-- In his great book *Prayer: Finding the Heart's True Home*, Richard Foster says this:

"Adoration is the spontaneous yearning of the heart to worship, honor, magnify, and bless God...all true prayer is saturated with it. It is the air in which prayer breathes...the rarefied air of selfless devotion. We ask for nothing but to cherish him. We seek nothing but his exaltation. We focus on nothing but his goodness...we love God for himself, for his very being, for his radiant joy."

### B. Our Weakness and God's Delight

1. For many, perhaps most of us, the truth is that although praise and adoration are the heart and soul of prayer, it may be the weakest part of our prayers. We are much better at asking God for something than telling Him that we love Him. We are much better at thanking Him for what He does than at praising Him for who He is.

2. Let me make two suggestions here:

a. First, don't let your weakness deter you. God delights in even our weak expressions

of adoration and praise. Just as a mother takes a wilted bouquet of dandelions and puts them in a cup of water on the dining room table as if they were a dozen roses, and just as a father takes a crude hand scrawled sign that says, "You're the Greatest Daddy in the World" and puts on his office wall above professional awards and plaques, so our Heavenly Father delights in the feeble but heartfelt expressions of adoration and praise from His children.

b. The second suggestion: learn how to express praise and adoration to God. The best tutor is the book of Psalms, which is filled with declarations of praise and expressions of adoration to our God.

**Psalm 34:1** I will bless the LORD at all times; his praise shall continually be in my mouth.

**Psalm 146:1-2** Praise the LORD! Praise the LORD, O my soul! <sup>2</sup> I will praise the LORD as long as I live; I will sing praises to my God while I have my being.

**Psalm 103:1-5** Bless the LORD, O my soul, and all that is within me, bless his holy name! <sup>2</sup> Bless the LORD, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits, <sup>3</sup> who forgives all your iniquity, who heals all your diseases, <sup>4</sup> who redeems your life from the pit, who crowns you with steadfast love and mercy, <sup>5</sup> who satisfies you with good so that your youth is renewed like the eagle's.

## CONCLUSION

Commenting on the part of the Lord's Prayer that we've focused on today, Martin Luther said this:

"To pray 'hallowed be your name' demands...that God's honor be sought in all, before all, and [above] all else and that our whole life [overflow] forever only to God's glory."