

THE LORD'S PRAYER | WEEK 2 — CHARACTER

Matthew 6:9 — “Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name.”

Before we focus on one line today, every week in this series we're going to hear the prayer Jesus gave us in its entirety.

Read Matthew 6:9–13

“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.’

Today we're focusing on the very first sentence: “Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name.” We will be sitting with this truth: **Big Idea:** Prayer begins with who God is—and asks that His character become visible through us.

THE PRAYER THAT WENT AROUND THE WORLD

Years ago, I stood on the Mount of Olives in Jerusalem, in a church built around the place traditionally associated with Jesus teaching His disciples to pray.

And what struck me wasn't the architecture. It was the walls. Everywhere I walked in the gardens—down corridors, around corners, row after row—there was the Lord's Prayer in colorful ceramic plaques. I couldn't read most of them.

One was in French. Another in Korean. Another in Arabic. Another in Latin. Languages from Africa, Asia, Europe, Latin America—languages from all over the world. And I remember walking those walls thinking about what Jesus said right there:

“Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name...” Two thousand years ago, Jesus taught a handful of disciples how to pray. And today, the nations pray it.

The prayer made it to the ends of the earth. But here's the question I've been thinking about: **The prayer has reached the nations. But can the nations see what our holy God is actually like?**

Because Jesus didn't simply give us words that would one day be prayed in hundreds of languages. He taught us to pray: **"Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name."**

1. OUR FATHER IS NEAR—AND ABOVE

Last week we spent time on those first two words: *Our Father*. Jesus teaches us that prayer begins with relationship. We don't approach God as terrified strangers. **Through the death and resurrection of Jesus, we have been brought into the family of God as sons and daughters.**

God is not a distant authority we petition from afar. **He is a Father who has welcomed orphaned children into His family.**

But Jesus doesn't stop there. He says: *"Our Father — in heaven."*

And those two words change everything. Because the moment Jesus adds *in heaven*, He is not reminding us how far God is. He is telling us that God is close enough to call Father. And He is great enough to reign over everything.

Hold both. If we only think of God as near, we can make Him too small—a God who fits our preferences. But if we only think of Him as above, He can feel unreachable.

Jesus gives us both: a Father who is intimate and transcendent.

I've actually been trying to teach this to my three-and-a-half-year-old. And if you've ever tried to explain theology to a toddler, you discover very quickly that **"it's a mystery" only works about twice.** Eventually they want answers.

I've been intentional about praying with Leo since he was about two. Because that's really the premise of this whole series—nobody automatically knows how to pray. The disciples themselves said, *"Jesus, teach us to pray."* **Our children need that too.**

And lately, like most little kids, Leo sometimes gets scared at night. Nightmares. Something in the dark. And in those moments, there's something about God I want him to carry his whole life.

I'll say: *"Leo, God is in heaven—but He also lives in your heart."* And I can see his little mind working through it.

Wait... God is up there? But He's also here? **"Yes, Leo. It's called the doctrine of omnipresence. Get it through your head!"**

And honestly — I'm 38, and I'm still working through that too. Aren't we all still getting there? Because what Jesus is teaching us to say at the very beginning of this prayer is something that should take our breath away if we let it.

The God who is high and lifted up — the God before whom the seraphim cover their faces and cry *holy, holy, holy* — that God lets a three-year-old call Him Father. He bends down to a child's bedside fear and says *I am here*. And He simultaneously holds the universe together in the palm of his hand.

He is near — but He is not small.

He's there — but He hears when you call.

And this matters for the rest of the prayer. Because when Jesus teaches us to say ***"hallowed be your name"*** — the name we are asking the world to treat as holy belongs to this God. Not a manageable God. Not a comfortable God. The God of heaven. The Father of Jesus. The one the angels cannot look at directly.

Because prayer begins with who God is before it gets to what we need.

2. HIS NAME IS HOLY

Jesus continues: **"Hallowed be your name."** Now, *hallowed* is probably one of those words most of us only use because Jesus used it.

Nobody walked into work this week and said, *"Good morning, everybody. Hallowed be this break room."* So what does it mean?

To hallow something means to treat it as holy—to set it apart, to give it the weight and honor it deserves.

Let me give you a picture. In 1997, Major League Baseball did something it had never done before. It retired Jackie Robinson's number 42—not just from the Dodgers, but across **all of Major League Baseball**.

No player on any team would wear 42 again. Why? There's nothing inherently special about the numbers four and two. **It was because of the name attached to that number.**

Jackie Robinson had come to represent something—courage, sacrifice, breaking the color barrier in baseball—and so baseball essentially said: **This number will no longer be treated like every other number.**

We're setting it apart. We're going to treat it differently because of the name it represents. That's a small picture of what it means **to hallow something**.

But here's where the analogy completely breaks down. Jackie Robinson's name was honored because of what he accomplished.

God's name is holy because of who He is. We don't make God holy by honoring Him.

God is holy whether anybody recognizes it or not. And when the Bible calls God *holy*, it doesn't simply mean God is really, really good. It means **there is no one like Him.**

God isn't simply the greatest thing in the universe. He made the universe. He's not one being among many who happens to be bigger, stronger and smarter than everybody else. **He is Creator. Everything else is creation.**

That's why when people actually encounter the holiness of God in Scripture, nobody responds casually. Moses takes off his sandals. Isaiah sees the Lord and cries, **“Woe is me!”** The seraphim cover their faces and cry: **“Holy, holy, holy is the LORD Almighty; the whole earth is full of his glory.”**

And Scripture doesn't merely call Him holy, but **“holy, holy, holy.”** **There is no one like Him.** And that's important because when Jesus teaches us to pray: **“Hallowed be your name...”**

We're not praying: **“God, would You please become holy?”** You can't add holiness to God. Before anyone worshiped Him, He was holy. If everyone rejected Him, He would still be holy.

So what are we asking? **“Father, because You are holy, may Your name be treated as holy.”**

May You be recognized for who You actually are. May Your name carry the weight it deserves. May the world see that **there is no one like You.** And here's where this prayer starts getting uncomfortable.

Because if I'm praying for God's name to be treated as holy in the world...**how is the world supposed to see what God is like?**

That's what we're praying because: **Prayer begins with who God is—and asks that His character become visible through us.**

Which raises the questions: how? **He puts His name on His people.**

3. WE BEAR GOD'S NAME

When Jesus teaches us to pray, **“Hallowed be your name,”** He's not introducing a brand-new idea. God had always intended to have a people in the world who would **bear His name.** This goes all the way back to Israel.

In Exodus 19, God calls them **“a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.”** But their holiness wasn't only for them. **The nations were watching.**

Deuteronomy 28 says: **“The LORD will establish you as his holy people... Then all the peoples on earth will see that you are called by the name of the LORD.”**

Don't miss it:

A holy people.

Bearing His name.

Before all the peoples of the earth.

Israel didn't just know God's name. **They carried it.**

This reality is so important to the heart of God that he also included it in the Ten Commandments. Exodus 20: **“You shall not misuse the name of the LORD your God.”**

We usually hear *“Don't take the Lord's name in vain”* and think, *Don't use God's name as a cuss word.* And yes—God's name should never be treated irreverently. But Israel was also a people who **carried God's name before the nations.**

That's why Jesus' prayer matters: **“Hallowed be Your name.”** Father, don't let me carry Your name casually. Let my life honor the name I bear. Let people think, there is something different about their God when they see my life!

Their holiness was missional. But here's the tragedy. By the time you get to Ezekiel, God says something devastating about His people.

Ezekiel 36:20: **“Wherever they went among the nations they profaned my holy name.”** Do you see the reversal? They were supposed to bear His holy name among the nations. Instead, they profaned His holy name among the nations through their disobedience.

God had not become less holy. His people were living in such a way that the nations could no longer see His holiness clearly.

And I think that's where this prayer gets uncomfortable for us. **Because you can say God's name is holy with your lips...while making God's name look common with your life.**

And church, **we bear His name too.** We call ourselves **Christians.** Christ-ians.

People belonging to Christ. People identified with Jesus. And when people know you follow Jesus, whether you realize it or not, **they are learning something about Jesus by watching you.**

- When your coworkers know you're a Christian—you bear His name.
- When your children hear you pray and watch how you live—you bear His name.
- When someone disagrees with you and watches how you respond—you bear His name.
- When nobody is watching...you still bear His name.

Peter actually takes the language God used for Israel and applies it to the church. First Peter 2 says: **“You are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's special possession...”**

Why? **“That you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light.”**

And then Peter says: **“Live such good lives among the pagans...”** Why? So that they may **“glorify God.”**

A holy people.

Bearing His name.

Living among the nations.

So that the nations can see what God is like.

Church, holiness has never just been about staying away from bad things. Holiness is not simply, *“Look at all the things I don't do.”* **Holiness is becoming the kind of people whose lives make the character of God visible in the world.**

And that changes the question. The question isn't only: **“Do people know I'm a Christian?”**

Maybe the more important question is: **“What do people think Christ is like because they know I'm a Christian?”**

I bear His name. And suddenly, “Hallowed be your name” isn't an abstract religious phrase anymore. It's a deeply personal prayer.

Father, may Your name be seen as holy in this world—and don't let my life tell the world otherwise.

So what does it look like to pray this with our lives? Would you pray this sentence with me: **“Hallowed be your name.”**

Do you realize what you just prayed? You didn't merely pray, "God, go make yourself famous." **You prayed: "Father, let Your name be treated as holy—and start with me."**

Then holiness becomes intensely practical without becoming legalistic:

- Hallowed be Your name in my relationships.
- Hallowed be Your name in how I raise my children.
- Hallowed be Your name in how I treat people who hurt me.
- **Hallowed be Your name through my life.**

But let me make this really practical.

What might it actually look like for God's name to be hallowed through your life?

Sometimes it looks like somebody noticing that there is something different about you.

Maybe you're unusually generous with somebody. And they ask: **"Why are you doing this for me?"**

Maybe you forgive somebody who knows they don't deserve it. **"Why aren't you angry with me?"**

Church, **those are holy moments.** Because someone has just encountered something of the character of God **through the life of somebody who bears His name.** And when that happens, don't miss the opportunity. *Let me tell you about a moment when this became very real for me.*

Last summer, an older woman I know was given this large skateboard ramp by her boss. He told her she could sell it and keep the money—but she had absolutely no idea how to sell something like that.

So I told her, *"I'll help you. If we sell it, we'll split some of the money."*

And church, I worked for this thing! Researching, listing on multiple platforms, answering dozens of messages, driving back and forth, negotiating with buyers.

Finally, I got it sold for about \$2,500.

And afterward I told her, *"I think \$900 for everything I put into this would be fair."*

She immediately said, "Oh my goodness! You're trying to take advantage of me. I thought I'd give you maybe \$150 or \$200."

And I'll be honest—I didn't think I was taking advantage of her. I still thought what I was asking was fair!

But the moment she said those words—“*You're trying to take advantage of me*”—something else became more important to me than proving that I was right.

She knows I'm a pastor. She knows I follow Jesus.

And suddenly I thought: *I never want this woman telling somebody, “Yeah, I knew a Christian pastor once. He took advantage of me.”*

So I sent her all of it. Not \$1,600. **All \$2,500.**

And I told her, “*I don't want there to be any question in your mind about whether I was trying to take advantage of you. Keep all of it.*”

And she never wrote me back.

I couldn't control what she thought about me. But I could control what I did with the name I carry.

And in that moment, \$900 became less important to me than this: *I don't want my life to give somebody a reason to misunderstand the character of the Jesus whose name I bear.*

Father, hallowed be Your name—in me.

GOSPEL CONNECTION

And maybe you know exactly what that feels like. There are moments when I have carried His name well. **And there are moments when I have profaned the very name I pray would be hallowed.**

But here's the good news of the gospel: **Jesus carried the Father's name perfectly.** Jesus said, “**Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father.**”

Every place Israel failed, every place I fail, every place you fail—Jesus perfectly revealed what the Father is like. He perfectly showed us the Father's holiness, mercy, justice and love.

And then He went to the cross for people like us who haven't always carried God's name well. So this isn't: “**Try harder so you don't embarrass God.**”

That's not the gospel.

Through Jesus, we are forgiven, brought into the Father's family, given His name—and by His Spirit, He is actually forming His character in us.

We don't live holy lives so that God will make us His children. We pursue holiness because through Jesus, we are his children.

Jesus doesn't teach perfect people to pray, "Hallowed be your name." He teaches disciples who are still being formed.

So we keep coming back: "Father, hallowed be Your name in me."

Here's a really simple way to think about hallowing God's name in your life:

LIVE IT.

NAME IT.

POINT TO HIM.

First, **LIVE IT.** Let the character of God actually become visible in your life. Be generous because your Father is generous. Forgive because you've been forgiven. Show mercy because you've received mercy. Welcome people because God welcomed you. Love people who cannot repay you because that's how Jesus loved you. **Live it.**

But then, when somebody notices...

NAME IT. Because here's what we sometimes do. Someone says: *"Why are you doing this for me?"* And we say: *"Oh, don't worry about it. I'm just a kind person, and humble."*

Well, guess who just got the glory? **You did, not God!** What if instead you simply said: **"God has been so generous to me. I want to be generous to you."**

Or: **"God has shown me so much kindness. I want you to experience some of that kindness too."**

Or sometimes it can be as simple as: **"I'm doing this because I follow Jesus, and I believe this is what He would want me to do."**

It doesn't have to be weird. It doesn't have to become a sermon. You don't have to turn every act of kindness into a five-minute gospel presentation. Sometimes all you have to do is **connect what they're experiencing to the God you're representing.**

Live it.

Name it.

And then POINT TO HIM.

Because if they encounter generosity through you, I want them to discover: **My God is generous.** If they experience forgiveness through you: **You should know how much my God has forgiven me.**

That's what Jesus said: **“Let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven.”** Did you catch where the glory goes? They see your life...but they glorify your Father.

My spiritual father, Pastor Larry, used to warn us young ministers: **“Don't touch God's glory.”** That's hallowing His name. **The goal isn't that people walk away impressed with you. The goal is that your life points them to Him.**

I can't make anyone hallow God's name. **But I can faithfully represent the God whose name I bear.** So every morning this week, before you ask God for anything else, what if you prayed:

“Father, hallowed be Your name in me today. Make Your character visible through me—and give me the courage to point people back to You.”

MOUNT OF OLIVES

On the Mount of Olives, I walked those walls and saw the Lord's Prayer in 190 languages from around the world.

And what a testimony: This prayer has reached the nations. But church, Jesus didn't only send His words to the nations to be recited religiously. ***He sent us.***

We are the people who bear His name. So perhaps the question isn't simply, *“Has the world heard His name?”*

But...can the world see what His Name is like by looking at my life?

So before we leave here and try to live this prayer, **let's pray it. Would you stand with me?** Maybe open your hands before God, bow your heads or look to heaven. And would you make this your prayer:

“Father, hallowed be Your name in me.”

In my family.

In my workplace.

In my relationships.

In the things nobody else sees.

Make Your character visible through my life.

Hallowed be Your name. Amen.

Bless congregation, invite any pastors present to join me.

May the **Father's name be hallowed through you,**
the **Son be seen in you,**
and the **Spirit make you holy in love.**

Go in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Amen.