Lord, Teach Us How to Pray

Luke 11:1-4

The Lord's Prayer, a cornerstone of faith, begins with the invocation, "Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name" (Matthew 6:9). This opening line holds significant meaning. Still, it is often overlooked due to a lack of understanding of the text. While "hallowed" is commonly viewed as an adjective, a closer examination reveals that "hallowed" is not a description but an instruction, a command. It is a call to honor, respect, and acknowledge the nature of God. This insight transforms how we approach prayer and our connection with the divine.

Jesus' directive to show reverence towards God the Father is evident in the Lord's Prayer. By using the word "hallowed" from the Greek word "hagiastheto," Jesus issues a command rather than making a mere statement. He guides us to hold God's name in high honor and treat it with reverence. This commandment establishes an atmosphere of respect and wonder, distinguishing prayer from a mere conversation.

Jesus' instruction to honor God's name reminds us of the importance of prayer as a practice. According to Jesus, prayer is not just an activity; it is an encounter with someone entirely and totally different than we are. By urging us to hallow God's name, Jesus encourages us to approach prayer with reverence and adoration. This directive shifts our focus from ourselves and what we want to what God wants of us.

When we approach prayer, understanding that "hallowed" is a directive, our perspective on prayer must undergo a change. Prayer ceases to be a repetition of words or a list of demands. Instead, it transforms into an act of worship, an opportunity to enter into communion with the Sacred Presence. Acknowledging God's holiness elevates the practice of prayer, filling it with wonder and reverence.

Invoking God with the instruction to honor His name alters how we view our relationship with Him. It should remind us that we are communicating with the Creator of all things – someone who is entirely distinct from us, yet close at hand. This awareness takes surrender to the Almighty to a completely new level. It changes prayer from an activity to worship. Prayer becomes petitioning the Almighty and making intercession to the Almighty on behalf of others and sometimes ourselves.

Jesus' guidance to honor God's name wasn't just for the twelve disciples that day; it was meant for all His followers. This inclusiveness is key to understanding the nature of Jesus' teachings on prayer. The directive to respect and hold God's name in high regard forms a part of faith that applies to everyone who wants to follow Jesus.

By speaking to the community of believers, Jesus emphasizes the shared duty to uphold the sanctity of God's name. This directive isn't just about individual effort but about communal worship. It brings us together in acknowledging God's holiness and our responsibility to reflect that holiness in our lives.

Recognizing God as the Holy Other is crucial for grasping the importance of honoring His name. The idea of the Holy Other, as explained by one of my favorite theologians Rudolf Otto, highlights God's transcendence and incomprehensibility. God is entirely different from us, beyond our understanding, and completely separate from creation. This concept enhances the sense of awe and mystery of the greatness of God that should accompany our prayers.

When Jesus tells us to honor God's name, He orders us to recognize this transcendence. Recognizing that God is beyond comprehension; His ways surpass ours. His thoughts are higher than ours (Isaiah 55:9) calls for our humility and reverence. It calls for a complete change of consciousness is expected. This acknowledgment highlights the difference between the Creator and His creation.

Viewing "hallowed" as a directive has implications for how we are supposed to engage in prayer. It emphasizes the importance of being purposeful and mindful of where we are when we pray. Where we are in terms of our mindset, and remembering who we are praying to. We are instructed to begin our prayers focusing on God's holiness, not on our wants and desires. This can be nurtured by applying the following ways to approach God in prayer:

1. **Adoration**: Commencing prayers with admiration, acknowledging God's characteristics, and showing respect for His holiness.
2. **Confession**: Acknowledging our inadequacy in light of God's holiness, confessing sins, and seeking cleansing.
3. **Thanksgiving**: Expressing gratitude for God's kindness and compassion that bridge the gap between humanity and the Divine.
4. **Supplication**: Presenting requests with an attitude recognizing them within the framework of a relationship with a supreme God.

These practices help develop an attitude of respect and worship, aligning our intentions with honoring God's name. When we say the words "hallowed be thy name" in the Lord's

Prayer, it is not a phrase but a powerful instruction that changes the way we approach prayer. It encourages us to have a sense of awe and mystery of God's transcendence, reminding us that prayer is truly an encounter with God. By approaching prayer with mindfulness and purpose, honoring God's name becomes more than a routine; it becomes an act of devotion.

To summarize: The command to hallow God's name in the Lord's Prayer is an important directive that transforms the act of prayer. It shifts our mindset, encouraging a deep sense of reverence and awe. By recognizing "hallowed" as a command, we are reminded that prayer is a sacred engagement with the Holy Other. This understanding unites the community of believers in a collective act of worship, honoring a transcendent God. Through awareness and intentionality, the command to hallow God's name elevates prayer from a routine practice to a transformative encounter with the divine. Our God is truly an awesome God.

Blessings,
Pastor Gool