

Hallowed Be Thy name

St. John 17:11-19

Trinity Lutheran – Kearney, Missouri

24 February 2010 – Lent I Midweek



In the name of the Father, and of † the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen. When we pray in the Lord's Prayer that God's name might be hallowed – that is, holy – we recognize that our prayers aren't what makes God's name holy, but that it's holy all by itself. We know that where God puts His name, there He has promised to be with His blessing *for you* – to help you, to be merciful toward you, to seek the lost, to save the damned, and raise the dead. With God's name He comes into your life to cleanse you from your sin and grant you eternal life. Consider the prayer Jesus prayed on the night He was betrayed. He prayed: "Holy Father, protect those who are Yours by the power of Your name – the name *You* gave Me . . ."

God graciously gave His name to Moses in the burning bush, the tabernacle, the wilderness wanderings, a pillar of cloud by day and pillar of fire by night, the temple, and the very body of Jesus Christ, the Word made flesh. He is the very embodiment and revelation of God's holy name. And whenever we are gathered here for the Divine Service, God also gathers around us in His name according to His promise. Without God's name you couldn't pray to Him, praise Him or thank Him. Without His name your worship would be idolatry – no matter how beautiful, contemporary, cutting-edge, transformational, liturgical or historical that worship might be. Without His name, you'd be naming idols to be your gods – idols that would crack and break under the pressure you put on them. But God *has* given you His name – in Holy Baptism – in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. And so you belong to the Holy Trinity and are His, because in His name He has given Himself entirely and completely to you! He has made you His holy people – a royal, holy priesthood!

And what's the primary thing a royal, holy priesthood does? It prays. So when you pray say:

"Hallowed be Thy name." Implore God that He allow His name to be holy among you! And how does that happen? It happens in two ways – first, when the Word of God is taught in its truth and purity – and second, when we, as God's children, lead holy lives according to it. You who bear God's name on your forehead and heart dare not profane that name with your lips or life. And false teaching of any kind done in God's name is one of the worst ways to defile or profane His name. For instance, to contend in God's name that our crucified, risen Savior doesn't save sinners desecrates God's name. To proclaim that what Jesus did wasn't enough to reconcile you to the Father, and that you must add something, tarnishes and diminishes God's name.

What if on Easter morning a preacher declared that Jesus hadn't bodily risen from the dead? He would be a liar and a deceiver! And if you believed that lie then God's name would be drug through the mud! What if a pastor declared in God's name that homosexuality is pleasing to God? And what if you believed and defended that lie? Then God's holy name would be degraded among us. While these may be overly obvious examples, the fact is we sinners are experts at twisting God's Word so it appears to say the opposite of what it really is. Many an advanced degree has been given, countless Church offices have been bestowed, and much worldly success has been granted while God's name was blasphemed by false teaching, lies and deceit.

Do you know who Eva Brune is? Eva is a 55 year old woman who claims to be Lutheran while at the same time is a practicing lesbian proudly living with her girlfriend. You might wonder why I even bring this up, but this past November Eva was consecrated as Bishop of Stockholm, Sweden with the *full support* of the Swedish Lutheran Church! You don't dare speak out against such things in Sweden these days, because the authorities will put you in jail. And

all of this is done in God's name. Another bishop, Walter Obare, Bishop of the Lutheran Church in Kenya, dared to denounce this travesty so that God's name might be kept holy among the dear African Lutherans under his care – and he has suffered greatly for his denunciation.

Pastors everywhere – even here in the “land of the free and the home of the brave” – are under *heavy* pressure to compromise the truth of God's Word. We're told that issuing a warning against false doctrine is impolite, overbearing, rude and arrogant – and that it's not the sort of behavior a team player engages in. We're told that we aren't supposed to be concerned with pure doctrine, but only with the Gospel. Well, what else is the Gospel if it isn't pure doctrine – if it isn't an attempt to keep God's name holy among us? The Gospel, you see, is all about God being God for the sake of His people. It's about God being God for us and for our salvation. That's why Jesus prayed: “Holy Father, protect those who are Yours by the power of Your name – the name *You* gave Me . . .”

Yet in opposition to this prayer, openly wicked, evil people – sometimes even claiming to be Christians – defile God's name and treat it not as sacred but ordinary and disposable. So realizing this, ask yourself if your life looks any different on the outside than all the unbelievers around you. Do you, as a member of the royal, holy priesthood, proudly live as an idolater, adulterer, fornicator, drunkard, glutton, slanderer or liar? Are you too proud to confess your sin to Jesus, or too conceited to receive God's forgiveness in His name? Or do you insist on answering for your own sin without Jesus and His absolu-

tion – or without His promise of forgiveness in the Sacraments? If this is true, then His name is being desecrated among you also.

No wonder Jesus teaches that when you pray, say: “Hallowed be Thy name.” He teaches you to pray this prayer against yourself, your sin, and your old Adam or Eve. He knows this prayer will turn you inside out to faith in Jesus who died for you – and to a life of love for others. Faith clings to only Jesus' name, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which you must be saved. Jesus' name means that He alone is the Savior of sinners – even sinners that profane God's name with their lips and lives. He is the One who came in the name of the Lord on Palm Sunday as your Savior King to hallow His Father's name for you – with His lips, His life, and His death! As He goes the way of the cross for you, He has you and your salvation uppermost in His mind and heart. That's why He prayed this prayer with you in mind: “Holy Father, protect those who are Yours by the power of Your name – the name *You* gave Me . . .” The Father answered His prayer, and He is delighted to hear your prayer as well. He *is* your Father and *you* are His dear child. He has given you His name and placed it upon you. Therefore you will hallow it in your own life – and you will make it hallowed among all whom God places in your path – so that they might hear His Word, know His Son and be saved by His name. In the name of Jesus. Amen.

And now that peace of God, which passes all understanding, will keep your hearts and minds in that one true faith in Christ Jesus, unto life everlasting. Amen.