

2018 06 03 – Hallowed be Your Name

Psalm 138

As most of you know, this summer I am doing another sermon series. Last year we moved through the stories in the book of Genesis, the summer before I explored the nine personality types on the Enneagram and this year we are studying a prayer, a prayer that we say every Sunday, a prayer that we call *The Lord's Prayer* or *The Prayer of Jesus*, or *Jesus' Prayer*.

Two weeks ago we began with the phrase “Our Father in heaven” and talked about many of the images that we use for God. Today we are moving on to the second line, “Hallowed be your name.” We say these words, or similar words, every Sunday. But do we know what they mean?

First of all, let's be clear about the fact that this is a prayer so we are talking to God, to the sacred, the divine, the ground of our being. So “Hallowed be your name” could also be phrased “Hallowed be God's name.”

So what does it mean to hallow God's name? Hallowed is an old-fashioned word that we don't use very often anymore. Does anyone know what it means? (*wait for a response – holy, great, wonderful, revered, exalted, just*) When I looked up the word “hallow” in my four-volume *Dictionary of the Bible*, it said “see holiness.” “Hallowed” and “holy” are synonyms, so in this phrase we could substitute the word “holy” for “hallowed” and say “Holy be God's name” But we

already know that God is holy, that holiness or sacredness is the essence of God. So why do we pray “Hallowed be God’s name?”

To answer that questions, let’s focus on the concept of “name” as it was understood in the world of the bible. The bible was written in the Middle East and by men who lived in a patriarchal society, a society where the most important thing that a man had to maintain was his honour, his reputation, or in other words his name.

In patriarchal societies, the man is typically the head of his house, he is the householder. In the Middle East, the honour or the name of the householder is greatly affected by how they treat the members of their household including those who arrive unexpectedly at their door. The householder has to make sure that the fields and the flocks, the servants and the dependants, that everyone in his household is treated well, that they all have enough. Even the alien, the outsider, the one who stops by unannounced is expected to be treated with hospitality and to be given what they need. John Dominic Crossan, a well-known biblical scholar, says it this way, “If all is well, then you praise the name, you extol the reputation of the householder.” *The Greatest Prayer*, page 52)

In today’s psalm we praised God’s name and we said, “you have exalted your name and your word above everything... for though you are high, you care for the lowly... your love, O God, is eternal.” So here’s the connection. God is the ultimate householder, the householder of the world. In order to hallow God’s name, in order to keep God’s name holy, we, as God’s people, are called to do

as God the householder would do. We are called to treat the members of God's household with justice, we are called to make sure that everyone has what they need and that everyone, even the outsider, is welcomed with warmth and hospitality. Only when everything is well with God's household can God's name truly be holy.

Our Affirming Ministry Committee has been working for a year now to help us understand what it means to be fully committed to inclusion and justice for all people. So far we have explored inclusion for people of differing abilities and we have studied racism and the different forms of privilege that we enjoy without even realising it. Today, we are blessed to have two members of our LGBTQ community with us to share their stories and to help us understand what it means to commit ourselves to justice and inclusion for the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Queer community. With their help, may we learn the true meaning of, "Hallowed be your name."