

Sermon – Lord’s Prayer Series Hallowed be Thy Name June 14, 2020

Hallowed by Thy name. What do you think of when praying that short petition? What does it even mean? I have heard the jokes about little children praying the prayer, and saying – Harold be thy name. That is actually profound. Because names are so important. Names give identity, access. When someone calls out Tim or Pastor in a crowd I look around. Of course, there can be other Tims and sometimes other pastors. That is the power of a name. Jesus blessed his disciples by giving them the name of the Father whom he prays to. Jesus invites them into the prayer circle; or as I said last week, to sit at the table of the Trinity, where Father and Son and the Holy Spirit are seated. We are taken into God’s communicating. Luke records the beginning of the Lord’s Prayer as Father, hallowed be thy name, Father. It is probably the same word that James and John use when they call out to their Father Zebedee. “Father, do we have to go out fishing again today?” Matthew records Jesus giving his disciples a locator or descriptor for the Father he invites them to pray to. Our Father, who art in heaven. So not Zebedee or any human father. And Jesus first petition to the Father is Hallowed be your name. That’s an affirmation. That’s a confession of faith really. God, you are holy, and we seek and pray to honor your holy name. How would we go about that? Jesus modelled praying, praying often, calling out to God in prayer. That’s why his disciples asked for him to teach them how to pray too. And so he does. Prayer honor’s God’s name. Praise honor’s God’s name. We do that with a lot of the hymns and songs we normally sing. Giving thanks to God honors God’s name. And in this time of many challenges and lots of pain, lamenting to God honors God’s name. “Lord, have mercy. God, how can this be? Father, how long will this go on? Jesus help us, help the world.” There have been a lot of prayers for Phil Lebold in his last earthly days, and continued prayers for Joe Riggs. That praying all hallows God’s name. We are in God’s communicating circle. Martin Luther, in his Small Catechism, wrote a meaning for each of the petitions of the Lord’s Prayer. He writes for the First Petition – Normally I would say to get the hymnals out, but in this Covid time we are best to not touch things in the pews. So I will read it to you. “Hallowed be Your Name, Thy name. What does this mean? It is true that God’s name is holy in itself, but we ask in this prayer that it may also become holy in and among us. How does this

come about? Whenever the word of God is taught clearly and purely and we, as God's children, also live holy lives according to it. To this end help us, dear Father in heaven. However, whoever lives otherwise than the word of God teaches, dishonors the name of God among us. Preserve us from this, heavenly Father." Luther's take is that God's name is hallowed by God's word being well taught, clearly taught. Luther made that his mission. During the 500th anniversary year of the Reformation we learned more about Luther's glasses, lenses for reading scripture, lenses that he wrote came from scripture itself; Christ alone; Faith alone; Grace alone; Scripture alone. So if someone's teaching from the Bible obscures Christ, then that is not teaching the scripture rightly, and not hallowing God's name. If someone's teaching gives the impression that you have to earn your way into God's kingdom, that is not hallowing God's name, the truth about God. And Luther mentions Christians leading holy lives according to what the word of God teaches, so hallowing God's name by how we live our lives. Hmm. That's challenging. Would you say that you are hallowing God's name by your actions, by how you live? I would say for me, some of the time. Sometimes I recognize that my actions are not really matching my words. That's a challenge for a preacher, and can be for anyone. There are some broad ways that I think we would all agree would be part of living God's holy life. I would start with living out the fruit of the spirit – love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self control. I like that reflecting on this list. All of the fruit are very much reflected in the life of Jesus. Though when it came to the religious leaders, he did not seem patient. When he took up the whip to drive out the money changers, that did not seem like gentleness. But it was love – love for God, and anger about corruption and exclusion at the temple. Jesus was hallowing God's name, angering the religious leaders who thought they were hallowing God's name, and keeping unholy riff raff out of the temple. Don't we have that challenge today with such a wide variety of responses to racism? I am challenged as a pastor with how to respond and how to lead in honoring God's name with my life, with our lives. I believe I was honoring God by taking part in a prayer march 2 Sundays ago with many other religious leaders in the Lincoln Arts District, to hear sermons and join in prayers, prayers for justice for African American people. I heard there loud and clear, in word and prayer, that black lives matter to God, to the Father, to Jesus, to the Holy Spirit. And I know that each and every life matters to God, but the march

was focused on African American people and their lament. And that was good and holy too. Of late, a number of people have shared a scripture that they assert and pray for in their lives, from Micah 6:8; “What does the Lord require of you? To ask justly, or to do justice, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with your God.” Wow. That is a lot in one verse. Perhaps you have some favorite scripture that pulls you deeper into living a holy life. There are the Ten Commandments, and Martin Luther has also written meanings for them; frequently he deals not only with what not to do, like not stealing, but then also what to do; a positive side of the commandment. And Luther is realistic about our human nature, being saints and sinners at the same time. He would be telling us today about daily returning to baptism, seeking God’s forgiveness, and praying for God’s power through the risen Jesus to live and new and holy life. That process really honors God, and, hallows God’s name. There is so much in the one petition. Hallowed be thy name. There’s plenty to chew on for the week. Amen.