

The Lord's Prayer: The God Named Hallowed  
Exodus 3:1-15  
Dr. Alan H. Landes  
Crestview Presbyterian Church  
February 28, 2010

Do you remember the Chicago Bears super bowl team from several years ago? Mike Ditka, who was the coach of "da Bears," came in to give his customary pre-game pep talk. As Ditka started, he looked at the "Fridge-" defensive tackle William Perry, who was as big as a refrigerator, often overweight and frequently the target of Ditka's wrath- and told Fridge that he was to lead the team in the Lord's Prayer after the pep talk.

Ditka launched into his tirade- he was known for his fiery temper- and the quarterback, Jim McMahon, leaned over and poked the man next to him in the ribs: "Look at Fridge- he's shaking! I bet he doesn't know the Lord's Prayer!" "Of course he does," came the whispered response; "everybody does!" "Twenty bucks says he doesn't," whispered McMahon.

As Ditka finished, hair flying and finger pointing, he turned to Fridge and told him to lead the prayer. Sweat was rolling off Fridge's face as he began...: "Now I lay me down to sleep...."

Everybody knows the Lord's Prayer- right? Maybe so, maybe not. I'd hazard a guess that most everyone does, William Perry included. When we can't sleep at night, just before surgery, during special moments in life, during a funeral, during worship, we turn to the Lord's Prayer and find great comfort in lifting it to God.

Today, I'm continuing our sermon series on the Lord's Prayer. There are many reasons for doing so, but one is that it is a portion of sacred scripture that holds meaning

and depth for us in the living of life- especially in a world that seems to be growing more and more secular with each passing day.

John Killinger, in his book on the Lord's Prayer, tells of a recent newspaper article about a gang of youths who rode their motorcycles through a local cemetery, toppling headstones, smoking pot and having sex on the graves. One elderly man who was trying to repair his wife's grave was overheard saying, "Is nothing sacred any more?"

That a good question, isn't it? I've read some similar comments from people suggesting that the recent burning of ten churches in east Texas over the past six weeks betray a society that no longer fears the wrath of God; there was a time when you simply didn't desecrate a church because it was a house of God. Is nothing sacred any more? I believe our times call for the people of God to respond with a resounding "YES," and that we ignore that call at great peril.

I believe that it begins with our naming of God and his place in our lives. There was a little boy who once asked his parents on the way home, "Why don't we call God by his name?" "What do you mean?" asked his mother. "You know- Harold: 'Our Father, who art in heaven, Harold be thy name...'" We all know the term is "hallowed," and it's a word we don't use all that often. The root Greek word behind it: "*hagios*" is usually translated, "holy" but its basic meaning is something that is separate, or different. That thing that is "*hagios*" (show slide with word) is something different or separate from other things.

A temple is *hagios*- separate- because it is different from other buildings. God's day is *hagios*- different- from other days in the week, and an altar is *hagios* because it

exists for a purpose different from the purpose of ordinary things. When Jesus urges us to pray, “hallowed by thy name,” Jesus is reminding us that God’s name is *hagios*... different and separate from all other names... holy. In that culture, and even sometimes now, a person’s name communicates something of the character of the person. (close *hagios* slide)

So it is with God’s name, and the ancient Hebrew people were known as “the people of the Name.” God’s name is what was given to Moses in his desert encounter with the burning bush, and it symbolizes the relationship God established with the Hebrew people... God gave them his name. The third commandment, given to the people at Mt. Sinai, tells us not to take the name of the LORD God in vain; later on, the Psalmist spoke in Psalm 9; “They that know they name trust in thee.” Jesus continues the same thought: “Hallowed be thy name...”

When we honor the name of God, and build our lives upon the *hagios*- the sacredness of God’s presence in all of life- everything else seems to find its proper perspective. Without a sense of the *hagios* in life, we lose our sense of perspective in our living.

History books are beginning to point out that as agnosticism and secularism began to spread across Europe and North America in the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century- as the Name of God became devalued- we’ve increasingly found ourselves being plunged into a moral and spiritual wasteland unlike anything we’d ever know. Our psychological compasses went wild. Divorce rates skyrocketed, homosexual behavior has become more prevalent, there was a surge in the crime rate, a younger generation seems lost to drugs and alcohol, pornography is everywhere, and international terrorism was born- the

Munich Olympics; TWA flight 800; the embassy in Beirut; 9/11... and the list marches on and on. I'd like to suggest that the failure to respect the *hagios*- the sacredness of God's name... God's presence- lies near the root of our moral and spiritual problems. We're losing our conviction that there is a holy God who cares about and has become involved in human affairs.

We must stand on holy ground The Christian church needs to stand as a central supporting pole in the billowing canvass of humanity. We can stand- and mean it whenever we pray "hallowed be thy name." Reverence for God is the beginning of right relationships and decency in our world; it gives us a place to begin. It begins with reverence- reverence for God as we give to God the uniqueness which God's name and character demand. In his commentary, William Barclay suggests four essentials which you and I can engrave on our hearts: (please put these on screen- one at a time)

1. **We must believe that God exists.** God is for real, and is not some wistful philosopher's pipe dream. You can't ignore God any more than you can ignore the Ohio River, the smell of a rose, the cry of a newborn, a glowing sunrise or Mozart's music.
2. **Remember who God is:** our Father, our *Abba*, our Daddy; an intimate God who loves more than any mother could possibly love her children.
3. **Maintain an awareness of God-** not just at church, but in front of your computer screen, while cooking dinner, while driving the kids to school, at Bob Evans, on vacation. As the Apostle Paul suggests, "Pray without ceasing..."
4. Lastly, **there must be obedience and submission.** We hallow God as we share God's love with those around us; we hallow God when we treat others with justice and dignity... as we smile at the checkout clerk, as we wave to a cop driving by, as we comfort a child. (close slide)

Our world hungers for such people. I suspect that was part of the charm of Pope John Paul or Nelson Mandela or Billy Graham- a sense of integrity, a moral fiber and a clear sense of being grounded in something eternal is immensely attractive in the midst of the moral chaos that surrounds us... poles in the tent of humanity.

Robert E. Lee, the great Civil War general, was a tent pole. After the Civil War, he became the president of Washington College. During that time, he took trips through the shattered South. In small towns of no more than a couple hundred, thousands would show up to gather at the train station. Mothers would hold up their children with notes in their hands informing Lee that they were named Robert E. Lee after him. The South was in such despair, shame and humiliation- they needed a tent pole... and the name of Robert E. Lee gave them a sense of hope and dignity.

If a human name can do so much, think of what God's name can do in our world and in your life. Look for that place in your life that is *hagios*... a place where you encounter the Name of God... a burning bush. We all need a place to stand- on holy ground- and there allow God, our heavenly Father, to remind us how much we are loved... and with that assurance, we too can become a "tent pole for Christ."

Move to ordination of deacons... "tent poles" of caring