

# Hallowed Be Your Name

*Sermon Preached by the Rev. Robert A. Arbogast  
Celebration Fellowship, Ionia, Michigan  
July 9 & 10, 2018*

## **Scripture: Exodus 34:1-8**

*We have seen his glory,  
the glory of the one and only Son,  
who came from the Father,  
full of grace and truth.*

John 1:14

## **Sermon**

“Hallowed be your name.” We say that all the time. It’s our prayer that God’s name will be held in the highest honor. It’s our prayer that God’s name will be spoken with awe. It’s our prayer that God’s name will be used with reverence. And it’s our prayer that all this will be as true on earth as it is in heaven.

Now, it really is a big deal for us to pray, “Hallowed be your name.” It’s a big deal, because the hallowing starts with us! The hallowing starts when we hold God’s name in the highest honor. The hallowing starts when we speak God’s name with awe. The hallowing starts when we use God’s name with reverence. The hallowing starts on earth when it starts with us.

HAVE YOU EVER THOUGHT ABOUT how we Christians use God’s name constantly? Well, we do. Lots of times we use God’s name without even saying a word. We’re called “Christian” after all. And that means the name of Christ is on us. So wherever we go, whatever we do, we take the name of Christ with us. And as much as we rise, and as much as we fall, the name of Christ rises and falls with us.

And that’s not all. Because the name of the triune God is put on us when we are baptized. We are baptized in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. That name is on us, on us for good.

And so we are identified with God the Father, who created the heavens and the earth and who promised to rescue the world through the family of Abraham. We are identified with God the Son, who died as the son of Abraham and who rose from death. We are identified with God the Holy Spirit, who is poured out into this world and who

gives gifts of faith and hope and love. And we are identified with the God who will come again to bring lasting justice to the world.

All of that and more, it's all there in the name of God, the name of our baptism. That name declares who we belong to. That name decides who we are. That name describes our way of life. That name determines our destiny. And that name has a story.

AT THE BURNING BUSH, God spoke to Moses. And he gave Moses a job to do, to lead Israel out of Egypt. Now, that wasn't going to be easy. For one thing, Moses wasn't even sure if the Israelites would cooperate with him. So he asked God for some credentials. "Give me a name to drop," he said. "Something more than 'the God of your fathers.'"

Moses was looking for a name with some weight to it. But God wasn't quite ready for that. He did give Moses a name. But that name was a little bit undefined. "I am who I am." That's what God gave Moses. Or maybe he meant, "I will be who I will be." Either translation works. And the point is the same, I think. God is telling Moses that he and the Israelites will find out what God's name is when they see what God does as time goes by. They will find out what God's name is when they see what God does.

That was in Exodus 3. And there's another episode, in Exodus 6, that confirms this way of understanding the name of God. But the real confirmation comes in Exodus 34. The real confirmation comes when the LORD declares his name to Moses.

BY THE TIME WE GET TO EXODUS 34, a lot has happened. From the plagues and the Passover to the Ten Commandments and the Golden Calf. The Calf is a turning point. Because of the Calf, the LORD was ready to destroy all the Israelites. Because of the Calf, the LORD was ready to start over through Moses.

But Moses persuaded the LORD to show mercy. And he did show mercy. Yet three thousand people were put to death. And the Israelites suffered a plague of their own.

It's after all this that the LORD declared his name to Moses. And this time the name was well-defined. This time the name had more of a story attached to it. This time the name reflected what Israel had learned about God.

This is what the LORD said to Moses:

*The LORD, the LORD, the compassionate and gracious God,  
slow to anger, abounding in love and faithfulness,  
maintaining love to thousands, and forgiving wickedness, rebellion, and sin.  
Yet he does not leave the guilty unpunished;  
he punishes the children and their children for the sin of the parents*

*to the third and fourth generation.*

*Exodus 34:6-7*

That's the name the Israelites had begun to know. That's the name that fit their experience of the LORD. He was the God who forgives and the God who punishes.

HERE'S WHAT HAPPENED. No sooner had the Israelites pledged their loyalty to the LORD, than they broke the first two commandments. They made an idol in the form of an earthly creature. And then they started celebrating made-up "gods." No wonder Moses broke the stone tablets! Israel had destroyed their covenant relationship with God.

Now, you would think that would be the end of it. But it wasn't. Because the LORD forgave them. Why? Because, apparently, that's who the LORD is. The LORD had mercy on them, because the LORD is mercy.

The LORD is a "compassionate and gracious God, slow to anger, abounding in love and faithfulness." That's the name the Israelites had begun to know. Though their rebellion also had its cost. Because the LORD "does not leave the guilty unpunished." So that, too, was part of the name the Israelites were learning.

AS THE YEARS WENT BY, the LORD would continue to reveal his name to the Israelites. And the Israelites would continue to remember that name. But even when they were being punished for their rebellions against the LORD, they remembered especially that the LORD is "abounding in love and faithfulness."

Now, that sounds like wishful thinking. Or it sounds like a deliberate attempt to push away the consequences of their sins. But actually they were not misreading God by focusing on the positive. In fact, they were getting nearer to the heart of God. Here's what I mean.

WHEN GOD REVEALED HIS NAME TO MOSES on the mountain, he did it in response to a request Moses had made. "Show me your glory." That's what Moses had said. "Show me your glory." Well, that was no simple request. And, in fact, God never did show Moses his glory, not exactly. But he did show Moses enough to set his face aglow. And the centerpiece of that whole experience was when God declared his name.

Well, moving ahead in the long story, it turns out that all this is on the mind of John when he writes his Gospel. When John describes what he and the others had seen during their years with the Lord Jesus—when John describes it, he puts it this way. He says, "We have seen his glory."

And so finally, through Jesus, Moses' request has been satisfied! Finally, through Jesus, the glory of God has been revealed! And this is how John describes that glory. He says Jesus was "full of grace and truth." And that is John's way of saying that Jesus was "abounding in love and faithfulness." In other words, that is John's way of saying that Jesus reveals the name of God.

NOW, IF IT'S TRUE THAT GOD'S NAME IS KNOWN by what God does, then of course God's name is known best of all through Jesus. Because Jesus is God himself coming into the world to save the world by suffering at the hands of the world for the sake of the world.

There is a cost to rebellion and sin. So Jesus suffered a punishment he never deserved. But at exactly the same time, he revealed the love and faithfulness of God. Put all that together, and it becomes clear that Jesus embodied everything God's name is about. And so Jesus himself is the real answer to our prayer. Because in Jesus, more than anywhere else—in Jesus the name of God is hallowed.

So what does it mean for us to hallow God's name? Certainly it means that we hold God's name in the highest honor. It means that we speak God's name with awe. And it means that we use God's name with reverence. But above all else, it means that we follow Jesus. When it comes to hallowing God's name, Jesus leads the way. Actually, Jesus is the way.

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Glory and thanks be to God:  
Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

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