

**SERMON: "OUR FATHER, WHO ART IN HEAVEN, HALLOWED BY THY NAME"**  
**TEXTS: OLD TESTAMENT PSALM 68:4-6, 32-35**  
**NEW TESTAMENT MATTHEW 6:7-13**

**October 13, 2024**  
**Stewardship Series – "Thy Will Be Done"**

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## **INTRODUCTION**

I remind you again of a game my parents taught me and my brothers  
It is a car game we played often on trips from Georgia to North Carolina  
I taught my kids and they played it often on many of those same roads

The game is called "Cow Poker." Each participant gets their side of the road  
You get a point for every cow, ten points for every horse and 50 points  
for a chimney without a house. That's your side of the road  
On the other side ... You can look over there too  
If you see a graveyard on their side, it wipes out all their points

My brothers and I spent a lot of time on trips ... on the lookout  
for cows, horses and chimneys (and graveyards). My kids did too  
It is a fun game – old school I admit. Before personal devices  
and screens built into the minivan. I know people today are probably more  
focused on the screen in front of them than what's out the window

Either way, my question to kick off this new series of sermons is about  
being on the lookout, whether it be on a screen or out a window  
What are you looking for? And maybe even what are looking past?

The stewardship theme is based on the Lord's Prayer. We will walk through it  
these next several weeks one phrase at a time with a focus on one phrase  
in particular – "Thy will be done." That is the heart of this prayer, isn't it?  
A sincere desire / hope / plea that God's will be done

With "Thy will be done" at the beginning, end and heart of our prayers,  
I want to talk about being on the lookout – out the window and on the screen,  
wherever and whenever to see where we might see God's will being done.  
Where do we see God at work?  
And how are you or how might you be part of that work?

Those are the questions we'll be asking ourselves these next several weeks  
To help us think about God being at work (and God most certainly is)  
You may notice a few construction cones to remind you ...  
This is a work zone. Thy will be done = Thy will being done  
The cones and I are preaching the same sermon – Be on the lookout

## WHOSE

Beginning with the first phrase of the prayer – “Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed by thy name” I want to start to answer the question about where Thy will is being done by talking about the who, who is at work here  
This is God at work. It is not our work (not in ownership), nor in obligation (got to do this to earn my reward) ... It is our joining in on God’s ongoing work

To focus on the who a bit more I’d suggest that we think about this opening phrase this way focusing on two words – “Our” and “hallowed.”  
We might think of the who this way - whose and who’s who.

When we pray the prayer Jesus taught his followers to pray, we address God and immediately speak to the intimacy of our relationship.  
We speak to God the same way Jesus does ... as “father”

You’ve heard me often speak of my love and respect for my parents  
They were and still are my role models. The bond between parent and child is certainly worth highlighting in a sermon as how we relate to God especially a sermon based on this prayer. When we pray we are talking to our heavenly parent - to One who loves us like the beloved children we are

Let me try another tact and focus on the fact that this Father is “Our” Father.

I’ve lived here close to ten years now. As a life-long Southerner who calls Iowa home, I’m learning how to adjust to the climate. I own more sweaters and sweatshirts  
But that is not my only adjustment to winter. I get a little stir crazy with all the darkness, so I’ve learned that I need to give myself winter projects projects to keep me busy (I’m a bit OCD). They call me the quicker picker upper

This winter my project is to go through all the old pictures and identify everyone write their names on a sticker, put it on the back of the picture frame especially the old family pictures of my grandparents and great grandparents  
I want my kids to know who’s in those pictures. I want to name the people in the group pictures, pictures of special people and special times

I want to lean into the ‘our’ in ‘Our Father’ so as to name the other people in the pictures (and not just my pictures). I want to remember the people I just might forget ... but God will not. I want to remember my intimate connection with my Father without forgetting my Father’s connection with all of my siblings ... and therefore my connection to them.

Who is it that is at work here and there? Our father! Whose father? Our father!  
Where do I see God at work in this world? I see it when and where people are using the word “our” not to differentiate from “us” from “them” but using it to include and name everyone in every picture

## WHO'S WHO

There is a beautiful creative tension in this opening phrase of the prayer  
It begins by showing just how close we are to God, to our Father  
The very next phrase then points out the difference between parent and child  
The one with whom we are speaking when we pray is  
“Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed by thy name.”

In prayer we have an audience with the King of Kings,  
the one who sits enthroned over all of earth, enthroned in heaven  
Wow. What a privilege. Given that privilege, that access, we don't go need to  
go strutting up to God in like some actor on the red carpet  
No, it is far wiser to get a clear sense of who's who and show some respect

Mentioning that this is our Father *in heaven* is one way of letting us know who's who  
The Old Testament reinforces that location. Reminds me of the apps on my phone  
that want to know my location ... “turn on Wi-Fi for better location accuracy”  
or I could just read the verses from Psalm 68 again for our father's location

**Sing to God, O kingdoms of the earth; sing praises to the Lord,  
O rider in the heavens, the ancient heavens; listen, he sends out  
his voice, his mighty voice. Ascribe power to God, whose majesty  
is over Israel and whose power is in the skies. Awesome is God  
in his sanctuary, the God of Israel; he gives power and strength  
to his people. Blessed be God!**

Who's who here? One is that God, the God of heaven and earth.  
The other one is you, me, us, them ... Our Father who art in heaven

The other reminder of who's who is the next phrase, “hallowed by thy name”  
The mention of heaven and of being hallowed are about showing some respect  
knowing who's who. Our Father is the one whose name is to be hallowed

What exactly might that mean? What does it look like to ‘hallow.’  
Seeing that this is a church full of educators, how about we define it  
by using it in a sentence. It is not a word we use or hear often  
I can really think of just two sentences where I hear the word “hallow.”

The first sentence is this one, from this prayer, “hallowed be Thy name.”  
I like the way Tom Long puts it writing in his commentary on Matthew ...  
*“hallowed be Thy name” is, in effect, a daring cry to “show the world who you are”*  
I think that jives with my saying this is petition is very much about who's who

To ‘hallow’ God's name is to honor it, show it some respect  
understanding who's who ... who is worthy of respect, worthy of that honor

## SUMMARY

I rather like how the word hallow is sparingly used

It need not be used that often. We say it when we pray the prayer

Jesus gave his followers ... and that's about it. Makes sense

Other names, names we hear often, ones we find in headlines and in lights

They may be big and bright ... but not 'hallowed.'

The only other time I've really heard the word 'hallowed' used is to talk  
not about names, but about the names of places – hallowed ground

Can you name those places ... those hallowed grounds?

Yes, I've heard the term applied to sporting venues

Maybe that's a bit over the top. What sports? Overhyped?

I've heard the term "hallowed ground" applied to other places

I've been to many places I would describe as hallowed ...

places in the Holy Lands - the Church of the Holy Sepulcher in Jerusalem,

Nativity Square and Jacob's well in Palestine

And I'd include places in our own country, 'hallowed ground'

The Vietnam Memorial, Arlington Cemetery, Andersonville Prison

where Union troops were kept in the Civil War, the Edmund Pettis Bridge

in Selma, the Lorraine Motel in Memphis

Those are just a few I would name

That first list you probably expected, places of religious significance

The second list ... maybe you didn't expect it (or maybe you did since  
you have extended the privilege of this pulpit to me for ten years)

The common thread that kept running through my head and heart as I played

and prayed with this sermon is the sacrifice involved in places we call "hallowed"

That sacrifice is woven through places like Seneca Falls, Selma and Stonewall,

Ground zero and the burial grounds of Arlington and Normandy

Sacrificial love is at the very heart of the gospel story of Jesus of Nazareth

"Suffered under Pontious Pilate, was crucified, dead and buried ..."

And it certainly connects to the idea of praying to God as "our Father"

Think about the sacrifices parents make for their children,

That your parents made for you ... that Our Father made for us

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be your name