

Hallowed be Thy Name as Thy Kingdom Comes

Luke 23:35-43 (NIV)

³⁵ The people stood watching, and the rulers even sneered at him. They said, "He saved others; let him save himself if he is God's Messiah, the Chosen One." ³⁶ The soldiers also came up and mocked him. They offered him wine vinegar ³⁷ and said, "If you are the king of the Jews, save yourself." ³⁸ There was a written notice above him, which read: THIS IS THE KING OF THE JEWS. ³⁹ One of the criminals who hung there hurled insults at him: "Aren't you the Messiah? Save yourself and us!" ⁴⁰ But the other criminal rebuked him. "Don't you fear God," he said, "since you are under the same sentence?" ⁴¹ We are punished justly, for we are getting what our deeds deserve. But this man has done nothing wrong." ⁴² Then he said, "Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom." ⁴³ Jesus answered him, "Truly I tell you, today you will be with me in paradise."

When I say the name "Abraham Lincoln," what instantly comes to mind? Maybe the word "president?" A tall black stovepipe hat? The word "slavery" - as in the guy who emancipated the slaves? Maybe "Civil War" or "Honest"? Every name has a reputation, a reputation based on what the person says and does.

Now, if I say the name "God," what instantly comes to mind? Whatever came to mind first is the reputation that you have of God. His name is his reputation, and that is what we're praying about when we say, "Hallowed be thy name." But how did you get to that reputation of God that you thought of and is that reputation hallowed, or kept holy?

On Good Friday, we heard from our Bible readings what some people considered to be Jesus' reputation. The rulers sneered at Jesus saying, "He saved others; let him save himself if he is God's Messiah, the Chosen One." (verse 35) Savior. Messiah. Chosen One. But he is not powerful enough to save himself. Some Savior you are... The soldiers read the written charge above Jesus' head, "THIS IS THE KING OF THE JEWS." A king, huh? A guy with power and authority and dominion and soldiers? Well, "If you are the king of the Jews, save yourself." (verse 37) One of the criminals hurled insults at Jesus' reputation: "Aren't you the Messiah? Save yourself and us!" (verse 39) These people were doing anything but hallowing Jesus' name.

When we pray in the Lord's Prayer, "Hallowed by thy name," we're praying God's name be kept holy, his reputation upheld. God certainly does have a reputation, and, like us, it is based on what he says and does. Also like us, people can say whatever they want to say, insult our name and try to bring down our reputation because they don't like us and they don't think that we're doing what we should be doing. I can ruin someone's reputation if others will take my word for what other people have said or done and never fact check for themselves.

Have you ever done or said something that would give someone a bad reputation about God? Maybe it was announcing a judgment of God, that I think he is ruthless, violent, vengeful, unfair to judge people the way he does, that he's an egomaniac as he demands people to worship him and bring him offerings, that he's old fashioned, not kept up with the times and really needs to understand the current way of thinking and be more woke. Maybe I've let people think that God doesn't care about me or isn't powerful enough to answer my prayers because I mourn and complain that my prayers are not answered. Do the ways that I talk about God echo the rulers and the criminal: "Aren't you the Messiah? Save me already!"

Conversely, have I not done or not said something that would also leave a bad name for God? Have I stayed quiet when someone talked about how ridiculous people are to believe in an Almighty God, that this is some delusion that humans created to make themselves feel better when they can't control circumstances and events? Have I listened to someone tear down someone else and never spoke a word edgewise? Have I failed to love, to have compassion, to put others ahead of myself and so shown people that it's okay if my actions don't match my beliefs? In so many ways, we've failed to hallow God's name. We've tried to dilute and pollute what he is and what he does, and it has negatively affected us and those around us.

If that's all we had tonight, all the ways that we've failed to hallow God's name, I don't think any of us could go home thinking that God's name would ever have an ounce of holiness left, that our prayers that Jesus taught us to pray were ineffective and a waste of time. But this is where God's name, his reputation, differs from ours.

We do plenty to ruin our reputations, but God never does. What people say doesn't actually change who God is and what he has done. When we go back to the source of knowing God, his Word, then we find the same God that has always existed – the same pure, loving, giving, caring, merciful, and just God.

One of the criminals on the cross observed Jesus' reputation in action. It led him to hallow God's name. He rebuked the other criminal. "Don't you fear God since you are under the same sentence? We are punished justly, for we are getting what our deeds deserve. But this man has done nothing wrong." (verses 40-41) This criminal recognized that Jesus didn't deserve to be up here. This criminal had rightly earned his reputation, deserved this punishment as did the other criminal. But this Jesus hanging on the cross was still a perfectly, sinless person. What he had actually done didn't change because of the heckling of others. He was still the Messiah, the Chosen One. He was still the King of not just of the Jews – as the charge read - but he was the King of Kings here on this cross to show people who he was as he saved the world.

This is the name, the reputation of God, that Jesus had prayed for the night before: "Father, the hour has come. Glorify your Son, that your Son may glorify you." (John 17:1) God the Father would glorify God the Son and his reputation by having him be nailed to the cross and crucified. He would glorify him by having him insulted and yet he did not retaliate nor defend himself. He would be shown as the sinless Son of God, our substitute, our Savior, the Chosen One. As King of the world, he would not use his authority to vanquish at this time all those who repudiated his name. Instead, he would use his authority to pay for their sins, all the ways that they tried to dilute and pollute his reputation. He would do this so that he might give them eternal life instead of eternal death.

The one criminal saw the God whose holy reputation remained intact on the cross. He also saw his King who had come for him. This is why he said, "Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom." (verse 42) He believed that this Jesus was both the Savior Messiah and the King of Kings. He believed that he was here to save him, a horrible criminal who rightly should be considered irredeemable by everyone for what he had done. Yet, this King was using his power to save him, just as his reputation would indicate that he would do.

This is why we pray not just "Hallowed be thy name," but we also pray, "Thy kingdom come." God's kingdom is not really a visible one here on earth. His kingdom is his rule, his authority, over his people as he protects them. He's in charge. This rule, this kingdom, comes to us when we are brought to faith in him by the Holy Spirit. His kingdom comes whenever his Word, his reputation, is preached in its truth and purity. His kingdom is right here, right now, because here the message of who Christ is and what he has done as our God is proclaimed.

And the King granted this criminal's request and brought his kingdom to him. Jesus answered him, "Truly I tell you, today you will be with me in paradise." (verse 43) Jesus had upheld his reputation, his name holy, by paying the price of this man's sins, how he had polluted and diluted God's name when he first mocked Jesus along with the other criminal. Jesus also was there with all his authority and power as the King of Kings to pay for every time we have diluted or polluted his name by what we have said and done and what we have failed to say and do. His kingdom, his rule in our hearts as our Savior, as the one Chosen to take away our sins and fill us with his holy name, has come to us. We have heard this message and the Holy Spirit has caused us to believe that his is our King who used his authority to pay for our sins and bring us under his rule, his kingdom. This has brought glory to God's name. His reputation is intact because it is based on what he did.

Having brought your kingdom to us, having brought us to faith in you, Lord, send your Holy Spirit to us that we would be as bold as this other criminal on the cross, that we would hallow your name as we speak up for you and show you as you actually are to the people in our lives. Help us to be in your Word to know your holy so that we can convey you as you are to others. Use us to proclaim you so that the Holy Spirit causes your kingdom to come to many more people. Amen.