

## Hallowed be your Name

### Psalm 145; Matt 28.16-20

Friends, as it's only my second week among you let me tell you a little bit more about myself. My full name is Martin Scott Kemp. Martin means *war-like, or warrior, or soldier*. It's a name that's derived from Mars, the Roman God of war! Scott means *wanderer*. Kemp has two very different meanings "champion at wrestling or jousting" or "the hairy one". So putting it all together, my full name means either "Soldier who wanders around looking for someone to wrestle or joust", or "Soldier who wanders around looking to borrow a razor".

Now does this name give you any information about what I actually do? Of course not! When my parents chose my name I don't think they had any expectations that I would lead a life where I was wandering around looking for a fight. And that's often the case with modern names, isn't it? When we choose a name we'd like the name to sound nice, we'd like the name to not cause the child any problems growing up, and we might check the meaning to see if it's not too weird, but we don't seem to invest a great deal in the name's actual meaning.

However, our names are still important because we do want our names to be associated with a good reputation. When someone hears the name *Martin Kemp*, I'd like them to make a positive connection! I'd like them to think "Oh yeah Marty, he's a kind man, He's a responsible and trustworthy church leader". Modern names might only be loosely connected to their original meanings, but we still want them to represent something, we want them to represent a positive reputation.

Now when we turn to the Bible, we're reading about a culture where names are massively important. Like us, names were linked to a person's reputation. God promised Abraham that his name would be great, and many centuries later in the New Testament, Abraham's name was linked with the virtues of faithfulness and obedience. But unlike our culture, the Bible invests heavily in the actual meaning of a person's name. Again, Abraham is a good example. Abraham means "father of many", and his descendants become so many they form a whole nation. So in Biblical times someone's name set up their life's agenda; their name really did create a series of expectations for them to fulfil.

Here at Waitara Anglican we are in a series looking at the Lord's Prayer. We're taking this prayer one line at a time learning to pray as Jesus taught us, and in the second line Jesus prays about his Father's name. We don't often speak at length about God's name these days, but it's a very fruitful area to study and meditate upon. One thing I've discovered is that, like other Biblical names, God's name comes with a particular reputation, and it also comes with some particular expectations attached to it. And these characteristics have made it clear to me why it is that Jesus wants his father's name to be *hallowed*.

Now, at first glance the word *hallowed* seems a bit old fashioned, but we still use it from time to time: cricket fans might find themselves speaking about the “hallowed turf” of the Sydney Cricket Ground; students might find themselves walking along the “hallowed halls” of a sandstone university. When we use the word in that context we kind of get what it means: if something is hallowed it means it’s worthy of respect, worthy of honour. To see something as hallowed means to see it as being special, set apart. The final instalment of the Harry Potter series is called the Deathly... *Hallows*. The Deathly Hallows are 3 objects set apart by their power and importance.

So Jesus prays that God’s name might be respected, honoured, seen as special. And the reason why his name should be hallowed lies with the name’s reputation and the with the great expectations associated with it. Today I’m hoping that, like last week, we’ll gain some motivation to pray. I reckon that if we think about *why* God’s name is so special, Then we’ll be moved that little bit more to ask that his name be hallowed.

So first of all: what is this name of God, and why ought it be honoured so much? Well, to be accurate, the Bible has many names for God. I’ve just picked two for us to think about, one from both testaments .If you regularly read your Bible you’ll know that in the Old Testament God is often referred to as the LORD, with LORD written in small capitals. Whenever you see those small capitals you can be sure that the Hebrew name behind those capitals is the name *Yahweh*

Now, it’s not easy to work out the actual meaning of the name Yahweh. But what is clear is the reputation that Yahweh has in the OT. In Ps 145, the name *Yahweh* is worthy of praise because he is *great*. Yahweh has demonstrated great deeds and awesome works (v3-6). Yahweh upholds creation, giving life to every living thing (v15-16). But the name Yahweh is also linked with mercy and compassion:

Verses 8-9: Yahweh is gracious and compassionate, slow to anger and rich in love.

<sup>9</sup>Yahweh is good to all; he has compassion on all he has made.

So in the ancient world Yahweh’s name brought with it a certain reputation: It was known that Yahweh was a powerful God, but also that he was a benevolent and merciful figure.

We see this playing out when the *Queen of Sheba* pays a visit to Solomon. When we think of that story we think the queen is coming to check out this incredibly successful Israelite king, but the text actually says that she’s come on account of the name of Yahweh (1 Kings 10:1). It’s like she’s thinking: “I’ve heard about this powerful God of Israel, I’ve heard about how much he’s blessed that nation. Let’s go and see what this Yahweh God is capable of, Let’s see what he’s doing through this Solomon character:. And in the end, she reveres, not Solomon, but the name of God (1 Kings 10:9). Yahweh’s reputation led to her investigation, and then to her hallowing.

Move into the New Testament and the Trinitarian nature of God becomes clearer. Jesus introduces us *to God the Father* and we spoke a bit about him last week. I think when Jesus was teaching his disciples this prayer he specifically had in mind the hallowing of his Father's name, but *Jesus*, the earthly name of God the Son, that's a name also worth our respect.

It's a name that builds up a very important expectation. The name Jesus means "God saves". We read in Matthew 1:21 that Joseph was told to name Mary's child *Jesus*, because he would save people from their sins. And this is exactly what Jesus would grow up to do. By willingly and selflessly dying on a cross, Jesus purified us of our sins, saving us from sin's consequences: from God's judgment and death. That means the name of Jesus is worth respecting, don't you think? Respect is probably too weak a word, actually. His name is worth worshipping! And so these are the reasons why its worth hallowing God's name. It's a name that carries with it a reputation and an expectation of both power and also loving sacrifice and care.

So if that's the *why*? what about the *how*? *How* are we to honour God's name? The Bible gives us some simple starting points. We can hallow God's name by simple *words* and *actions*. In Psalm 145 David wants to tell others about the worthiness of God's name. My mouth will speak in praise of the LORD. He says in v21. I think we have abundant opportunities to hallow God's name in speech. These opportunities may take some courage, and we might need to break some entrenched habits, but it can be as simple as giving God the credit that is rightfully his.

I saw a great example of this a couple of years ago. I know a university professor who was being interviewed at an academic conference, and as he was talking about his subject—the history of South-East Asia—he casually threw in a line acknowledging God's role in the outworking of history. "This is the way God has organised things", he said. Now, there are lots of factors that explain the story of world history: Economics, politics, cultural differences. But if we believe God is real then we'll also believe that God has the biggest part to play of all! I was impressed that this man didn't just ignore the spiritual side of things, that he didn't just sweep God under the carpet, or lock him in a cupboard only to let him out on Sundays. It was just a quick statement, but it gave honour and credit where it was due.

But along side our speech, our actions can also lead to the hallowing of God's name. This is an area where, sadly, many Christians have failed. We bear Christ's name on our lips but our actions bring his name into disrepute. However, backing up our speech with our actions can form a powerful combination. Let your light shine before others Jesus says in Matthew 5:16, that they may see your good deeds and *glorify your Father in heaven*.

You know, back in the Roman Empire, in the very early years of the church, it was the Christians who made a name for themselves caring for the sick. During times of plague, the pagan response was to flee to the countryside, but the Christians stayed in the cities, nursing both believers and non-believers back to health.

As you can imagine, this love-in-action resulted in many pagans turning to the God of the Bible. Men and women who once accused Christians of atheism started to honour and respect the name of Christ and his Father in Heaven. The lesson here is that when we honour God's name in speech and action, that hallowing has a tendency to be contagious.

Now of course, we all know that not everyone learns to respect the name of God. We've all heard God's name being dishonoured, sometimes in the media, sometimes in our classrooms, sometimes among our friends and within our families. As people who love God and who long to hear his name respected, we need to decide what to do when people around us start tearing God down. I reckon there are at least four different responses we could possibly make.

First of all we could try and *prosecute* those who are being disrespectful. We could try and attack back and make the person feel sorry for their words. Maybe we could issue a counter accusation, fighting fire with fire, Maybe we could find other Christians and gang-up on the non-believer. I feel there are some problems with this approach. The New Testament has a sense of allowing God to be the judge of these matters, and the Bible paints God as defending his own name in his own time. I think it's wrong-headed to try and avenge God's honour ourselves.

As a second option, there's perhaps a little more room for us to *protest*: to ask that our faith be respected at work and for the disrespectful language of our friends to be toned down; For families not to mock the God worship.

I think an even better option is to try and *persuade* those who are disrespectful; to persuade them that God's name really is worth hallowing. What we're really talking about here is evangelism; We may persuade some non-believers to respect Christian values and faith, but full respect for God's name only comes when people have faith in him. To revere the name of Jesus you really have to bow the knee before him. This is why I had us read from the great commission at the end of Matthew. Evangelism has at its end-point baptism *into the name* of Father, Son and HS. If we want to see God's name honoured fully, then we'll want to see people baptized into that very name.

And so this leads us to the last and best response when God's name isn't honoured, the response that Jesus has been teaching all along: the response of *prayer*. To pray that people will have their eyes opened to God's reputation, that they'll see and understand why his name ought to be hallowed, and that more and more people might honour God in speech and action.

You know it struck me this week that the business world has something to teach us when it comes to hallowing God's name. Recently I've been reading a book called *The Real Mad Men*. It tells the story of the advertising revolution that took place in the 1960s. Before then, advertising was all about the hard sell: big promises and exaggerated facts leading to greater sales. But then some agencies adopted a new

tactic: they started telling the truth. Some only did work for companies they felt they could be honest about. One famous campaign from this era was the Volkswagen campaign. The brief was to sell the German VW beetle into the US market where people drove Cadillacs and when WWII was still a fresh memory. And so the advertisers decided to sell the product by speaking truthfully. "It's small" they said, "which means it's efficient, and you'll always find a park". They started to build the reputation of the Volkswagen name, and they created an expectation of efficiency and reliability. And it worked.

What Jesus is asking us to do is to pray that the same thing might happen with God's name: that people might hear of his reputation; that they might have an expectation of great things, and that the impossible might happen with cynical people learning to trust, and therefore revere, the name of God.

Can I lead us in prayer?

Father, let your name be hallowed. Father, lead our politicians to fear and respect your ways and to not legislate against them. Father let our classrooms be places of respect for your name and not places where spiritual discussion is avoided. Father, let honour for your name be given a hearing in our media outlets. And so Father would you please open the eyes of our leaders and educators and editors, let them hear of your reputation, and may they themselves learn a new respect for your name. Amen.