

Our Father in Heaven, Hallowed be Your Name

SCOTT HOEZEE

In the Bible, starting already in the Garden of Eden, humans having communication with God is a bedrock part of reality. Almost from the beginning, that communication has taken the form of prayer. In the Reformed confession, the *Heidelberg Catechism*, we are told that the number one reason Christians need to pray is because the very act of praying shows how grateful we are to God for all his grace to us. Grateful people want to stay in regular contact with the One who gives us such gifts. Today on *Groundwork*, we begin a series on what may be the best known prayer in the world: It is the prayer Jesus taught us, and so we call it the Lord's Prayer. Stay tuned.

DARRELL DELANEY

Welcome to *Groundwork*, where we dig into scripture to lay the foundation for our lives. I am Darrell Delaney.

SCOTT HOEZEE

And I am Scott Hoezee; and Darrell, with this program, we are beginning a six-part series on the Lord's Prayer. Probably just about every Christian in the world knows this prayer, and a lot of people in their own native languages know the prayer by heart. Most of what is contained in the prayer is found in two different places in the Bible.

DARRELL DELANEY

I really appreciate us jumping into this one because when we did the series before on the entire Sermon on the Mount, it feels like every single part can be gone deeper.

SCOTT HOEZEE

Right.

DARRELL DELANEY

There is so much in there that it is hard to pack into a limited series. So, I am glad we are zeroing in on the Lord's Prayer this time.

SCOTT HOEZEE

Yes, because Matthew 6 is part of the Sermon on the Mount; right in the middle of the Sermon on the Mount, really. The prayer is also taught in Luke 11. In Luke, Jesus gives out this prayer in answer to a request from the disciples: Lord, teach us how to pray. Matthew doesn't have that specific request; but instead, Jesus embeds this Lord's Prayer into a larger teaching on prayer there in the Sermon on the Mount. But as we begin this series, let's go to Matthew 6, and just hear the prayer that again many of us know so well.

DARRELL DELANEY

⁹“Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name, ¹⁰your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. ¹¹Give us today our daily bread. ¹²And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. ¹³And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one.”

SCOTT HOEZEE

So, we will be taking this prayer kind of one petition—one set of petitions—at a time in this six-part series; and for this first program, Darrell, we are going to deal just with that first line: Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name. Now, Darrell, I think sometimes because this prayer is so well known...in fact, in German the name of the prayer is *Das Vaterunser*—the Our Father. Yes, we know; it starts with Our Father; and we kind of maybe slide past that word *Father*, and we don't realize how loaded that term is, and really how kind of radical it was that Jesus taught us to pray this way using that word, *Father*.

DARRELL DELANEY

I think it is one of the first times that Jesus allows us to think of the Father as our God in an intimate and informal way; because most of the time, if you are talking to your god or your deity, no matter what religion, there is a level where you realize: Oh, we are just down here and he is way up here. If you get to address God at all, then you have to address God in a certain way: Very formal, very regal; if he is a king, then you have to do this with a ton of respect; but this is the first time that Jesus allows the intimate, familial language to introduce itself.

SCOTT HOEZEE

And when we think of the Old Testament background for the Jews...for Israel...you know, when Moses encountered God at the burning bush in Exodus 3, Moses says: What is your name? And God answers, you know: I AM. Four letters in Hebrew: Yod, hey, vav, hey; or translated into English: YHWH. Older translations, some of us remember, rendered this Jehovah. More recently it has been translated Yahweh, or actually, Darrell, a lot of Bibles just have LORD in all capital letters...

DARRELL DELANEY

Yes.

SCOTT HOEZEE

To distinguish it from the ordinary Hebrew word for lord. But what we need to remember here, Darrell, is that the Israelites never pronounced it. They were so afraid they would violate the commandment of taking God's name in vain, that they figured the safest course was don't say it at all. So, when they would run across YHWH—yod hey vav hey—in a text, they would just say the word Lord instead...just put in a different word altogether, so they wouldn't risk taking the name in vain. So, that is how much reverence they had for the name.

DARRELL DELANEY

They also called him The Name, which is *Ha'Shemesh*. They also go by that, because they want to make sure that they don't end up blaspheming, because taking the Lord's name in vain is a form of blasphemy; and because that formality was set in the Old Testament, that is the culture that they lived in, so when Jesus comes along and says: Call him Father...

SCOTT HOEZEE

Right.

DARRELL DELANEY

I am pretty sure it shocked them; I am pretty sure they were surprised to hear that.

SCOTT HOEZEE

Yes; and of course, Jesus, from all eternity, was the Second Person of the Trinity; in our trinitarian theology, he is the Son of God. He has a relationship with the First Person of the Trinity that is like a son relating to a father. All Three Persons in God...Jesus...you know, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit...all three of them have an intimate relationship; but now, what Jesus does in this prayer, Darrell, is he is taking the intimate relationship he has with his Father and he is sharing that with all of us.

DARRELL DELANEY

I love that because throughout the gospels, you often hear Jesus saying: My Father, my Father, my Father; but it isn't until after the resurrection where he says: Go to your Father and my Father...our Father; but he gives them this prayer *before* he goes to the cross, and says this will be the new relationship once I reveal and I pay for the cost of your sins, and I tear the veil. Now you have an intimate connection with our Father.

SCOTT HOEZEE

And none of the four gospels talks more about Father/Son than John—the Gospel of John. We get it already starting in John 1: ¹⁴The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the one and only Son, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth. ¹⁸No one has ever seen God, but the one and only Son, who is himself God and is in closest relationship with the Father, has made him (the Father) known.

So, as Jesus was the Son of God, and in the closest relationship with the Father, now he shares that relationship with us.

DARRELL DELANEY

His relationship with the Father is so close and so intimate that seeing him is the same as seeing the Father, because he represented the Father, and fully manifested his glory here, which is what John 1 said; and it picks up again in John 5, by saying: ¹⁹“Very truly I tell you, the Son can do nothing by himself; he can do only what he sees his Father doing, because whatever the Father does the Son also does. ²⁰For the Father loves the Son and shows him all he does.

Philip says, John 14:8“Lord, show us the Father and that will be enough for us.” ⁹Jesus answered, “Don’t you know me, Philip, even after I have been among you such a long time? Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father. How can you say, ‘Show us the Father’? ¹⁰Don’t you believe that I am in the Father, and that the Father is in me? The words I say to you I do not speak on my own authority. Rather, it is the Father, living in me, who is doing his work. ¹¹Believe me when I say that I am in the Father and the Father is in me.”

SCOTT HOEZEE

So, that is John 14, and then in the next chapter, John 15: ¹⁴“You are my friends if you do what I command. ¹⁵I no longer call you servants, because a servant does not know his master’s business. Instead, I have called you friends, for everything that I learned from my Father I have made known to you.”

So, Darrell, when we pray the Lord’s Prayer: *Das Vaterunser*—the Our Father, let’s not slide past that *Father* word too quickly because it packs a wallop of wonder and grace, that we now are sons and daughters of this same Father; and so, for that very reason, we are able to call God our Father, at Jesus’ invitation. He has adopted us into the family.

Well, in just a moment, we will move on to the next words; the words that this is a Father in heaven, but then also, the words; Hallowed be your name. So, stay tuned.

Segment 2

DARRELL DELANEY

You are listening to *Groundwork*, where we are digging into scripture to lay the foundation for our lives. I am Darrell Delaney.

SCOTT HOEZEE

And I am Scott Hoezee; and Darrell, we are looking at the opening words of the Lords’ Prayer in this first of six *Groundwork* programs on the Lord’s Prayer. So, we just thought about the wonderful and radical gift it is that Jesus now tells us to call no less than Almighty God, our Father; but then, let’s just briefly also notice that he throws in the words: In heaven...our Father in heaven...and that is important, too.

DARRELL DELANEY

So, if we think about this, God in physical form is not here with us; and so, it is important that Jesus is reminding us of the fact that our Father resides in heaven, and it is the spiritual world, and he is above us and

transcends all that we know. If you look at a verse in Jeremiah 23, it says: ²³“Am I only a God nearby,” declares the Lord, “And not a God far away? ²⁴Who can hide in secret places so that I cannot see them?” declares the Lord. “Do not I fill heaven and earth?” declares the Lord. So, he is talking about being in both places, and Jesus reminds us that he is in heaven.

SCOTT HOEZEE

And in Acts 17, we hear the Apostle say: ²⁴“The God who made the world and everything in it is the Lord of heaven and earth and does not live in temples built by human hands. ²⁵And he is not served by human hands, as if he needed anything. Rather, he himself gives everyone life and breath and everything else.”

So, the heavenly dwelling of God reminds us that he is *other*, and that he is the sovereign God. Yes, we get to call him Father, but we still do so remembering how mighty and majestic this God who fills heaven and earth really is.

But now, what is kind of the first petition of the whole prayer: Hallowed be your name; a desire...we said earlier that in the Old Testament a desire to keep God’s name holy prevented the Israelites from ever pronouncing the name. They never even said it out loud. So, they certainly respected the holiness of God’s name; but what does it mean for us here, Darrell, to say in this first petition: Hallowed...or hallow-ed, I have often heard it pronounced for some reason...hallowed be your name.

DARRELL DELANEY

So, we all know that God’s character is one of holiness. We see in Isaiah 6, we see in Revelation 4, where the angels cry: Holy, holy, holy all day, all night, and the temple shakes, and things of that nature. So, the fact that God is holy, and he is set apart...it goes back to what you were saying about his transcendence...about him being *other*.

SCOTT HOEZEE

Right.

DARRELL DELANEY

He is definitely in a class by himself. There is no one who compares. When we used to pray where I come from, we would say that this is the *matchless* name of God. No one can match it; there is no one on this level.

SCOTT HOEZEE

And we want to preserve that. I mean, we cannot make God’s name holy; obviously, it is holy; and we cannot make it more holy. I mean, you cannot get...holy is holy. We cannot make it more holy. So, when we pray: Hallowed be your name; we are not saying we are going to make your (God’s) name holy; rather, we are saying we are going to *keep* it holy.

DARRELL DELANEY

Right.

SCOTT HOEZEE

We are going to keep it *holy*; and that is really what is behind that commandment we thought about in the first part of this program, about not taking God’s name in vain from the Ten Commandments. You know, sometimes when we were younger and we would go out into the world, our parents would say, you know: Hey, remember, you are taking our good family name with you; don’t bring our family name down; don’t do anything that is going to dishonor our name, son...daughter...whoever; and that is what we do. We represent the holy name of God when we go out in the world, and we want to act and behave and speak in such a way that *keeps* the holiness of God intact in the eyes of others.

DARRELL DELANEY

Now, we did a series on Ezekiel way back here in *Groundwork*, and we talked about something in Chapter 36, because the people of God...they weren’t exactly living the way...

SCOTT HOEZEE

No.

DARRELL DELANEY

They were supposed to be living, but God took it personally that they weren't doing that. In Chapter 36, it says;

²²“Therefore say to the Israelites, ‘This is what the Sovereign Lord says: It is not for your sake, people of Israel, that I am going to do these things, but for the sake of my holy name, which you have profaned among the nations where you have gone. ²³I will show the holiness of my great name, which has been profaned among all the nations, the name you have profaned among them.”

So, now it says that they dragged his name in the mud.

SCOTT HOEZEE

Yes; not their own name. they didn't make Israel's reputation bad...oh, maybe that, too...but the main thing God is concerned about is that they bore his name, and they dragged his name through the mud. You made me look bad, God says. You ruined my reputation of holiness. The Israelites forgot that they represented God; and unfortunately, sometimes we do, too; and so, the first petition of the Lord's Prayer sets squarely before us every time we pray this prayer: Remember who you represent in the world and make your Father in heaven look good.

DARRELL DELANEY

So, just like Jesus does what the Father is telling him to do, and what he sees his Father doing, the Lord is actually, in this prayer, reminding us that we represent the Lord, in whatever we do. In Matthew Chapter 5, we are told that we are supposed to be the light of the world. It says: ¹⁴“You are the light of the world. A town built on a hill cannot be hidden. ¹⁵Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead, they put it on a stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house. ¹⁶In the same way, let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven.”

So, we see here, and in the Pauline epistles that we are supposed to be ambassadors for Christ, and that when we pray the prayer, we are reminded of who God is, and how we are supposed to live.

SCOTT HOEZEE

When I was a boy, our pastor often opened the worship service with the first verse of Psalm 115: Not to us, Lord, not to us, but to your name be the glory, because of your love and faithfulness.

So, how we live out our Christian lives is not, first of all, about us. It is all about the God who we represent, the Savior Jesus Christ we represent, because a whole lot of what the world is going to think about our God, Darrell, depends on what they think of us and what they see in us; and you know, again, we don't always do well; and you know, you've heard this, I've heard this, probably most of us have heard this, and it stings...it stings...because we know there is some truth to it...when you hear people say: You know, I like Jesus a lot. It's his followers I cannot stand! It is like, well, we are going to reflect bad on Jesus, right? If the followers behave badly, they are going to think badly of the Jesus whose name we proclaim. So, we go out into the world to keep God's name holy in all that we do.

DARRELL DELANEY

So, our role is to be the ones who represent him in this world. So, hopefully when they see us, they actually see a representation of the Father's character, and Jesus actually prayed that we would be that sign in John 17.

SCOTT HOEZEE

²⁰“My prayer is not for them alone. I pray also for those who will believe in me through their message, (talking about the disciples) ²¹that all of them may be one, Father, just as you are in me and I am in you. May they also be in us so that the world may believe that you have sent me. ²²I have given them the glory that you gave me, that they may be one as we are one—²³I in them and you in me—so that they may be brought to complete unity. Then the world will know that you sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me.

So, here Jesus just keeps repeating the word: In...you in me, I in you, us in them, them in us. It is like in-ness, or this innity...I am going to make up a word...innity. The more we are *in* the Father, the more likely it is we are going to *know* the Father, and the more likely it is we are going to *act* like the Father, and so preserve his holy name in all our living.

DARRELL DELANEY

So, the innity that you are talking about starts with Jesus helping us to realize that in prayer, this is a place where that can be birthed in us, and in our character; and as we close this program, we want to look at a couple of examples of how this happened elsewhere in the New Testament. So, stay tuned.

Segment 3

SCOTT HOEZEE

I am Scott Hoezee, along with Darrell Delaney, and you are listening to *Groundwork*, and this first program of a six-part series on the Lord's Prayer; and Darrell, so far, we have seen that Jesus introduced the idea of calling God our Father; and so, not surprisingly, the apostles elsewhere in the New Testament pick up on that and run with it.

DARRELL DELANEY

Yes; there are plenty of places in the New Testament where the word Father comes out again and again. Like this one from Romans 8 that says: ¹⁴For those who are led by the Spirit of God are the children of God. ¹⁵The Spirit you received does not make you slaves, so that you live in fear again; rather, the Spirit you received brought about your adoption to sonship. And by him we cry, "Abba, Father." ¹⁶The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God's children.

SCOTT HOEZEE

And Paul sounds a similar theme in Galatians 4: ⁴But when the set time had fully come, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under the law, to redeem those under the law, that we might receive adoption to sonship. ¹⁶Because you are his sons, (and I would add daughters) God sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, the Spirit who calls out, "Abba, Father." So, you are no longer a slave, but God's child; and since you are his child, God has made you also an heir.

So, there we have it. This Abba, Father...Abba almost means Daddy...even more intimate than just Father; and we have been adopted into the divine family. So again, the radicalness of Jesus teaching us to address God as our Father is brought out in these two passages by the Apostle Paul.

DARRELL DELANEY

It is also brought out in John's first epistle. He talks a lot about the relationship with the Father as well. It says: ^{3:1}See what great love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called the children of God! And that is what we are! The reason the world does not know us is that it did not know him. ²Dear friends, now we are children of God, and what we will be has not yet been made known. But we know that when Christ appears, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is. ³All who have this hope in him purify themselves, just as he is pure.

So, it is really that purity language that is leading back into the *hallowed* part, if you ask me.

SCOTT HOEZEE

Yes, exactly; hallowed be your name is right there in that verse in 1 John. All who have this hope in him *purify* themselves, just as he is pure. So, we want to, not only call God our Father, we want to be *like* our Father, and that is holy, as he is holy; pure, as he is pure; so that we can imitate our Father and our elder brother Jesus as well. That is what we carry with us into all of life.

So, here is a good example, I think, Darrell, of the old adage, you know; whether or not prayer changes God...and you could have a long discussion on that...do we actually change God's mind when we pray for things? One thing we know for sure that is captured in that old adage: Prayer changes us, right? The more we pray, the more we think God's thoughts after God, and the more we are...as we said earlier...the more we are in the Father and the Father is in us, the more likely it is that we will keep God's name holy as we go about

our lives.

DARRELL DELANEY

I think, too, it is a way, Scott, that we can honor what he taught us in John 15 about being the vine and the branches. He says: Remain in me and I will remain in you, and the prayer that we do when Jesus taught this prayer, whether we use our own model or whether we use this model right here in scripture, it is a way of abiding and getting into the innity, if you will...that is what you said before...the innity that helps us to come closer to who we are. Then God's character can begin to change who we are and how we respond.

SCOTT HOEZEE

And the more we are in the Father, and in the Son, and the more the Father and the Son are in us through the indwelling of the Holy Spirit—in, in, in, again—then the more we recover the image of God we were originally created in. We were created in the image of God, Genesis tells us. We didn't lose the image when we fell into sin, but it got bleared and smeared and distorted...it got blurry; but the more we gain conformity to Jesus now, who the author to the Hebrews says Jesus is the express image of God, par excellence...

DARRELL DELANEY

Yes.

SCOTT HOEZEE

The more we conform to the image of Jesus, the more we recover that original image that was our intended goal in creation way back in the beginning, in Genesis.

DARRELL DELANEY

So, the closer we come to that image, the more we realize that we have things to work on; that we fall short every time; and that is why we are able to actually ask for forgiveness; but we are called to set our minds on things above; we are called to put to death those things that are of an earthly nature; and then what happens as a byproduct of that is what Paul says in Colossians 3: ¹⁶Let the message of Christ dwell among you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom through psalms, hymns, and songs from the Spirit, singing to God with gratitude in your hearts. ¹⁷And whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.

SCOTT HOEZEE

Very interesting verse there in Colossians 3. It is in the imperative mood. It is a command, but it is in the third person, which seems weird, right? Commands are always given in the second person: Darrell, you do this; you sit down, you know. How can you have a command in the third person? But it is. That is the form of the verb Paul uses there; and it is his way...my colleague Jeff Weima taught me once...it is Paul's way of being as emphatic as he can. Let that word of Christ—that message of Christ—*dwell* in you! It is like he is saying: Umph! Get it in you! Get that Word in you! Because the deeper we get that word in us, the more likely it is that we will follow, and we will fulfill that first petition of the Lord's Prayer: Hallowed be your name.

DARRELL DELANEY

When we think about this prayer that Jesus has given us, it is supposed to rightly align us under the will of the Father. In the next episode, we are going to talk about how his kingdom come, how his will will be done; but this prayer is setting us up so that we can acknowledge who God is and what he has done and align our character under his; borrowing from his ability to keep us holy, and if we live that way, then we will also honor his name.

SCOTT HOEZEE

Jesus taught us to call God our Father, and to hallow that name in all our living. We cannot do that, but by the Spirit who proceeds from the Father and the Son, he can help us every day. Thanks be to God.

Well, thanks for listening and digging deeply into scripture with *Groundwork*. We are you hosts, Scott Hoezee and Darrell Delaney. Join us next time as we study the second petition of the Lord's Prayer: Your kingdom come; your will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Connect with us at our website, groundworkonline.com. Share what *Groundwork* means to you. Make suggestions for future *Groundwork* programs.

DARRELL DELANEY

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