Hi everyone,

I hope that your sense of well being increases with the increasing hours of sunlight.

Here is my favorite quote from the book that some of us are reading during Lent:

**"Prayer is a conversation about everything. Words and images are vital tools that can help us grow in this endless and ongoing conversation, but we must understand that the words and images we use are not the content itself. They are excavation tools that help dig toward and into the real content: the ongoing, ever-present conversation between us and the Divine"**

(McRoberts & Erickson, *Prayer: Forty Days of Practice.*)

I still have some books left. Let me know if you would like one...

Prayer is about connecting here and now with the God whom Jesus called “Our Father in heaven.” Of course, this is the opening line of the Lord’s Prayer. It is possible to confess, believe, or think all kinds of things about God but the second phrase of the Lord’s prayer establishes a connection between who God is to you and how we live our lives. When we pray, as Jesus taught his friends, “may your name be kept holy,” or “hallowed by your name,” we express the desire and commitment to make God’s love and desire to see all humans flourish visible by how we live our lives.

When this happens, those around us can come to see God the way Jesus saw God. As we learned from Albert Haase last week, the God that Jesus addressed as Father in the Lord’s prayer is “a God of selfless, sacrificial love and consolation who continually surrounds me in the protective air of the divine presence” (Haase, Living the Lord’s Prayer, 24.) What does it mean to keep the name of someone like that holy?

In order to keep God’s name holy, you need to know God’s name.

* Who is God to you?
* Do you know God by name?

To Jesus, God was not a distant authority figure or merely an abstract concept to be confessed. And neither was God the big guy upstairs far away from everyday life and experiences merely allowing good and bad things to happen to us.

Within the context that Jesus grew up in, names were not just names. Knowing someone’s name was linked to a shared existence. This means that names for God are about relationship rather than merely a form of identification. It is possible to use all the right words and language to talk about God but keeping God’s name holy depends not on specific words but on this sacred intimacy between the divine and you.

Knowing God’s name, who God is to you, is linked to experiences of God’s presence and activity in your life. Praying “may your name be kept holy” is about expressing our desire for continued and increasing intimacy with God. One way to explore what this means for us is to learn from what this looked like for Jesus.

**To help reflect on this further, take a look at the image below.**



Thinking about prayer and who God is to you, what would you say?

**Is God the object or subject of your prayers?**

Praying “may your name be kept holy” also requires us to ponder who we are before God.

* How does God see you?
* Who are you to God?

**The God whom Jesus called “Father” knows you by name!**

However, our connection with God is interrupted; Jesus’ was not. Praying “may your name be kept holy” means to cultivate the desire for, and committing to increasing our understanding and awareness of, something that Jesus knew fully. Because of his undisturbed connection with God, who Jesus was and everything he did flowed from this awareness of God’s unrestricted and boundless love. Like Jesus, you are the beloved of God. Like Jesus, **God wants you to hear this: “you bring me great joy”** (Mark 1:11).

Praying “may your name be kept holy” is about the desire to become people who know fully how deeply they are loved by God and that we bring great joy to God. This is about becoming a certain kind of person. Praying "may your name be kept holy" is about becoming people whose lives increasingly take on the shape of Jesus’.

**Out of the soil of knowing how deeply we are loved by God grows the fruit of loving others without expectations or restrictions, unconditionally.**

If you are interested in exploring further what a Jesus shaped life—a life that reflects the prayer “may your name be kept holy”—looks like, you can find a thought provoking collection of Jesus’ teachings here: [Matthew 5-7](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Matthew+5-7&version=NLT) (This collection of Jesus’ teaching is commonly referred to as the “Sermon on the Mount”).

If you find the time to read this, I can guarantee you that you will have questions. I have lots of questions about Jesus' teaching but sometimes a conversation can help us find answers. So please do not hesitate to reach out. It is always good to talk; on the phone, by email, or we can go for a walk&talk.

Andreas