

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ,

Greetings from the parsonage! Welcome to one of my favorite months of the year: October! This is the month the weather feels the best; and we celebrate the Reformation! Some of us may also celebrate Halloween by Trick or Treating or Trunk or Treating. Another name for Halloween is All Hallow's Eve. I haven't done much research on why it is sometimes called that, but it does lead nicely into our Large Catechism study—which will be on hallowing God's Name. Let's take a look!



At the end of last month, we were wrapping up Luther's introduction to the Lord's Prayer. He wrote the introduction and, indeed, the entire section on the Lord's Prayer "in order that we may learn above all to value prayer as a great and precious thing and may properly distinguish between vain babbling and asking for something. By no means do we reject prayer, but we do denounce the utterly useless howling and growling, as Christ himself rejects and forbids great wordiness. Now we shall treat the Lord's Prayer very briefly and clearly. In seven successive articles or petitions are comprehended all the needs that continually beset us, each one so great that it should impel us to keep praying for it all our lives.

“‘May your name be hallowed.’

“This (petition) is rather obscure and not idiomatic in German. In (their) mother tongue, (Luther and his German brothers and sisters in Christ) would say, ‘Heavenly Father, grant that your name alone may be holy.’ But what is it to pray that his name may become holy? Is it not already holy? Answer: Yes, in its essence it is always holy, but our use of it is not holy (BoC, pp.444-445).”

Last Sunday I was discussing with our youth catechism students how the use of our tongues is very important. They had a hard time learning that thinking “Oh my God” or “OMG” in a negative way is just as bad as saying “OMG” or “Oh my God” in a negative way. It is the same as when our Lord Jesus tells us that it is sinful to hate a brother or sister, let alone murder him or her, or that having impure thoughts is as bad as having sex with the person you are

looking at. Yet thoughts and words (and even sex) have their correct usage. But in this article we're focusing on the Name of God. Yes, even God's Name has proper and improper uses. Most people today use His Name improperly. How many television or Netflix shows that mention God or Jesus use His Name properly? Or is His Name more often used as an exclamation when something goes wrong? This is not how we are to use God's Name.

“God's name was given to us when we became Christians and were baptized, and so we are called children of God and have the sacraments, through which he incorporates us into himself with the result that everything that is God's must serve for our use. Thus it is a matter of grave necessity, about which we should be most concerned that God's name receive due honor and be kept holy and sacred as the greatest treasure and most sacred thing we have, and that, as good children, we pray that his name, which is in any case holy in heaven, may also be holy and be kept holy on earth in our midst and in all the world. How does it become holy among us? The plainest answer that can be given is: when both our teaching and our life are godly and Christian. Because in this prayer we call God our Father, it is our duty in every way to behave as good children so that he may receive from us not shame but honor and praise (BoC, p.445).”

As Luther reminds us, God's Name is not made holy simply by using it in the proper context, but by our keeping our lives and our teaching faithful to His Word. Yet none of us is holy enough to do this of ourselves; we need God in order to do this. That is why Luther also reminds us that God has given us His Sacraments—Baptism in which He calls us to be His children and the Lord's Supper where He strengthens our faith. Without God, we are unholy, unrighteous sinners. But through Jesus' death on the cross as the payment for our sins, we have been brought into God's family through the waters of Holy Baptism and we continually receive strength for our faith in Holy Communion. Every day God the Holy Spirit reminds us of our Baptism and on Sundays has us partake of the Holy supper so that we might keep God's Name holy, or hallowed, among us—not just this October when we celebrate the Reformation and maybe also All Hallow's Eve, but every month of the year. In Jesus' Name. Amen.

Your brother and under-Shepherd in Christ,

Pastor Josh