**John 17:1-25**

**March 4, 2020 (Lent Midweek 1 – “Hallowed be Thy Name” Lord’s Prayer in Lord’s Passion II)**

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and from our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Amen.

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

The word “Hallowed” is defined as “made holy” it also can be referred to as keeping something sacred, praising something or honoring it. We pray in the Lord’s Prayer, “Hallowed be Thy Name.” The name of our Father is holy because God himself is holy and perfect. Therefore we are to hold his name sacred. We see throughout the Passion of our Lord Jesus Christ that his name is constantly defamed and torn down. We don’t find much honor being given his name at all. In John chapter 19:3, “They (meaning the guards) came up to him, saying ‘Hail, King of the Jews!’ and stuck him with their hands.” Luke chapter 23, “And the people stood by, watching, but the rulers **scoffed** at him, saying, ‘He saved others; let him save himself, if he is the Christ of God, his Chosen One!’ The soldiers also **mocked** him, coming up and offering him sour wine and saying, ‘If you are the King of the Jews, save yourself!’ There was also an inscription over him, ‘This is the King of the Jews.’ One of the criminals who were hanged **railed** at him, saying ‘Are you not the Christ? Save yourself and us!” Earlier in chapter Luke 23, “And Herod with his soldiers **treated him with contempt and mocked him**. Then, arraying him in splendid clothing, he sent him back to Pilate.” Finally, the last section we will see as an example of the disrespect to our Lord and Savior’s name from his Passion this evening, from Luke 22, “Now the men who were holding Jesus in custody were **mocking** him as they beat him. They also blindfolded him and kept asking him, ‘Prophesy! Who is it that struck you?’ And they said many other things against him, **blaspheming him**.” Our Lord, the very Son of God, the promised Messiah was treated shamefully. They “honored” him in sarcasm, they scoffed at him, mocked him, railed at him, and blasphemed him. His name was far from “hallowed” before they took his life.

Lent is a time of reflection. When we look at these examples of disrespect and dishonor, do we see ourselves? Do you openly mock God in your speech? Cursing God? Making fun of God to others in order to be part of a crowd that may be hostile to the Church or to the Gospel? We live in a world where such things are commonplace, and God’s name isn’t “Hallowed”. Religion and Christianity is far from a topic that wouldn’t be mocked, that would be given some kind of exemption from comedy or jokes. If anything making fun of Jesus is almost a worn out punch line in our world today. It wouldn’t even be seen as edgy or different to make fun of God, in fact the opposite would make you stand out. If you were a comedian or entertainer who defended the Word of God, or would never profane His name but instead only spoke about our Heavenly Father with honor and respect. That would be seen as different, if you were to treat your faith as something sacred and set apart, something you honor and defend more than anything else.

Martin Luther speaks on the subject in the Small and Large catechism, specifically from the Small Catechism he says, “God’s name is certainly holy in itself, but we pray in this petition that it may be kept holy among us also. God’s name is kept holy when the Word of God is taught in its truth and purity, and we, as the children of God, also lead holy lives according to it. Help us to do this, dear Father in heaven! But anyone who teaches or lives contrary to God’s Word profanes the name of God among us. Protect us from this, heavenly Father!”

So the true “hallowing” or honoring of God’s name in our lives isn’t just in what we say. To boil this down to simply not cursing, swearing, or taking the Lord’s name in vain would be a disservice to the true nature of what we are praying here in the First Petition of the Lord’s Prayer, while the guards, and the thief on the cross, and Herod and the chief priests were guilty of disrespecting God’s name in their words, it was their actions that spoke louder. It was how they lived and what they were doing that showed their lack of respect for God’s name. My Dear friends, the saying is true, “Actions speak louder than words.” God’s name is kept holy when we as the children of God lead holy lives according to the true teachings of the Word of God. Saying it is one thing, living it is another. When people see you, and what you do, do they know you are a Christian? Do they see your faith in action through how you treat others and the love of God radiating through your interactions with the world around you? Or do we instead profane the name of God through what we do? Through how we give little thought to what God’s Word says about how we should live our lives and dishonor God by the example we’re showing to everyone around us? To hallow God’s name is to do more than just refrain from certain words or speech it’s to actually live your life in honor of God and what He has done for you.

Which brings us from the words of the Lord’s Prayer, to our Lord’s Passion. Because here is Jesus Christ laying down his life to save even those who dishonor him and fail to hallow his name. Think about this reality for a moment, Jesus is laying down his life for these individuals, to save them, to give them the greatest of gifts, to save them from their sins and eternal death. You’d think if there was ever a time they would be hallowing his name it would be now! When he’s going to make this sacrifice for their benefit as well as the rest of the world. It reminds me of a rather strange occurrence that has happened quite a bit the past few days which is surprising in the thinning down of presidential candidates in the democrat party. In just the past few days, candidates like Pete Buttigieg, Amy Klobuchar, and now even as it was announced just today, Mike Bloomberg have dropped out of the race. And they all have endorsed for President, former vice president Joe Biden. Which means that just weeks or in some cases, days ago Joe Biden would be speaking about how he was a better candidate for President than these individuals, and then, upon hearing that they’ve dropped out of the race, he would be talking about how wonderful it is to receive their endorsement. You can’t insult your way to an endorsement! Once the relationship changed from adversary to ally, you can imagine that the entire mood changed when these individuals spoke to each other, and no longer were their insults or rivalry, there was only kind words and shaking hands.

If there was any recognition of the gift that Jesus was giving to the world they would be treating him with respect, but instead there is only ugliness and mockery. But the gift was still given, for those who profaned his name on that fateful day of his death, and for those who profane his name in their lives today. The gift of forgiveness is still given, through God’s Word, through His Holy Sacraments, through the love of God the Father shown through God the Son. The gift is yours, no matter how profane your actions may be. God’s forgiveness is complete, and he holds no grudges, he doesn’t count it against you, he forgives you completely and totally, because His nature is merciful and holy. His name is holy with or without your prayers, His power is ultimate and His authority is complete and it has nothing to do with you. You can’t add anything to Him, He doesn’t rely upon you for anything, but you do rely upon Him for everything! And to hallow God’s name is to praise him for his gifts, to honor him for his sacrifice, and to hold his name sacred in your life in what you say and do as his reborn child.

God’s name be hallowed in your life not just in what you say, but in what you do. In the moments when you honor God’s name with no recognition from the outside world. When you do the right thing as laid out in God’s Law when no one is watching, when no one will know but Your Father who is in heaven. Do not tire in this work, but instead take this season of reflection to do an inventory on your own actions, not to give in to despair, but to find the comfort and relief of what Jesus’ sacrifice on the cross truly means in your life.

Amen.

The peace of God which surpasses all human understanding keep our hearts and minds through faith in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Amen.