

Adoration 'Hallowed Be Your Name'

Pippa Page

Revelation 4:7-11

We are in a sermon series on prayer, based around the themes of the Pete Greig's 24/7 prayer course. So we're looking at **the Lord's prayer**, and going through a line of it each week.

Today's part is "**Our Father in heaven, Hallowed be your name**".

I'm not an expert in prayer, I haven't got this all sorted, and I'm very much still on journey and still learning.

But this is what I think: I think that God is **Awesome!**

The readings that we had today remind us of just how **holy** and **awesome** He is, and yet, at the same time, how **compassionate** and good and kind and loving towards us.

Psalm 103:11-12 | ¹¹"As high as the heavens are above the earth, that's how great *His love* is for *us*, ¹²as far as the East is from the West that's how far He has removed our transgressions from us."

Psalm 8:3-4 | ³ When I consider your heavens,
the work of your fingers,
the moon and the stars,
which you have set in place,
⁴ what is mankind that you are mindful of them,
human beings that you care for them?

Just take a little pause to consider these words, and the **amazing beauty** of God's creation.

God's creation is so incredible, and so fantastic, you can't **not** be wowed by it really!

The prayer of adoration is how we respond to God for His incredible love for us and His amazing magnificence in who He **is** and what He **does** and **has done**. It is about coming close to God in Praise and worship – thanking Him and giving Him the glory for all that He is and all that He has done.

James 4:8 | ⁸ “Come near to God, and He will come near to you.”

It's quite incredible, isn't it? That God actually **wants** each of us **to come near to Him**; to **talk** to Him; to **be with** Him; to **listen to** Him. God, who made the Universe, *actually wants* to be in relationship with each one of us! It's mind blowing, if you think about it!

I think that we can sometimes feel that God is so magnificent and mighty that our praise doesn't make much difference to Him. When we read in Revelation that the 4 living creatures are crying out:

Revelation 4:8 | ⁸“Holy, holy, holy is the Lord God Almighty, who was and is and is to come”

They're doing this all the time. And every time they do, the 24 Elders are falling down and casting off their crowns and saying:

**Revelation 4:11 | ¹¹“ You are worthy, our Lord and God,
to receive glory and honour and power,
for you created all things,
and by your will they were created
and have their being.”**

We can sometimes feel that our feeble efforts at praise and worship aren't going to make any difference to Him! But, that's simply not the case! Of course, God is self-sufficient, but **Richard Foster**, in his book about prayer, says this:

*“We should always remember the words of St Augustine: ‘**God thirsts to be thirsted after**’*

Our God is not made of stone. His heart is the most sensitive and tender of all. No act goes unnoticed, no matter how insignificant or small. A cup of cold water is enough to put tears in the eyes of God. Like the proud mother who is thrilled to receive a wilted bouquet of dandelions from her child, so God celebrates our feeble expressions of gratitude”

God actually wants to hear our expressions of gratitude and our attempts to worship Him! He **wants** us to spend time with Him and listen to Him. He wants us to tell Him about what we specially like about creation, and everything else that we are grateful for, and He also wants to **hear** about how we are feeling.

When the Disciples asked Jesus to teach them how to pray, they must have been quite shocked when He started with “Our Father in Heaven”. All the Jews knew that God is incredibly pure and holy. They were not even allowed to speak His name because it was considered too holy to speak. To use such a familiar term as “Our Father” would have been a real surprise.

But if we believe what it says in **John 1:12-13**, we know that we are God's children, and so it's only right to call Him Father. This is the "In the beginning was the word" passage that we hear every Christmas Carol Service, and at other times too. It talks about Jesus, the light of the world coming into the world that He created and the world not recognising Him and not receiving Him. It says:

John 1:12-13 | ¹²"Yet to all who did receive him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God – ¹³children born not of natural descent, nor of human decision or a husband's will, but born of God."

So, when we become a Christian, we ask God to turn us around and take away all our wrongdoing and we accept His **free gift** of **forgiveness** and of **having Jesus in our lives**, in the form of the Holy Spirit, to guide and direct us from then on, and then we get to live with Him for ever. That's what being born of God means. A new beginning. So, if we have done this, we are children of God.

We do have to remember though, that God is still **holy**. He is still **awesome**. The fact that He loves us **individually** does not alter that. It **is possible** to become too familiar with God and take Him for granted. He is **not** there just to swat all our enemies and provide us with all the things we ask for. Familiarity can breed apathy. That is something we need to guard against. God does not always do what we ask Him to – we'll be thinking about that later on in our series. We have to let God be God and keep on worshipping Him. I'll come back to this in a minute.

We've looked, so far, at what adoration **is**. So, on a practical note, **how do we do it?**

All the writers on prayer that I've come across seem to be in agreement that it helps to have a particular place for prayer. Some people like to be up a mountain. I think that this can really help, especially with appreciation of creation and adoration, but it's not particularly practical for all of us every day.

Jesus said “go into your room, shut the door and pray to your Father in heaven.” (Matthew 6:6) It definitely can be helpful to have a particular place, or a particular chair that we tend to sit in, to have our regular prayer times. But we also need to be aware of ourselves. Many of us feel more alive and able to appreciate and communicate with God when we are outside – in which case – do that (when it's not too cold or too wet).

I sometimes go outside at night and when the stars are out, there have been a couple of nights in the last week when we've had really good stars. Its amazing. It makes me feel very small and insignificant. And yet God, who created all this, wants to hear from me!! That is fairly mindblowing! Most of the writers on prayer also agree that it is a learning process. If you think about small children, think for a moment about what happens if you take them into a supermarket? You don't usually have to teach them how to ask for things!! But learning how to say “thank you” doesn't come to them quite so naturally!

I think we have a **gratitude centre** somewhere inside us, (not to be confused with our centre of gravity!), and I think we need to **exercise** it in order for it to grow strong.

We have to **learn** how to pray in general, and in particular , for today, we have to learn how to pray the prayer of adoration. Richard Foster suggests that we should start with appreciating small things. He recommends insects – I would prefer to recommend flowers or trees – but whatever floats your boat! Don't try to analyse them, just look at their colours, shapes, movements and learn to appreciate what you see. When we take pleasure in the small things around us, we tend to develop gratitude to their creator, and that's how adoration begins.

Once we have got started with adoration we can learn how to lift up God's name in praise and worship. The book of psalms can help with this.

For example, Psalm 66 starts like this:

**Psalm 66:1-3 | ¹“Shout for joy to God, all the earth!
²Sing the glory of his name;
make his praise glorious.
³Say to God, ‘How awesome are your deeds!’”**

¹ Shout for joy to God, all the earth!

² Sing the glory of his name;
make his praise glorious.

³ Say to God, ‘How awesome are your deeds!’

Psalm 8:1 begins with:

**Psalm 8:1 | ¹“Lord, our Lord,
how majestic is your name in all the earth!
You have set your glory
in the heavens.”**

If we read Psalms like these we can begin to add our own words of awe and worship, and develop our own prayers of adoration.

Of course, while private prayer, including adoration, is vital for us, we also need to take part in **collective worship**, which is why we come to church! One of the easiest ways to lift up God in praise and worship is in sung worship, and many of the songs and hymns that we sing in church are based on the Bible, and in particular the book of Psalms. When we read the book of psalms, we can often find verses that remind us of the hymns and songs we sing, because they have the same words.

There’s something really powerful and uplifting for us in celebrating God together in worship in the church family. That’s why we do it!

It's fascinating to think that Jesus would have sung the psalms too, it was his, and everybody else's song book in Israel. Many of them would have known the whole book of psalms off by heart.

But what happens if we really don't feel like it?

There can be several reasons why we don't feel like adoring God. It might be that **our perspective of Him** is a bit out, it might be that **we** are out of sorts, it might be that we just don't have the energy.

So, what if our perspective of God is out?

In Pete Greg's book, *How To Pray*, he says that some people envisage God as scowling, perpetually disapproving, invariably disappointed and needing to be placated or persuaded in prayer. If that's how we picture God, then it's not surprising that we want to avoid His gaze!

But Jesus shows us what God is really like in the parable of the prodigal son. The father in that parable never gave up watching, and at the first sign of a returning prodigal, he came running, with arms wide open desperate to welcome him back. The God that Jesus introduces us to is extravagantly kind. He comes running to meet us **whenever** we approach Him, **wherever** we've been and **whatever** we've done. Jesus assures us that our Father God, the Creator and Sustainer of the Universe is **on our side!** He **loves us**, He is **always** pleased to see us, and he **wants** to bless us.

C.S.Lewis identified some reasons why we can find it difficult to come to God in adoration. The first is **inattention**. It's so easy to be caught up in the whirlwind of life. The legitimate demands of home and family, of studying and work can make life a blur. Our obligations seem overwhelming at times, and can prevent us from noticing God's attempts to communicate with us. We cannot adore when we cannot see.

Another obstacle that he mentions is **greed**. When we see something beautiful, instead of taking the time to admire it, and also its creator, we just ask for more. But our addiction for more and more and more keeps us from reflection, **lingering** over a rose, for example, enjoying the colour, the shape the perfume, the way it grows – this is where adoration begins.

But sometimes, we're just not in the mood. When life **heaps trouble** on us and we just can't bring ourselves to be thankful and joyful, or when we are so **tired** we can hardly stand up. This is when the writer of Hebrews urges us in to "offer a sacrifice of praise." (Hebrews 13:15) Sometimes we just have to make ourselves do it!

In times like this it's often helpful to use the Psalms or other written prayers to help us, when we just haven't got the words to say. It's a **discipline**. This is when it also helps to have a "place" to pray. If we sit ourselves in our "prayer chair" it sometimes helps to focus our attention on God. Worship music can also help to lift our souls sometimes.

Pete Greig says:

"If adoration fails to erupt spontaneously when I first approach God in prayer, I take hold of my soul quite firmly and make it wake up! This is an act of the will. Instead of waiting to worship until I feel like it (which could be a very long wait indeed), I begin to thank God for all the evidence of His love in my life – often speaking out loud – until my feelings fall into line with the facts. Sometimes this feels a bit fake at first, but that's OK, and sometimes I continue to feel tired or sad or lethargic and that's Ok too."

We need to be honest with God (after all, He knows anyway!) and remember that He likes us a lot, He isn't annoyed with us, and He wants nothing more than to spend time with us.

So we've looked at **why** we do prayer of adoration and **how** we do it and **what to do when** we don't feel like it. So now all that's left is to do it!



@allsaintswestonchurch



All Saints Weston Church



01225 447663

All Saints Church, Church Street, Weston, Bath, BA1 4BT
office@allsaintswestn.org.uk allsaintsweston.org.uk