

4.21.24

Give Us This Day Our Daily Bread

Matthew 6.11, 25-34

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Bread and carbohydrates don't have a great reputation in our culture, but bread was very important in first century Mediterranean culture, whether one was Jewish, Roman, or Greek. Bread is one of the oldest forms of food people make, going back to about 8,000 BC in Egypt. Bread was a staple food in many ancient civilizations, it was always present in homes and during meals. As we continue our series Teach Us to Pray based on the Lord's Prayer, the phrase we're focusing on today is from the Gospel of Matthew 6:11, "**Give us this day our daily bread.**" A little further on in Matthew 6, **Jesus continues to teach about trusting God for our daily needs** when he says,

<sup>25</sup> "Therefore I tell you, **do not worry about your life, what you will eat** or what you will drink, or about your body, what you will wear. **Is not life more than food**, and the body more than clothing? <sup>26</sup> Look at the birds of the air; they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they? <sup>27</sup> And **can any of you by worrying** add a single hour to your span of life? <sup>28</sup> And **why do you worry** about clothing? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they neither toil nor spin, <sup>29</sup> yet I tell you, even Solomon in all his glory was not clothed like one of these. <sup>30</sup> But if God so clothes the grass of the field, which is alive today and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, will he not much more clothe you—you of little faith? <sup>31</sup> **Therefore do not worry, saying, 'What will we eat?' or 'What will we drink?' or 'What will we wear?'** <sup>32</sup> For it is the Gentiles who strive for all these things; and indeed your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things. <sup>33</sup> But strive first for the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well. <sup>34</sup> "**So do not worry about tomorrow**, for tomorrow will bring worries of its own. Today's trouble is enough for today."

Let's pray: Holy God open our ears, focus our minds, soften our hearts, and prepare our spirits that today the leaven of your Word might find in us pliable dough. In the name of the One who called himself the Bread of Life, Amen.

The past two weeks we've heard how the beginning of the Lord's prayer is concerned with God's name, kingdom, and will. Today the focus shifts to our needs and concerns. The Lord's Prayer starts with God's great purposes, but it doesn't end there. Jesus invites us to pray about *our needs* – our bread, our sins, our trials. When we pray, *"Give us this day our daily bread,"* we're asking **that our needs for today would be met today**. This includes food and whatever else we truly need to live. The emphasis is on what we need **today**. This reminds us of the passage from Exodus 16:1-36 about God providing food for the Israelites in the wilderness. The Israelites were complaining against the Lord, and the Lord provided manna for them to eat so they wouldn't die of hunger. God told Moses to instruct the people **to take only what they needed to eat for that day** and not to worry about gathering more, but some folks didn't trust God and didn't listen, *"some left part of it until morning, and it bred worms and became foul."* The only day they were supposed to take more was the day before the Sabbath because they were supposed to rest on the Sabbath day, and yet on the seventh day there were still folks who went out looking to gather manna, which made Moses angry. According to Exodus 16:36, *"the Israelites ate manna forty years, until they came to a habitable land."* That's a long time to have the same menu every day.

Like the Israelites in the wilderness, in praying *"give us this day our daily bread,"* **Jesus is teaching us to learn to trust God for our daily needs**. George Müller was a remarkable 19<sup>th</sup> century Christian evangelist and the director of the Ashley Down orphanage in Bristol, England. He led an incredible life. He knew six languages fluently (Latin, Greek, Hebrew, German, French, and English). He built five houses for orphans and cared for over 10,000 orphans during his lifetime. He provided educational opportunities for the orphans to the point that he was accused by some of raising the poor above their natural station in British life. In addition to caring for orphans George Müller also paid for the printing of Bibles and tracts. He gave away more than 250,000 Bibles. He paid tuition for hundreds of children to go to school. He established 117 schools which offered Christian education to more than 120,000 people. The amazing thing is how he did it. He didn't advertise or ask for the financial and material needs he had in supporting such a vast ministry. He prayed and allowed it to come from the prompting of God in other people. He did this as a testimony that God provides faithfully

for those who trust the Lord. He reasoned: *“Now if I a poor man, simply by prayer and faith, obtained without asking any individual, the means for establishing and carrying on an orphan house: there would be something which with the Lord’s blessing, might be instrumental in strengthening the faith of the children of God, besides being a testimony to the consciences of the unconverted, of the reality of the things of God.”*

One of the most shared examples of this in Muller’s ministry was one day when the children were dressed and ready for school. But the housemother of the orphanage informed Muller there was no food for them to eat. George asked her to take the 300 children into the dining room and have them sit at the tables. He thanked God for the food and waited. George knew God would provide food for the children as he always did. Within minutes, a baker knocked on the door. *“Mr. Muller,”* he said, *“last night I couldn’t sleep. Somehow, I knew that you would need bread this morning. I got up and baked three batches for you. I will bring it in.”* Soon, there was another knock at the door. It was the milkman. His cart had broken down in front of the orphanage. The milk would spoil by the time the wheel was fixed. He asked George if he could use some free milk. George smiled as the milkman brought in ten large cans of milk for the children. If we see needs met because we have asked God alone, our faith in God’s presence and care will be greatly increased.”<sup>1</sup>

The only miracle Jesus performed that’s found in all four gospels is his feeding of 5,000 people. As an aside, the Bible, like most ancient manuscripts, didn’t use punctuation, paragraph divisions, or even spaces to separate words. Chapter and verse notations were put in the Bible much later. The verses, not until the 16<sup>th</sup> century. When that was done it made **Matthew 6:11**, *“Give us this day our daily bread,”* and **John 6:11**, *“Then Jesus took **the loaves**, and when he had given thanks, he distributed them to those who were seated; so also the fish, as much as they wanted.”* One verse encourages us to trust God for our daily bread and the other is a picture of God’s provision of an abundance of bread and fish with leftovers.

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<sup>1</sup> Willard, Spirit of the Disciplines, 174.

Most of us, though not all, have been blessed in that we haven't had to pray this prayer, *"Give us this day our daily bread,"* to survive. However, it's important to remember and to have compassion for the hundreds of millions of people in the world that need this prayer answered to have food for the new day for themselves and for their children. **Proverbs 30:7-9** is a request asking God to help us be honest and to keep us from the trials that can come with having too little or too much. It includes a thought like the Lord's Prayer. *"Two things I ask of you; do not deny them to me before I die: Remove far from me falsehood and lying; **give me neither poverty nor riches; feed me with the food that I need,** or I shall be full, and deny you, and say, *"Who is the Lord?"* or I shall be poor, and steal, and profane the name of my God."*

Proverbs says, *"**feed me with the food that I need.**"* Have you ever looked at a refrigerator or pantry filled with food and thought or said, *"There's nothing to eat?"* How do you think God feels when we stand in front of plenty or abundance and complain that we need more; especially when there are so many who have so much less than we do? Those of us who have gone on mission trips to other parts of the United States and other countries often get a healthy dose of perspective when looking at the vibrant and strong faith of sisters and brothers in Christ who live in conditions far more challenging, and impoverished than our own.

In Matthew 6 Jesus is teaching us **to trust God for what we need to live today and to free us up from worrying about the future.** The point is not that we shouldn't plan to cover our needs, but that we don't trust our money, possessions, or stuff for our future security – that's ultimately futile. We can make all the plans in the world and put away a lot of money to provide for us for many years, but there's no guarantee we'll get to use it. Jesus tells a parable about that in Luke 12:15-21. Our ultimate trust for the future is in the same God who is present with us and loves us today.

**Jesus urges us to keep a healthy perspective on material things and to cultivate an attitude of gratitude.** We're grateful for daily bread and so much more. It's important to learn from a young age to distinguish between wants and needs, to maintain an eternal perspective on what's truly important, and not to fall into the trap of thinking our value or anyone else's as a human being is tied to how much stuff we or

they have. Praying daily and expressing our thanks to God for what we do have can also help us to remain thankful for the many things we can take for granted.

In this phrase of the Lord's Prayer **Jesus is teaching us to live with contentment and thankfulness**. Give us this day our daily bread teaches us to say, "Enough" by encouraging us to pray for what we need today and to trust God for tomorrow. **The discipline of simplicity** can help us to live a more contented life. For example, have you ever found that you've gotten to the point in life where you're happier when stuff is leaving your house or garage rather than coming in? Have you ever had the experience of cleaning out a closet, room, garage or shed and felt better when there was less rather than more? What do you think that teaches us about where true contentment lies?

Parents usually strive to teach their children good manners including the magic word, "*please*" and the importance of saying, "*thank you.*" Yet Jesus teaches us that it's okay for us to ask for God's help and Jesus doesn't even mention the word "please." We don't have to pray, "*May we please have our daily bread.*" While we don't have to say please, it's important to say "Thank You" to God. When the Lord has provided us with homes, furniture, appliances, vehicles, tools, toys and more; how quick and consistent are we to thank God for providing for our needs so abundantly? Someone might say, "*God didn't provide these things for me, I worked for them myself.*" However, life itself is a gift and all that we have - our health, strength, intelligence, education, opportunities, are all blessings from the Lord. It's good to be thankful and to express more regularly our thanks to other people and to God. We could be living in far worse conditions and situations than we are and there are a few billion people who would happily trade their problems for ours.

Finally, remember Jesus didn't teach us to pray, "*Give me today my daily bread.*" Jesus wants us to be concerned not only about what *I* need, but what *we* need. All through the Bible we see God's love for those in need. If we see with the eyes of God, feel with God's heart, and serve with the Lord's hands, we'll care about those who have no daily bread. We'll share the bread we have with others. What's a step you can take or are taking to share what you have with others? As with saying "please" and "thank

you,” **sharing** is one of the most basic things parents try to teach their children; that shouldn’t stop when we become adults.

In John 6, after feeding 5,000 people with bread and fish, Jesus says, **John 6:35**, **“I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me will never be hungry, and whoever believes in me will never be thirsty.”** One connection between the request in the Lord’s Prayer for God to give us “our daily bread.” and Jesus’ statement about being the bread of life is that the former asks us to pray for something we need to live and survive each day. Physically, we can eat bread today, but we’ll be hungry again tomorrow. Spiritually speaking when we “feed” on Jesus we’ll be “satisfied,” “full,” and “content.” Jesus is more than enough to meet our deepest needs for love, relationship, meaning, and significance.

Jesus is teaching us to put our trust in God for the present and for the future. Then Jesus says (6:37), **“Anyone who comes to me I will never drive away.”** **The bread of life is for all people.** The manna that was given in the wilderness during the Exodus was uniquely for Israel. But that was physical food and everyone who ate it eventually died. Jesus is the bread of life that may be eaten by anyone from any culture, and he says, *“whoever eats of this bread will live forever (John 6:51).”*

One of the things that makes being a Christian different from other approaches to God, religion, or spirituality, is that we don’t have to work or do something to earn or deserve a relationship with God or to receive the blessings God gives. In John 6 people ask Jesus, **“What must we do to perform the works of God? (6:28).”** All they have to do is believe in Jesus the True Bread from heaven. **You can’t work for it; you can’t make it or bake it yourself. The Bread of life comes from God as a gift. The Bread of Heaven comes to give life – not to Israel, not to the church, not to a particular nation or people but to the world – to all who will come to Jesus and believe whoever they may be.** It’s been said, You Are What You Eat. That’s true, whatever we eat, at least some of it ends up becoming a part of us. How hungry are you for God? How hungry are you for the Bread of Life? Feed on Jesus through the scriptures, prayer, worship, and the breaking of bread at communion. Feed on Jesus, the Bread of God who gives life to the world because you are what you eat.

**Prayer:** God of the universe who provides daily bread for the nourishment of our bodies, we thank you for providing Jesus as the Bread of Life to nourish, energize, and sustain our bodies, minds, and spirits. Remind us of the importance of “feeding” on Jesus each day so that our faith may grow stronger, our hope brighter, and our love deeper for Jesus and for all your children. In Christ’s name, Amen.

**Blessing:** *“And my God will fulfill satisfy every need of yours according to his riches in glory in Christ Jesus.”* Philippians 4:19

### Questions for Discussion or Reflection

1. Have you ever looked at a refrigerator or pantry filled with food and thought or said, *“There’s nothing to eat?”* How do you think God feels when we stand in front of plenty or abundance and complain that we need more?
2. How does Jesus’ emphasis in Matthew 6 on the immediate needs of today and what we need to live today free us up from worrying about the future?
3. What can we do to keep a healthy perspective on material things? How do we cultivate an attitude of gratitude that recognizes how blessed we are by daily bread and so much more? In what ways does simplicity help us to live a more contented life?
4. When God has provided us with homes, furniture, appliances, vehicles, tools, toys and more; how quick and consistent are we to thank God for providing for our needs so abundantly?
5. Jesus didn’t teach us to pray, *“Give me today my daily bread.”* Jesus wants us to be concerned not only about what *I* need, but what *we* need. What is a step that you personally can take or are taking to share what you have with others?
6. John 6:35 states, *“Jesus said to them, “I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me will never be hungry, and whoever believes in me will never be thirsty.”* What do you think Jesus means when he says whoever comes to him and believes in him will *“never be hungry or thirsty?”*