

**“Daily Bread”**  
**Leviticus 26:3-13; John 6:1-13**  
**Rev. Curtis Bablitz**  
**August 6<sup>th</sup>, 2023**

For the past month we have been working our way through the Lord’s Prayer, and today we’ve reached Give us this Day our Daily Bread, which gives a good opportunity to pause and look back at the prayer in its entirety – not only because we are about halfway through the Prayer in terms of length, but we’re also halfway through in terms of the content.

This phrase marks a very important turning point in the entire prayer, one you have probably already spotted. We open the prayer by talking to God about God – we pray to Our Father, we pray that Your Name be Hallowed, that your Kingdom come, that your Will be Done. Of course, all those phrases involve us as well – we’re the children of Our father, the bearers of God’s name, the servants of the kingdom – but in the first half of the prayer, God is the subject - God is the centre of attention, we’re the one’s paying attention, God is the focus, and we are the ones focusing.

And now, the focus switches, and instead of giving God praise and focusing on God’s own nature and name and kingdom, now we bring the focus back on ourselves, and we start to talk about Us. Give Us bread. Forgive Us our sins. Save Us from Evil. In the first half of the Lord’s prayer we direct our eyes upwards to heaven, and in the second half we look back at the world, and ask for God’s help, not only for God’s own sake, but for our own.

Now, it makes very good practical and theological sense to start with God. If we are going to dare to speak to the creator of the Universe, to bring our needs and cares and sins and desires before the eternal throne of the Almighty King of Kings, then it makes sense to start by being very clear who exactly we are praying to, exactly who it is that we expect to hear us. When we call God our Father and pray that God's kingdom will come, God's will will be done, that makes sure that all our desires, all the things we hope for and yearn for and desperately need are seen in the proper perspective, things that are good only in so far as they further the hallowing of God's name and the coming of the kingdom.

We pray, God, let your will be done, but let that will include giving us bread and forgiveness and salvation. Yes, we need bread, we need forgiveness, we need deliverance from the evils that beset us, but first of all, we need to do God's will, and so we ask that that will happen first, and the rest will follow after. This is not to say that these two things are opposed to each other – we're not praying for God's will to be done and then crossing our fingers that somehow the things we need will come to us on the side if God has time to give them. The good news here is that our God is a God of Love, our God is our Father who gives good things to all these beloved children.

We don't serve a God who demands that we obey before we get what we need to survive and thrive, we are children of a God whose will is that we survive and thrive – God's deepest desire for humanity and the greatest good humanity can possibly enjoy are one and the same thing. When we focus on God's will first, it makes it possible for us to truly realize just how deep that love for us is, it makes us understand how good God's gifts are to those who ask for them. Jesus Christ told his disciples, "do not worry, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we

drink?’ or ‘What shall we wear?’ For your heavenly Father knows that you need them. But seek first God’s kingdom and righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well.” Once we’ve got the order right, once we’re putting God’s kingdom first, we come to understand what our needs truly are, and we know that God will supply us with what we truly need.

So if there is no real difference between God’s will for humanity and what humanity truly needs, why the importance of starting with God before we get to our needs? Well, the problem is that we are sinful people, and we aren’t very good at figuring out where our needs end and our wants begin. Starting this prayer with God rather than ourselves defends against the great temptation to make prayer always and entirely about ourselves, turning God into one giant vending machine that is there to dispense everything we want whenever we pray for it.

There have always been and there always will be scoundrels and charlatans posing as ministers of God’s Church who will tell you that God wants you to be rich, that we should pray for blessings and wealth to shower down on us and God will answer them, but that just isn’t true. God isn’t here to serve Our Will, we are here to serve God’s will, and by starting this prayer with God as our Father, as the one whose name is holy, whose kingdom is coming, whose will we want to do with every fibre of our being, we orient ourselves in the right direction, we get our heads straight by focusing on first things first, on God before on Us.

Of course, as bad as it is to try and focus only on Us and our wants, to skip over the name-hallowing and will doing to get to the part where God gives me a million dollars, the opposite is just as Bad. If all we ever do is pray the first part of this prayer, if all we do is glorify God’s name and celebrate God’s power and holiness

and never bring up the need and the pain and the restlessness we are struggling with, then our prayer is still incomplete. Like it or Not, Jesus tells us to pray “Give Us” – we are instructed to approach the throne of God with our hands out to receive what God has to give, and to do so without shame or hesitation, to boldly claim God’s mercies, immense and free.

And for many people, that is really hard to do. At the other end of the spectrum from the folks who think that God exists to give us whatever we want are the folks who want to show God that, don’t worry, I can make it just fine on my own, thanks very much. I don’t need any handouts, I work hard for everything I’ve got, and I’m working hard for God’s kingdom, I’m doing God’s will, I’m hallowing that name each and every day, and with my work ethic and persistence I know I can pull this off. At first glance this seems to be a much better position than seeing God as your personal piggy bank, but asking God for everything and asking God for nothing are both grave dangers and both are miles away from the gospel. The fact is that everything in this universe, everything we see around us, all the good qualities and strengths we see in ourselves, none of it actually belongs to us – all of it is a gift, a gift from God.

Our ability to work, our health, the knowledge and skills we’ve gained, the opportunities to put those skills in practice, if it wasn’t for God’s provident blessing at work in our lives, we would have none of it. Everything we have right now has already been given to us from God, all of it, all of it is daily bread, all gifts from God that we would not have without God’s amazing grace. Martin Luther defined the “daily bread” in this prayer as “everything that has to do with the support and needs of the body, such as food, drink, clothing, shoes, house, home, land, animals, money, goods, a devout husband or wife, devout children, devout

workers, devout and faithful rulers, good government, good weather, peace, health, self-control, good reputation, good friends, faithful neighbours, and the like” – when we pray this prayer, that’s what we are praying for, and that is what Jesus wants us to pray for, so there’s no point in getting bashful about it. As children of the Father, we are to rely entirely on our Father’s great and gracious providence, to accept with complete gladness and gratitude the infinite grace God chooses to bestow on us.

God is not the kind of Father who just wants to see the kids grow up and move out of the house, because that is something we cannot do – we can never stand apart from God - God is the very ground we are standing on, so instead of pretending to aspire to some independence and self-reliance that we can never achieve, Our Father calls us to rely instead on God’s strength and grace and love. Christ bids us to pray, Give us this Day our Daily Bread, give us what we need to survive, and when we pray this we are reminded of all the things we have already been given, all the bread we already enjoy, all the blessings that everyday we take for granted.

In fact, when you consider how deeply we have already been blessed, when you look at Martin Luther’s list of blessings and think of all the things on that list we already enjoy so fully and richly, you might even start to think that we no longer need to pray this prayer at all – God has already given us bread and so much more, so why keep praying for it? If you take a look at the obesity statistics on this continent, if you know how many people are suffering and dying from diabetes and heart disease in North America today, it seems we are suffering from too much bread in our diets and in our lives. So why keep praying for more?

Well, I think this is a problem if you only focus on the words Give and Bread and you forget the very important word, Us. The Lord's Prayer is never an individual Prayer – we never pray to My Father, always Our Father, so that by calling God Our Father we are simultaneously calling every other human being who ever has or ever will pray this prayer our family. Those are the people we are praying with, that 'Us' that we pray includes all of them, it includes anyone who has God's name written on their lives, anyone who will ever be a part of God's Kingdom, each and every child of God, whether they know that's who they are or not, all of them, all of them are part of that 'US'.

So when we pray Give US this day our daily bread, we are not merely thanking God for all that we've already been given, we are not asking for God to just keep throwing more stuff on our big ol' pile O' Stuff, we are lifting up every single human being on this planet, every child of God everywhere and crying "Give US bread". This prayer is not answered until everyone in that US has bread; so long as one single person on this planet goes hungry, as long as one single child starves, We are not fed.

Until the day when that long list of blessings Martin Luther called essential to life is enjoyed by everyone, this prayer is still not fully answered, so every time we pray Give us today our daily bread, we are praying that God will act in this world to answer this prayer, to give daily bread to everyone who hungers for it. And if we are praying this prayer with all our hearts, if we truly want God to Give Us, all of us, the daily bread we need, and then we look around at the abundance of bread in this particular part of the world and the people here who are still in need, we start to realize that this is a prayer that we can help answer. In all the

prayers we have prayed so far, we've been asking God to do things we cannot do on our own.

We can't Hallow God's name, we can't bring in the Kingdom on our own, so we ask God to do it for us. And instead of just doing it, God gives us an even greater gift – God lets us take part in answering those prayers, gives us every gift and blessing we could need to accomplish the task, gives us forgiveness when we inevitably fail, gives us the presence and power of the Holy Spirit so that we are able to do the impossible.

So when we pray Give us this Day our Daily Bread, and then we see that Our God has already given us enough food to feed the entire world, enough wealth to bring comfort and prosperity to this whole planet, then what we are praying for is for God to give us the courage to give it all away, to share with each other every blessing that we have received from God, so that we become the way God answers this prayer in the lives of the people we meet.

Every time we share God's gifts, every time we speak up for justice and peace, with every loaf of bread and every Monday meal, God is giving Us our Daily Bread, as we draw the boundaries of that Us wider and wider to include all the children of God, all the citizens of the Kingdom of Heaven. God has given the world enough bread for all, and it is God's will that we take part in the giving, so that no one will go hungry, so that everyone who prays Give us this Day our Daily Bread will hear us answer, Come and Taste and see that our God is Good. In the name of Jesus Christ Amen!