

The Lord's Prayer (4)

Give us this day our daily bread

Matthew 6:11

Pastor Tim Melton

At the beginning of John 6, Jesus miraculously fed a crowd of over 5,000 men plus women and children. As people saw the miracle, they begin to believe that He might be the Messiah who was prophesied to come. They were so excited about Jesus that the next day they came looking for Him again. During the night Jesus and His disciples had gone to the far side of the Sea of Galilee. When the people heard about it, they got in boats and sailed across to Capernaum looking for Him. Many of us would admire their commitment to use that much effort to find Jesus, but there was something else happening in their hearts that only Jesus knew.

When they finally found Jesus, He confronted them with these words: *"I tell you the truth, you are looking for me, not because you saw miraculous signs but because you ate the loaves and had your fill."*

Instead of following Him just to be in His presence, they were following Him so they could get what they wanted. They were looking for bread for the day, when Jesus was offering Himself as the bread of life for eternity.

We need to be careful in how we pray. We are studying the Lord's Prayer, so we can learn how to draw near to God. We are not learning about prayer so we can better manipulate God to give us what we want. The greatness of prayer is not in what we get, but in the fact that we get to come into God's presence.

As we look back at the beginning of the Lord's Prayer, we find these words:

"Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name. Your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven." (Matthew 6:9-10)

Jesus instructs us to set our minds aright as we begin our prayer. We are to present our prayers to God our Father. As our Father, He is our Provider and Protector. He draws us near and finds joy in the fact that we are His. We next are to remember that He is in heaven. He sits on the throne of heaven where He sees

and knows all things. He is all powerful and rules over our world. Thirdly, “hallowed is Your name.” Hallowed means holy, consecrated, sacred, unblemished, sanctified, pure and completely trustworthy. Hallowed is His name, which in scripture means hallowed is His character.

This type of beginning in prayer is transforming. It puts everything in perspective. We must realize to whom we are praying before our prayers even form in our hearts and minds. He is our loving Father, who is mightier than any struggle that we will ever face and is more trustworthy than anyone we have ever known. Once our hearts are fixed on these truths, our response joins with that of Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane, ***“Not my will, but yours be done.”*** Hebrews 5:7 tells us that this spirit of reverent submission was the reason that Jesus’ prayers were answered:

“During the days of Jesus’ life on earth, he offered up prayers and petitions with fervent cries and tears to the one who could save him from death, and he was heard because of his reverent submission.”

Jesus trusted and prayed for the Father’s will to be done. It is this type of beginning in prayer that prepares our hearts to rightly commune with God.

The greatest purpose of answered prayer is that God will be glorified. Yes, He cares for us as His children, but His glory is ultimate. In John 14:13 it reads, ***“Whatever you ask in My name, that will I do, so that the Father may be glorified in the Son.”*** That may surprise some who thought that prayer was merely for our benefit. As we read Matthew 6:11-13 we are instructed to pray for our daily bread, to ask for forgiveness, and to request deliverance from evil and temptation. We benefit in all of these, but our eyes must continue to be set on the goal. The goal is that regardless of how God responds to our prayer that He would be glorified. With this in mind we can receive any response from God and not be shaken. If our goal in prayer is self-serving, then we will be distraught every time God does not respond as we think He should.

Let’s now turn our attention to Matthew 6:11:

“Give us this day our daily bread.”

This was a prayer for much more than just bread. Bread was symbolic for all of one’s physical needs. It was a prayer that recognized that all physical provisions in our lives are given to us by God. Yes, we have jobs and have to work for our salaries, but when we stop and evaluate where our provision comes from, we are forced to admit that everything we have is given to us by God (1 Chronicles 2:14). It is God who grows the plants, brings the rain, rotates the seasons, put minerals in the soil and provides the other natural resources that we use. He provides our minds, our opportunities, our natural abilities, and our health. They are all gifts that God can give and quickly take away.

We deserve none of it. Even if God never blesses us again, we have already received much more than we deserve. Thankfully, we serve a God who knows our physical needs and provides.

We see it throughout Jesus’ ministry. He gave sight to the blind, cleansed the lepers, helped the lame to walk, fed the hungry, even raised the dead. Jesus’ eyes were set on eternity, but still He took time to reach out to meet physical needs in the present.

The kingdom of God is a spiritual kingdom, but His concern for us extends to our physical needs as well. We read it very clearly in Luke 12:22-31:

²² And he said to his disciples, 'Therefore I tell you, do not be anxious about your life, what you will eat, nor about your body, what you will put on. ²³ For life is more than food, and the body more than clothing. ²⁴ Consider the ravens: they neither sow nor reap, they have neither storehouse nor barn, and yet God feeds them. Of how much more value are you than the birds! ²⁵ And which of you by being anxious can add a single hour to his span of life? ²⁶ If then you are not able to do as small a thing as that, why are you anxious about the rest? ²⁷ Consider the lilies, how they grow: they neither toil nor spin, yet I tell you, even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. ²⁸ But if God so clothes the grass, which is alive in the field today, and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, how much more will he clothe you, O you of little faith! ²⁹ And do not seek what you are to eat and what you are to drink, nor be worried. ³⁰ For all the nations of the world seek after these things, and your Father knows that you need them. ³¹ Instead, seek his kingdom, and these things will be added to you.'

Many first-century workers of Jesus' day needed the encouragement found in Jesus' words. They did not work and live as we do today. They did not receive their pay once a month. They hoped to receive their pay each day after that day's work. They did not have paid sick leave if they were ill, or severance or *paro* if they lost their job. In their situation if the boss did not have the money, or if they were hurt or sick or laid off, they would not receive any money and would not be able to provide for their families. It was a life of faith, one day at a time.

We see a great picture of this in the story of the Israelites in the Old Testament. They had been freed from slavery in Egypt, but were now wandering in the wilderness as nomads. In Exodus chapter 16, it tells how the people began to grumble and complain about the lack of food. In response God provided a substance He called *Manna*. It appeared on the ground every morning like morning dew. It was like coriander seed, white, and the taste of it was like wafers made with honey. It could be prepared by boiling or baking.

God commanded that the people come out to gather the manna each morning, but only enough for that day. On the sixth day of the week they could gather extra for the Sabbath. But some did not obey. They gathered more than they needed for that day, hoping to secure their provision for the days to come. Those who chose not to walk by faith found that, the next morning, the extra that they had gathered had worms and filled their tents with a horrible smell. This daily gathering of *Manna* continued for 40 years, and stopped the very day that they began to eat from the produce of the Promised Land (Joshua 5:12).

God used this gathering of "daily bread" to remind the people of Israel that they were needy, that they could not meet their own needs, that God knew their needs, and that God could be trusted to meet their needs. But they had to depend on God every day, for 40 years. These same principles apply to us.

We will not pray for daily bread if we do not realize that we need it. We will not pray for daily bread if we are convinced that we can provide for ourselves. We will not pray for daily bread if we do not believe that God is aware of our needs. We will not pray for daily bread if we do not have faith that God will provide. God knows that being near to Him is the best place we can be. Because of this, God draws us back to

Himself with daily needs that only He can meet. Our needs are a daily reminder of our dependence on Him.

This request for daily bread is also a call to a life of contentment. A life that trusts in God for provision will be content with however God decides to provide. A life of contentment can find joy in the provision of our basic needs even when we don't receive our covetous wants. This idea of contentment is often difficult, especially when we are bombarded by so much advertising and media begging us to buy the next great thing.

Whether intentional or not, we find ourselves lured by the promise of comfort, pleasure, security or prestige. In turn we begin to long for and even pray for things that have no significance in the kingdom of God. Our lives become so complicated and cluttered as we accumulate so many things and pursue so many others. At times we get so taken in by our desires that we even believe that they are needs.

The Apostle Paul's words are also helpful at this point:

"I have learned in whatever situation I am to be content. I know how to be brought low, and I know how to abound. In any and every circumstance, I have learned the secret of facing plenty and hunger, abundance and need. I can do all things through him who strengthens me."
(Philippians 4:11-13)

We find a nice balance in the words of Agur, son of Jakeh, in Proverbs 30:8-9:

"Remove far from me falsehood and lying; give me neither poverty nor riches; feed me with the food that is needful for me, lest I be full and deny you and say, 'Who is the LORD?' or lest I be poor and steal and profane the name of my God."

Matthew 6:11 calls us to dependence and contentment, and ultimately leads us back to Christ, the "Bread of Life". In John 6, Jesus said:

"I am the bread of life; whoever comes to me shall not hunger, and whoever believes in me shall never thirst. I am the living bread that came down from heaven. If anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever. And the bread that I will give for the life of the world is my flesh."

What is Jesus saying? To those who belong to Him, He is not just the bread, or the food, but the sustainer of life.

"And my God will supply every need of yours according to his riches in glory in Christ Jesus."
(Philippians 4:19)

This idea we find in Matthew 6:11 applies to more than just bread, or even food. We need God to sustain us daily in many areas of our lives. It is a total dependence on God, the Father. It is asking God to provide all that we will need to sustain us today, without even knowing for sure what the day will bring. For the poor, it may mean providing them with the food and the shelter that they will need to sustain them physically. For those with a marriage on the verge of divorce, they will need the grace and forgiveness

that will hold them together for another day. For those who are facing important career decisions, it may be wisdom and peace. It will be different for every person, but our God, who is intimately aware of all of our life situations, can be trusted to meet us in the midst of our need. Even as we see in the life of the Apostle Paul, in the midst of his need the Lord said to him:

“My Grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.” (2 Corinthians 12:9)

That is what we are to ask for. We are asking for God’s supernatural provision in our lives as we face the day, trusting that He knows what this day will hold and what we will need in the midst of it.

This is often difficult for those who have plenty. We tend to take food, home, job and money for granted, but beware. In this complacency we lose the sense of gratitude and dependence on God. As we begin to think of ourselves as self-sufficient and entitled, we drift away from God. It is then that we will likely resemble the runaway child who loves their freedom until faced with the struggles of life that could have been solved if he had remained near the Father.

As we grow in dependence and contentment, we will find rest for our weary souls, but this in no way frees us from our responsibility. There is still a faith and work balance. Even the Israelites had to leave their tents and go gather the *manna*. Yes, we will need to make a CV and go to the job interview, or work hard at our jobs, or be disciplined and wise with our money, but all of this will be done with the confidence that as we seek God first, He will provide for our needs (Matthew 6:33). As we live under God’s promise and work as unto Christ (Colossians 3:23-24), He, not we, will be our confidence and our glory.

“Give us this day our daily bread.” May we recognize once again that every good gift comes from You, and that you, our Father, are sufficient to meet our every need, regardless what this day brings.

Discussion Questions:

- 1) What did you find most interesting or meaningful in this lesson from Matthew 6:11?
- 2) What was wrong with why people followed Jesus in the opening story? Do you think this problem still exists today?
- 3) Can you share an experience that you have had or heard about where God provided for physical needs?
- 4) How does this verse teach us about dependence?
- 5) How does this verse teach us about contentment?
- 6) How would you say *“Give us this day our daily bread”* in your own words?
- 7) When you think of your life right now, in what part are you needing God’s help?
- 8) How do we balance God’s part and our part when needing to provide for our physical needs?
- 9) What do you think you need to remember from this lesson?
- 10) What actions do you need to do to put this into practice?