

"GIVE US OUR DAILY BREAD."

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First Christian Reformed Church, Lynden, WA

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Text for Sermon: Matthew 6:11, 25-34

Introduction:

The people in the first century marveled and were amazed at Jesus' teaching. They said it was different from any of the teaching of their teachers and the rabbis. When we ask Jesus a question or ask Him to teach us something we had better be prepared for something completely different, something we have never heard before.

The Lord's Prayer is like that. It's huge. It's galactic in size and scope. This prayer is like the Himalayas and each petition is a mountain of divine insight into holy things.

If this prayer is the Himalayas then the first petition is Mt. Everest. Jesus starts out teaching us to ask "the most important person in the universe to do the most important act in the universe" (John Piper), which is to make His name hallowed, to make His name great and honored, revered and respected and only spoken highly of.

Two of the ways for God to be most hallowed are for His kingdom to come, both in our hearts and in our history, and for His revealed will to be obeyed and for His secret will to be accepted.

Jesus is giving us a vision for prayer that transforms our prayers. Most of our prayers are like asking for mud pies and Jesus wants us to pray for chocolate and truffles. Too many of our prayers are stuck in a rut and Jesus wants us to soar. Too often our prayers are stall bread and He is holding out fresh manna straight from heaven.

This is true even when we come to the second set of three petitions, the three petitions that deal with the stuff of life and our personal needs. As normal or routine as these petitions seem to us over all the years of use, they are anything but normal and routine. Familiarity may have bred some contempt or casualness, but there is nothing casual here. Even this first petition has profound implications about God and our lives.

Many say the prayer shifts from being God-ward to man-ward, or from vertical to horizontal. I think it's better to say that it shifts from being God-centered to being God-dependent, the focus is always on our Father who is in heaven.

Father.

Our Father who is in heaven, give us this day our daily bread.

Because of our affluence and instant access to most everything we need this petition has lost its power in our lives. And that is because we have lost a Biblical view of God's place in our lives at home, at work and in our daily lives.

We don't feel the connection between the spiritual and the physical realm. We are a consumer culture that is used to having everything provided for us and all we do is take some of our money and go to the

store. It's easy to see why someone might pray like Homer Simpson, "Dear Lord, we got this food with our own money, thanks for nothing. Amen."

It's the Law of Unintended Consequences. He blesses us and we forget Him. We become affluent and comfortable and we stop praying. There is a disconnect, a forgetting of God.

We have fallen into the very trap God warned the children of Israel about in Deuteronomy.

Deuteronomy 8:7 For the Lord your God is bringing you into a good land, a land of brooks of water, of fountains and springs, flowing out in the valleys and hills, **8** a land of wheat and barley, of vines and fig trees and pomegranates, a land of olive trees and honey, **9** a land in which you will eat bread without scarcity, in which you will lack nothing, a land whose stones are iron, and out of whose hills you can dig copper. **10** And you shall eat and be full, and you shall bless the Lord your God for the good land he has given you.

11 *"Take care lest you forget the Lord your God* by not keeping his commandments and his rules and his statutes, which I command you today, **12** lest, when you have eaten and are full and have built good houses and live in them, **13** and when your herds and flocks multiply and your silver and gold is multiplied and all that you have is multiplied, **14** then your heart be lifted up, and *you forget the Lord your God*, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery, **15** who led you through the great and terrifying wilderness, with its fiery serpents and scorpions and thirsty ground where there was no water, who brought you water out of the flinty rock, **16** who fed you in the wilderness with manna that your fathers did not know, that he might humble you and test you, to do you good in the end.

17 *Beware lest you say in your heart, 'My power and the might of my hand have gotten me this wealth.'* **18** *You shall remember the Lord your God, for it is he who gives you power to get wealth.*

Jesus is reconnecting to us reality. This petition of the Lord's Prayer is reconnecting us with the source, with the beginning.

James 1:16-17 Do not be deceived, my beloved brothers. Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father.

1 Corinthians 4:7 What do you have that you did not receive? If then you received it, why do you boast as if you did not receive it?

Don't we sometimes feel guilty praying for physical and material things, that somehow that is unspiritual, and we should focus more on spiritual needs. The stunning thing is Jesus put this petition for our physical needs ahead of the petition for our spiritual needs.

Consider the point of Jesus' teaching in the Sermon on the Mount. God created us and He made us dependent on Him as creatures. He made us to need food and drink, clothes and shelter. So He wants us to depend on Him for those things and to pray for them. God is the source of all those things and expects to be asked for them.

Our Father in heaven is insulted by our ingratitude. Our thanklessness is an affront to Him who gives us all things. We deny Him His glory and honor to our peril.

When we pray hallowed by your name part of the answer is to hallow Him as our provider.

1 Corinthians 10:31 Whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God.

How do you eat and drink to the glory of God? How do you glorify God in your eating and drinking?

When you pray to God for what you need you acknowledge your dependence on Him and when you do that you are doing two things, you are *humbling yourselves* and *exalting God*. You are honoring Him and this glorifies Him. You eat and drink to the glory of God when you pray to God for your food and drink.

When you ask your Father in Heaven for what you need you are acknowledging there is a connection between God and what you need, a first-hand, one to one connection.

We do not live in a self-sustaining universe, in a world that just moves along on its own power and does all it does by its own natural laws, it is sustained by supernatural power.

Hebrews 1:3 He upholds the universe by the word of his power.

Our universe is created and sustained by a Father-Creator-Sustainer. God declares in:

Genesis 8:22 While the earth remains, seedtime and harvest, cold and heat, summer and winter, day and night, shall not cease.

Bread.

The word bread is a placeholder, it's not just bread, and it's not just food, it includes all our physical and material needs, everything our bodies need to exist and survive.

To pray for daily bread is to pray for money which requires work, which requires good jobs, good business and good labor, for good production and distribution. To pray for daily bread is to pray for good weather, good crops, good roads, a good car to drive on the roads to get to work. It's a prayer for good economy, good social and political conditions. It's huge, it's local, national and even global in scope. And it all depends on God.

Jesus is teaching us to come clean and tell the truth about ourselves, that we are utterly, entirely, completely and desperately dependent on God for even the simplest of life's necessities.

This petition is a test of our faith. Do you live by faith or do you live by sight? Do you really believe God is sovereign over even the details of your life? Do you really believe all you have is gift and comes only by God's grace? Do you really look to God for everything? Do you recognize Him as the unique and sole source of all your blessings and benefits? Do you see His hand and His provision in increasingly smaller and smaller things all around you? Do you believe He cares for you and considers your physical needs as well as your spiritual needs?

We should say grace not just at every meal, but in every check out line, at every gas pump, while paying bills, mowing the lawn and cleaning the house. Saying grace not out of duty, not because that is what all good Christians do, not because we have to, but because we get the connection between all we have and our God in heaven. There is a direct link, a direct connection from heaven to earth. And we get it that it is a *daily* connection.

Daily.

Jesus sets before us the expectation that we would pray this type of request at least daily. He doesn't want us to pray on January 1st, "Lord, give us this year the food and drink we will need for the year." No, He is saying, at least 365 times a year He wants us to pray "Give us this day our daily bread." He wants to keep the lines of grace clear. Live daily-dependent and joyfully-dependent on God's grace. This glorifies Him.

He wants us never to grow weary in asking for what we need.
He will never grow weary of providing what we need.
He never grows weary of being generous. He is a true Father in heaven.

What about those who are well off, who have good pay checks or lots of savings or plenty of retirement income? What about those for whom all the daily necessities are more than adequately supplied? Are they to ask for more of what they already have in their own homes?

First, keep your heart thankful by giving glory and thanks to God. What do we have that we have not received? Name one thing that has not come from the hand of God?

Second, keep your heart humble by acknowledging your dependence on Him. Unless God gives us health and strength, all our food and possessions will mean nothing. Unless the Lord sustains us, we will enjoy nothing of the future supply. Unless God feeds us or enables us to receive the bounty He has provided, it is worthless.

Third, keep your heart God-centered, your only true treasure is in heaven. Remember the rich man in the parable, whose soul was taken that very night he pondered building bigger barns. "What does it profit a man to gain the world and lose his soul." What good is all you have if you don't have God?

Luke 12:15 Take care, and be on your guard against all covetousness, for one's life does not consist in the abundance of his possessions.

What about those who are experiencing lean times, when provision is running low? Follow the example of Paul,

Philippians 4:11-13 I have learned in whatever situation I am to be content. **12** 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. **13** I can do all things through him who strengthens me.

Paul was untroubled by the lean times, by the seasons of drought. Why? How? Because he was not fooled by the deceptive confidence we too often have in having plenty. His confidence was always fixed on the unmoved center point of God. However much everything else changed, this one thing never changed.

Now here is yet another test of our faith. Having prayed for our daily bread, our daily needs, will we believe what we receive, however little or much, is God's provision and will we not only be content, but grateful for whatever it is? Will we believe by faith that Matthew 6:33 is true?

Matthew 6:33 Seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you.

Are you humbly aware that ***all*** God has promised is today's provision. Anything more is abundance and generosity. Are you humbled and grateful for how much He has given? Have you told Him so?

Notice something I never noticed until yesterday, notice the context of this petition in the Lord's Prayer and the context of Jesus' teaching at the end of Matthew 6. Both are in the context of God's kingdom and pursuing God's kingdom and God's righteousness. Keep your physical and material possessions and needs God-centered, God-focused, submitted to what is eternal.

Our.

We are not just to pray for ourselves or our own, but for each other. We pray for the necessities of life for those near and far. This prayer becomes far reaching. We pray for farmers and against famine and drought. We pray for social and medical services and against disease. We pray for stable government and economy and against unemployment and poverty.

Most of the bread we eat was made by someone else. So it is right to pray God would bless the hands that prepared it, the farmer that grew it and harvested it, those who processed it, those who baked and packaged it, those who delivered it and sold it and the mom who served it.

We are part of a larger community. The current economy is clear proof of how connected we are, we are all impacted.

Let us not forget the poor and the hungry in our prayer. As we receive so much, pray for those with so little and give generously from the abundance that you have. Pray for young families struggling with the high cost of food.

God cares more about you than birds and flowers. He loves you and knows you and what you need. He invites you to pray, to ask, seek and knock. And He delights to answer.

Prayer: Jesus, as you have done from the beginning and in all generations, teach us to pray. Draw us to the Father, to His throne, into His arms, into His heart. Teach us things too marvelous, too high to know here on earth. Jesus, you are the Bread of Life. Your body given for us meets and satisfies our greatest need of all. Feed us until we want no more. In your name, the name above all names, we pray. Amen.

Our holy and heavenly Father, who dwells on high, enthroned over all the universe, who has created all things to reflect and reveal Your glory, to be received with gratitude always recognizing Your grace, grant by your grace what we need this day. Father, by Your Spirit grant us the grace to see the connection of everything in our lives to Your glory and grace. Make us conscious of the connection and how everything gets its meaning and significance from You. Bless us with Your strength for our labors and grant fruit from our labors, fruit sufficient for our need, not too much lest we become proud and forget You, not too little lest we complain or worse yet steal. And Lord, if that season comes when the fig-tree does not blossom and the olive tree fails and the fields produce no grain, grant us the grace to yet rejoice in the Lord and in the joy of our salvation. Jesus, you are the Bread of Life. Your body broken for us meets and satisfies our greatest need of all. Feed us until we want no more. In your name, the name above all names, we pray. Amen.