

A Journey Through The Lord's Prayer

“Give Us This Day Our Daily Bread”

[Matthew 6:9-13](#)

We are in the middle of a sermon series on the prayer Jesus taught us to pray. After an introduction to the Lord's Prayer, we have reflected on the first two sentences already. This week, we consider the third line, “Give us this day our daily bread.” Let's say it together: "Give us this day our daily bread." With this petition, we transition to *us* and *our needs*. After having focused on God, God's glory, God's kingdom and God's will, we now ask for something for ourselves.

“Give us this day our daily bread.” Can you live without bread or rice? “Of course, I can!” That will be the answer from those who try to lose weight by cutting out carbs from their diet. But, for most people around the world, the answer is “Absolutely not” because bread or rice is their staple food. I don't think I can either because rice is an important part of Korean cuisine and also because I love bread. Don't you just love the smell of baked bread? How can you resist a loaf of bread that is freshly out of the oven? I love to eat freshly baked whole grain bread with olive oil, balsamic vinegar and parmesan cheese. Perhaps you would prefer to eat it with butter instead of olive oil.

Let's dive in to our reflection on this week's phrase, “Give us this day our daily bread,” before we begin to feel too hungry. Otherwise, you might not stay focused for the rest of the sermon. What does it mean to pray for our daily bread?

In the Bible, the word bread is mentioned about 500 times in several different ways, with a variety of meanings and symbolism behind them. In the Old Testament, covenants were made by sharing bread. Peace was established between two disagreeing parties when they broke bread together. Among the various meanings and symbolism of bread, God's provision is the most prominent one. God provided the Israelites with manna, sweet tasting bread from heaven, while they were traveling through the wilderness. This daily food for God's people continued in abundance for 40 years until they reached the Promised Land.

Bread played an important role in Jesus' ministry. The one miracle all 4 Gospel writers record is Jesus' feeding of 5,000 people with only 5 loaves and two fish. Many of Jesus' parables include depictions of food; and many times, he talked about the kingdom of God with the image of a banquet, a feast. Immediately before his death and after his resurrection, Jesus broke bread with his disciples. And during his ministry, Jesus referred to himself as “the bread of life” and “the living bread that came down from heaven.”

What does it mean to pray for our daily bread? What did Jesus mean when he taught us to pray for bread? In his book, *Fifty-Seven Words that Change the World*, Darrell Johnson considers several layers of possible meanings for this phrase (pp. 71-73). When we ask for our daily bread:

1. First, we are praying for “*physical bread* - food in general, fuel so the body can work.”
2. Second, we are praying for “*everything necessary for functioning in the world.*” In other words, “everything necessary for our bodily well-being.”
3. Third, we are praying for “*everything necessary for living the kingdom life,*” such as “wisdom, courage, strength, patience, holiness and vision.”
4. Fourth, we are praying for “*the spiritual food that enables us to live in faith, hope, and love.*”
5. Fifth, we are praying for *Jesus himself*. Jesus said, “Your ancestors ate the manna in the wilderness, yet they died. But, there is the bread that comes down from heaven, which people may eat and not die (John 6:46-50).”
6. Sixth, we are praying for *the coming day... the final day when the kingdom of God comes in all its fullness.*”

Note again the plural pronouns Jesus uses in the prayer. It is not “Give *me* my daily bread,” but “Give *us our* daily bread.” The bread we ask for is not just for me and my family, but for all of us, all of our brothers and sisters, all of our siblings in Jesus Christ. Johnson writes, “The us keeps our prayer from self-centeredness. The us keeps us socially aware. The us makes us kingdom-conscious.” Praying for our daily bread is “to enter into solidarity with the whole family of God.”

About 25 years ago, I met a woman who beautifully prayed this prayer of Jesus, not through her words but her actions. It was a Saturday morning, and I was doing a food scavenger hunt with the youth of my church for a local food pantry. Two by two, we went from house to house, asking for some non-perishable food items for the poor. At one of the houses we visited, a Hispanic woman showed up at the door. Behind her were a couple of small children. We explained to her what we were doing. Then, with a gesture of inviting us in, she said, “Come in!” We hesitated to go into this stranger’s house. But, as she kept saying, “Come in,” we soon found ourselves inside her kitchen. As I expected, there was not much in her pantry. She said, “We are on food stamps, but we still want to help.” We picked one can of food. Then, she said, “More!” So, reluctantly, we picked two more items and thanked her for her generosity. She did not say much to us because of her limited English, but I could tell that she was very happy to share her food with her hungry neighbors.

I don’t know if the generous woman was a Christian or not. She may not have known the Lord’s Prayer, but she was already living it out. Her actions embodied the words Jesus taught his disciples to pray. There was only “our bread,” not “my bread”, even when she had barely enough food for her and her children. The prayer for “our bread” is a prayer for food not just for me and my family, but also for my neighbors, all those who are hungry.

The Chinese word for peace is a combination of three different characters that mean rice, mouth, and to be equal. Put together, they reveal to us the Chinese philosophy of peace: Peace is possible when every mouth has equal food. In other words, there is no peace in the world as long as someone somewhere goes to bed hungry. In the Chinese concept of peace, praying for peace without acts of feeding the hungry is saying empty words.

One more word for us to look at is “daily.” Jesus calls us to pray for our “daily” bread. Not weekly, not monthly, but *daily*. Jesus asks us to take it one day at a time, always depending on God’s goodness and

faithfulness. It is a call to trust that God will provide for us in our needs. I am sure Jesus had the Exodus story in mind when he said this word. The miraculous manna that God gave to the Israelites in the wilderness was daily food. Every morning, each household was to gather the bread-like substance, the amount just enough for that day. People were to eat their portion of manna each day, not saving it for the next day. Some people tried to keep the manna overnight. But, in the morning, they discovered that their food was already spoiled. Manna was a daily serving - enough for each day. God's people were to live with full trust in God's provision.

My father, who became a Christian through a strong conversion experience, took this line of the Lord's Prayer literally. He firmly believed that those who pray for daily bread should live on God's daily provision. So, he refused to have a savings account in the bank. He gave his tithing and more to the church, and he also gave away to the poor any money that he believed to be more than what his family needed. Can you imagine the financial difficulties my mother faced, raising their 6 children? Yet, both my mother and father had unwavering trust in God's provision. My mom said to us at our daily prayer meetings, "As the prophet Elijah was fed through the ravens, God will send us ravens who will bring us what we need." And guess what? Our family's life was filled with a series of miracles. By the grace of God, we never skipped a meal. All of us, all 6 children completed a college education. Though none of us are rich financially, all of us are content with our own lives, faithfully serving God in our respective churches.

"Give us this day our daily bread." This is a prayer as well as a faith statement. The Israelites discovered God's goodness and faithfulness in the wilderness. They witnessed that God was faithful in providing the food they needed for their journey every day. We worry about our lives. We worry about our present circumstances. We worry about the uncertainties of our future. But, Jesus says, "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?"

Friends, God is more than able. God can and does provide for our needs. God holds us safe and secure in God's hands. With God, everything is possible. All we need to do is surrender ourselves to God. We must lay our full lives down at the feet of the Lord Almighty - all of our fears and worries, all of our hopes and dreams, all of our plans and visions. All we need to do is trust in God, to rely on God's power and provision over our lives.

Would you continue to commit to praying the Lord's Prayer twice each day this week? And as you pray, would you meditate on what it means to surrender and trust in God for our daily bread? What does it mean to relinquish control and totally rely on God for our sustenance? What does it mean to ask for Jesus, who is the bread of life, to come feed our lives every day?

Let us pray together the third line of the prayer Jesus taught us to pray, "Give us this day our daily bread." Amen.