

Our Daily Bread

Sermon, June 27, 2021

Scripture Reading: Exodus 16:1-16 & Luke 16:19-31

Golden Verse: *“Give us today our daily bread.”* (Matthew 6:11)

Today we are focusing on the fourth request of the Lord’s Prayer: “Give us today our daily bread”. So far, we have dealt with YOU requests: “hallowed be YOUR name, YOUR kingdom come, YOUR will be done”. These are followed by three OUR requests.

Among these, Jesus is teaching us to pray for OUR daily bread first.

We will linger a little on each word.

The first word is BREAD. God is a loving Father who cares for the spiritual and physical needs of His children alike. In the wilderness, for 40 years, God provided the bread of His people. As we heard from our Scripture reading, He fed more than half a million people for forty years.

In the time of prophet Elijah, there were very dry years, when people suffered hunger. But God’s prophet was nourished in a very special way.

Our Lord Jesus Christ, on several occasions, satisfied many multitudes with bread.

Throughout history, there were orphanages supported by prayer, when the leaders were able to sustain and feed hundreds of orphans by asking God for the food they always needed.

In the 21st Century, in North America, it is hard to pray heartily for the daily bread because we think we can make everything and we don’t have to ask God to provide.

In my childhood in Romania, I learned the real value of bread. In my grandfather’s town, we did not have too much bread but had enough. In the city, where my parents lived, I remember that as a child I was standing in the line for 5-6 hours until a transport truck showed up with bread. At least 100 people were waiting and when the transport truck arrived, there was a real fight to get ONE loaf of bread per person. As a child, I was fighting with adults to get one loaf of bread. As children, we were not allowed to leave any leftover bread around our plates. If by accident a piece of bread fell off from our tiny hands, we were taught to pick up the piece of bread, to kiss it, and to ask ourselves for forgiveness, for dropping the bread on the floor or on the ground.

I learned that bread was a treasure. The bread was never wasted and never ended up in the garbage.

Martin Luther, the Reformer interestingly explains that, according to the Scripture, as we pray for the daily bread, we need to think not only of the daily portion of bread but also we pray for everything we need daily. Martin Luther's teaching was very Biblical, as he writes:

“We pray God to give us food and drink, clothing, house, and home, and health of body; also that He cause the grain and fruits of the field to grow and mature well; furthermore, that He helps us at home towards good housekeeping, that He gives and preserves to us a godly wife, children, and servants, that He causes our work, trade, or whatever we are engaged in to prosper and succeed, favour us with faithful neighbours and good friends. To comprise it briefly, this petition includes everything that belongs to our entire life in the world, because on that account alone do we need daily bread. Now for our life it is not only necessary that our body have food and covering and other necessaries, but also that we spend our days in peace and quiet among the people with whom we live.” (Book Of Concord <https://bookofconcord.org/large-catechism/part-iii/#lc-lp-0072>)

The second key word is: GIVE us. When we pray “Father, GIVE us our daily bread today”, Jesus encourages us to ask all of this from our Heavenly Father. Give me. He can ask the Father who knows Him, who knows that He is omnipotent and therefore can do and give anything. We know that He loves us very much, and that is why we, as His children, are not ashamed to stand before us with any request.

Jesus said that if we, as children, ask for the best, our Heavenly Father will provide us the VERY best. *“Which of you, if your son asks for bread, will give him a stone? Or if he asks for a fish, will give him a snake? If you, then, though you are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give good gifts to those who ask him!”* (Matthew 7: 9-11)

Today people might ask a question: Is it right for a believer to ask everything from our Heavenly Father? Would not it be better to work for it and to enjoy? The Bible is teaching us that we do have to work in order to have. “Work for six days” we read in the Ten Commandments. Paul says that those who do not WANT to work, should not eat. Let's pay attention: Paul did not say that those who CANNOT work, but those who DO NOT WANT to work, should not eat.

Why does Jesus still teach us to ask for the daily bread from our Heavenly Father? Because we believers are realistic. Believers don't think they can create everything for themselves. We work, but we know that the blessing comes from God. *“Unless the LORD builds the house, the builders labour in vain. Unless the LORD watches over the city, the guards stand watch in vain. In vain you rise early and stay up late, toiling for food to eat-for He grants sleep to those he loves.”* (Psalm 127:1-2)

When we ask Him: give us ... there is trust in Him, and there is humbleness. We know that the weather is not in our hands, neither our health nor our strength. It is necessary to pray: give us our daily bread. By this, we also glorify our Father, who feeds us, His children, and therefore for everything we ask we give Him thanks.

The third word is OUR bread.

We are asking not just for our own bread. It is characteristic of God's children that they think of others as well. The Father teaches us that He often puts the others' goods in our hands, and we are challenged to forward those gifts and to share them with others. When Jesus Christ shared the bread with a multitude, He was using His disciples to share. The disciples are between the Master and those in need. This is your and my great privilege to be used by God, to share with others the gifts God placed in our hands. This is a beautiful task and vocation of God's children.

We pray for OUR bread. What God's children received from the Father we should not put in our own pockets, covering only our needs, but we have to see what and how much we should keep for us, and how much we have to delivered, how much we should pass on to others.

Even today, thousands of people starve to death in this world. People die of starvation because they have no food and no water. How sad it is that we do not distribute equally the goods our Heavenly Father entrusted to us. But God holds us accountable for what we should have passed on to others.

Today, we heard the story of the rich man and Lazarus. There was a beggar placed at the door of a rich man. God puts a Lazarus at every Christian person's door. We have the responsibility to feed our Lazarus. When we pray for OUR daily bread, we pray for Lazarus' daily bread as well. Who is your Lazarus? Maybe a family who has not enough. Maybe an orphan. Maybe a family in Cuba. Think about it today, and recognize them and recognize your responsibility. God gives to you here in Canada, so you can feed those who are placed at your door.

The fourth word is: give us our bread DAILY. Calvin says that this word is in the Lord's Prayer to exclude us from greed, insatiability, demand, and dissatisfaction. This way we learn to depend on the goodness of our Heavenly Father, and we will be thankful for what He will give us day by day.

Often, we see that unbelievers trust in themselves, and they want to save much more than they need. However, God's children know that they can count on the Father, and the greatest security is that the Father will be our Father tomorrow and the day after tomorrow. He knows well what we need and He will take care of us.

Jesus uses a parable of a foolish rich person:

Then he said to them, "Watch out! Be on your guard against all kinds of greed; life does not consist in an abundance of possessions." And he told them this parable: "The ground of a certain rich man yielded an abundant harvest. He thought to himself, 'What shall I do? I have no place to store my crops.' Then he said, 'This is what I'll do. I will tear down my barns and build bigger ones, and there I will store my surplus grain. And I'll say to myself, 'You have plenty of grain laid up for many years. Take life easy; eat, drink and be merry.' But God said to him, 'You fool! This very night your life will be demanded from you. Then who will get what you have prepared for yourself?' This is how it will be with whoever stores up things for themselves but is not rich toward God." (Luke 12:15-21)

Let us learn that we are entirely dependent on the Father, who must be trusted. Our destiny, our future, and our daily needs are in His hands. *"Praise be to the LORD, to God our Saviour, who daily bears our burdens."* Psalm 68:190

Once again, let me quote Calvin. He asks the question: "Why is it that there are those who dare to trust their souls to God and are constantly worried about their bodies?" Let us not worry, but let us trust in the Father, whom we addressed at the beginning of the prayer: our Father. Happy is the person who asks with confidence: give us this day our daily bread. Amen