

Turn in your Bibles to Matthew 6.

Today is Easter! The day we celebrate the most glorious Good News of all history! It's the day that we celebrate the fact that the God/Man, Jesus Christ, rose from the dead. It's the celebration of the day that death, hell and the grave were conquered by God's Son when He walked out of a Judean tomb.



Today is Easter...and the Tomb is EMPTY and it's because of that fact, we are here today! It's because of that fact that followers of Jesus Christ have worshipped every single Sunday since then, because it's on the first day of the week, Sunday...that ladies went to the tomb and found the stone rolled away, revealing the fact Jesus Christ had done what no other person had ever done...rose from the dead.

In fact, Jesus did what we, mere humans, can't do... we can't rise from the dead...no mere human can WILL themselves to stay alive or will themselves (once dead) three days...come back to life. That's impossible. But, not with God's Son... Only Jesus could do what He did. And because He did rise from the dead...we have the offer of being able to rise from our own mortal death to immortality with Him, if we will receive Him into our lives. And if we will, we have the amazing privilege of being reconciled to the Father in Heaven because of what the Son did on earth to give us that opportunity.

You see, through Jesus Christ, we can (one day), not only enter into the physical presence of God...we can live WITH Almighty God for ALL ETERNITY...all because Jesus got up from the grave! All because the tomb is empty...

But until then...as followers of Jesus Christ, even though we are still trapped in these jars of clay, with our sinful nature, we can't come into the presence of God. We are separated from God by time and space until Jesus returns to set us free from these limitations. But, thanks be to God, that He's given us a mechanism in which we might communicate with Him. He has not left us as orphans, but has given us the privilege of speaking to Him through this wonderful mechanism called prayer.

And so today, Easter Sunday, what better day to consider the fact that because Jesus has risen from the dead, those who receive Him by faith, confessing and repenting of their sins may communicate with the Father in heaven. We call that communication: PRAYER and Jesus gave us a Model of how we should pray in what's often called the LORD'S PRAYER. **Look at it with me:**

Matthew 6:9

9 Pray then like this: "Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name. **10** Your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. **11** Give us this day our daily bread, **12** and forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. **13** And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us

from evil.

Indeed, this Model Prayer is a prayer many of us can quote from memory and not miss a beat. But, as we've learned over the last several weeks, that's not what Jesus intended when He gave us this pattern of prayer. Prayer was never intended to be something that we rattle off by rote memory, without thinking, like we do our social security number. Prayer is much more than that. Here is what we've learned:

The Characteristics of Prayer:

- 1. The Purpose of Prayer-Not just getting stuff, but Communion with God**
 - 2. The Worship of Prayer-Realizing God is our Father, our Papa in heaven**
 - 3. The Priority of Prayer-It's not about my kingdom but His kingdom**
 - 4. The Provision of Prayer-God, our Father supplies all that we need**
 - 5. Forgiveness and Prayer**
 - 6. The Protection of Prayer**
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English Pastor J.C. Ryle said this about prayer circa 1860:

“Once having begun the habit, never give it up. Your heart will sometimes say, ‘We have had family prayers; what great harm is it if we leave our private prayer undone?’ Your body will sometimes say, ‘You are sick, or sleepy or weary; you do not need to pray.’ Your mind will sometimes say, ‘You have important business to attend to today; cut short your prayers.’ Look on all such suggestions as coming directly from the devil. They are as good as saying, ‘Neglect your soul.’” (Circa 1860), English Pastor, J.C. Ryle

For whatever reason, we've made prayer something God never intended. We've made it something that's almost like getting our teeth cleaned or going to a doctor's appointment. We know it's something we need to do, but we almost do it begrudgingly because it takes time out of our day. Yet, what we forget is prayer is the privilege that mankind has to talk to Almighty, Creator God without an appointment...without taking a number...without standing in line...



...and without any credentials other than we are His child, born again, through faith in His Son. What a privilege...yet how we neglect it to our peril.

Please remember, Jesus was reminding the people of this privilege on that Galilean hillside as He preached His “Sermon on the Mount.” Remember Jesus was teaching hundreds, if not thousands of people. See this picture...imagine those netted banana trees are people.



He was reminding them of the great joy and honor that it is to have such a close relationship with God that we can actually approach Him through prayer boldly and with confidence. And so it is in this Model Prayer we see the pattern given by Jesus to use to come to the Pater (Father, Papa). And what we've seen so far is that this prayer is really given to us in two sections.

The first section of the prayer deals with our Father and bringing Him glory as the priority of our lives, while the second section deals with our needs and our petitions to our Father. Take a look:

Section 1: Honoring the Father:

1. Hallowed be your name...
2. Your kingdom come...
3. Your will be done...

Section 2: Making Requests to the Father:

1. Give us our daily bread...
 2. Forgive us our debts...
 3. Deliver us from evil...
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You see it's not until we make the Father our priority that we should be asking anything of Him. That's the supreme issue of the life of a Christian. It's not about us...it's about Him...and the same should be true of our prayer lives. It's not until we have a proper perspective toward our Father in heaven and His priorities, that we should begin to focus on our needs.

So here in verse 11, we have come to the place where we can ask the Father to meet our needs.

Matthew 6:11

11 Give us this day our daily bread,

But, what does this mean? "Our DAILY BREAD?"

Theologian, J.I. Packer says,

"The prayer of a Christian is not an attempt to force God's hand, but it's a humble acknowledgment of helplessness and dependence." J. I. Packer

But is it really? Packer wrote those words many, many years ago and I wonder if they're still true in our society.

Let me ask you: Are you wondering where your next meal is going to come from today? I bet, you already know where you are going to eat for lunch and perhaps what you are going to eat for lunch. I imagine that perhaps many of you have already had something to eat today. Can we even relate to this verse in our modern culture? We have these places filled with food...



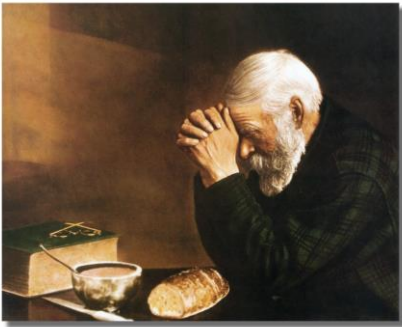
See the verse again... Jesus said to pray:

Matthew 6:11

11 Give us this day our daily bread.

Can we comprehend these words in our 21st century society here in America where food is so plentiful and readily available? You see in Jesus' day, those listeners on that mountainside weren't sure where their next meal was going to come from. They weren't sure what they were going to eat at that next meal and even if there would be a "next meal." That's why the eventual feeding of the 5,000 drew such a tremendous following to Jesus from that point forward. Those people were often hungry and so the petition to pray for their daily bread was an understandable one.

But what about us? The word "bread" used there speaks of literally: "our daily necessity." We are to give thanks for each meal...



This is why it's good to give thanks for each meal.

Remember, it's Almighty God who gives us all that we have including food. Listen, He allows you the ability to work so you can earn enough money to buy food. More than that...God is the one who is allowing you to take your next breath. It's God who allows your heart to beat the next beat. It's God who allows you to think that next thought. God is the provider of all things! God is the source of everything.

James 1:17

17 Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights with whom there is no variation or shadow due to change.

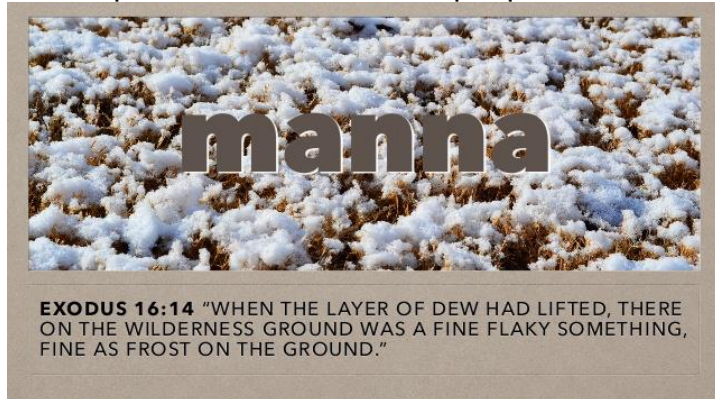
Yes, God is the source of everything. You and I don't possess anything that He didn't provide. He is the Creator and the Sustainer and the Preserver of the entire universe. God is the Provider of our daily bread. Do you know what King David said?

Psalms 37:25

I have been young, and now am old, yet I have not seen the righteous forsaken or his children begging for bread.

But, the truth is: most of us aren't worried about finding food for our next meal. We're worried about what hasn't happened yet! We're worried about God providing for us so that our retirement income can hold out. We're worried about what's going to happen at work or school that might derail our plans. We're worried about the stock market falling 10,000 points or who's going to win the White House. We're worried about our prosperity. We're worried about making money. We're worried about having enough income to sustain us for next year, the next five years...the next 20 years. That's how we have been programmed in our society. Our daily bread???? Are you kidding!!!!

Jesus is teaching that we should ask for just enough bread for today and God will provide that, just like He provided manna for His people in the desert.



If they tried to gather more than for that day it rotted. Jesus is teaching that we should trust our Father in Heaven, day by day. And after all...isn't that how the majority of the world has lived throughout history? Hand to mouth.

Now please don't get me wrong...this doesn't mean that we don't plan and we don't save. In Proverbs we're instructed to look to the example of the ant. They are constantly working and planning and saving. Jesus is not saying that we're not to plan, instead He's pushing us to be content with our daily bread and to trust God to meet our needs for the future.

Listen dear Christian, we're going to be okay as God's children. He is our Sustainer. He is watching over us at this very second! At this very moment, He knows everything that's going on in your life and He's undeterred and unwavering in His plans to care for you and provide what you need. But listen, if you don't know Him today...He has no obligation to provide for you!

Do you need Jesus? Romans 3:23 all have sinned, 6:23 wages of sin is death, 10:9-10 if you will confess with your mouth, 10:13 whoever calls on the name of the Lord...

Have you done that? If you haven't, God's not obligate to do anything for you. He's not obligated to do anything more than He already has...which is to sacrifice His Son for you?

Today is Easter. Will you receive Him today? Would you trust your life to Him today? You see, if you will, you can claim:

Matthew 6:33

33 But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you.
