

*Living from the Lord's Prayer, Pt. 4*  
***Give Us This Day Our Daily Bread***  
*John 6: 30-35, 51*

**First Presbyterian Church  
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Gerrit Scott Dawson**

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Saying a blessing before a meal has been a consistent part of our family life. We take a moment to acknowledge that God is the source of our lives and everything we need for life. It was important to Rhonda and me to lay down in our children's lives the same tracks that were laid down in our lives: we pray before meals, and we pray at bedtime. At the least, we thank God in those moments every day. It's enormously important in developing a worldview that includes God to establish this rhythm of verbally, openly recognizing his provision. As soon as they could talk, our kids participated in these kinds of prayers. We had several meal time blessings that we learned. One goes like this, "God is great, God is good, let us thank him for our food. By his hand, we all are fed. Thank you God for daily bread." All good gifts come from you, dear Father. Please keep supplying our needs.

That's the basic meaning in the phrase we're taking up from the Lord's Prayer, "Give us this day our daily bread." This marks a turning point in the prayer. The first three requests concerned our heavenly Father: may your name be made holy, may your kingdom come and your will be done. After firmly establishing that prayer is about God first, Jesus directs his disciples to take up their particular needs. We pray for daily bread. Please supply what we need to live. You are the Source. We eat from your hand. We live by what you give us.

Our Father invites us to seek what we need from him. He tenderly regards our lives. He knows that we require food, rest, shelter, companionship. He promises to provide for us. But in such a way that we maintain a continuing relationship with him. He doesn't give us everything he's ever going to give in one lump sum. Here's a check, now manage it well. No, he supplies the day's needs each day. And sometimes his estimation of what is a true need and what is merely a "want" differs from mine. But in this way he teaches us what truly makes for life. One of the gifts that came from the crisis of the Flood last year was our need for truly daily reliance. There was so much to do, so much need, that victims and relief workers alike had to just say, "Please give me what I need for this day. I can't look past the crush of these hours. I need you every moment." Our Father delights to show up when we need him and ask him to assist us.

So “Give us this day our daily bread” is about *provision*. But that’s not all. It’s also about *participation*. Notice that Jesus directs us to pray for *our* daily bread, not just *my* daily bread. He is involving us in each other’s lives. We are a “we,” not just an “I.” We are the “we” of our families, the “we” of our circle of friends and neighbors, the “we” of our church family, the “we” of our city, the “we” of God’s people throughout the world, and the “we” of the whole human race. This is a big prayer. *I* pray for *our* provision. And that extends everywhere. We’ve already seen just how engaging the Lord’s Prayer is. When we pray for our Father’s kingdom, he gets us involved in kingdom work. When we pray for our provision, he gets us involved in meeting needs.

This week in your guides, you’ll be reading a great story from Matthew 14. Jesus and his disciples had gone to the far side of the Sea of Galilee for a bit of rest and recharging. But when their boat landed, they discovered that a huge crowd of people had run around the lake on foot and were waiting for them. Jesus saw the crowd and felt deep compassion for them. He taught them and healed their sick. Jesus saw opportunity to love. By contrast, the disciples saw the crowd and felt crushing responsibility. The disciples saw only obligation. They urged Jesus to send the crowds away before it got too late. The day was ending and there was no food in this remote countryside. But Jesus said, “They do not need to go away. You give them something to eat.” Jesus asked his disciples to participate in meeting the provision of the crowds who had come out.

This overwhelmed the disciples. It seemed an impossible task. There were thousands of people there. “We have only five loaves and two fish.” The need was daunting and the resources were few. Jesus simply said, “Bring them here to me.” Then he had the crowds sit down. He took the bread and the fish and turned his eyes up towards heaven. He blessed his Father. Then he broke the bread. He gave it to the disciples. They gave the bread to the crowds. They all ate and were satisfied. From five loaves and two fish, twelve basketsful of food were left over. It was a feast in the desert. Jesus took what they had, gave thanks to his Father and then started giving to his disciples to give to others. The bread multiplied miraculously.

The principle here is a deep one. God does not ask us to give what we don’t have. He asks us to offer what we *do* have. He asks us to offer to him our five loaves and two fish in thanksgiving and request. And then he asks us to offer those same loaves, now dedicated to his service, to those in need. He creates the multiplying. He uses what we offer to do more than we can ask or imagine. The key is that we have offered what we have in his service. And that we have praised

him and thanked him for who he is. Then we just go do what we can do, frail and weak as we are, and watch what he does.

The two phrases go together: Your will be done. Give us this day our daily bread. We're yours. Provide for us and others. We're willing to be the answers to prayer. We will *participate* in your *provision*.

But that's not all that's going on in this story. Listen again to what Jesus did. He took the loaves. He blessed. He broke. He gave. Does that sound like anything? Took. Blessed. Broke. Gave. Yes! It sounds like the Lord's Supper. "In the night in which he was betrayed, Jesus *took* the bread, and when he had *given thanks*, he *broke* it, and said, 'This is my body which is broken for you'" (I Cor. 11: 23-24). The feast in the desert sounds like the first Lord's Supper. And the Lord's Supper is a foretaste of the great heavenly banquet to come. It's the appetizer that assures us that all of God's promises are going to come true. Isaiah imagined a day when death would be destroyed, tears would be wiped away, and God's people would feast on aged wine and rich meats (Is. 25) Jesus picked up this image as he described his Father's kingdom as a great banquet (Lk. 14: 12). Our future is a wedding feast where we, the bride of Christ, are joined to Jesus our bridegroom in the new heavens and the new earth. What's coming is a joyful feast celebrating all things set right as God's people dance in resurrection bodies before the throne.

Give us this day our daily bread, then, has to do with provision, participation, and also with *partaking in Christ*. It's about having Jesus now so that we can taste the truth in what is promised to come. It's about participating in the Supper he gave us as the way he sustains us with his own life filling up our lives. And then living from that intimacy in trust and faith and service every day.

In John's gospel, we hear Jesus make these connections very clearly. John goes on to record what happened after Jesus made the feast in the wilderness feeding the five thousand. The next day a group of people search for Jesus until they find him. They ask him a casual question. "Rabbi, when did you come here?" Jesus knew what they wanted. "You're seeking me, not because you saw signs about God's kingdom, but because you ate your fill of bread." In other words, you don't really want my Father, you just want more free bread. Look, "don't work for the food that perishes, but for the food that endures to eternal life, which the Son of man will give you." He told them to believe in the one God had sent them. Jesus was offering them himself.

But they wanted the stuff. Believe in you? What sign will you do so we might believe? Hey, if you're stuck, here's an idea: long ago our fathers ate manna in the wilderness. Why not start giving us the manna again?

The people were talking about the days when God's people were on the way to the Promised Land. They needed food in the desert for forty years. And God provided it. Every morning, a sweet, bread-like substance would be on the ground. They called it "manna." Each day's manna would be just enough to sustain them. They got bread from heaven every day. There was a belief in Jesus' day that when the Messiah came, the manna would start appearing again. So the crowds were asking Jesus to give them miracle manna every day. Hey Jesus, just keep us fed all the time and we'll believe. Nothing ever changes with us does it? Just give me what I want, God, and I'll trust you. Miraculously give me stuff like a big Sugar Daddy and I'll smile and thank you, at least until I think of something else I want.

Jesus was not fooled by their flattery. He urged them to look deeper. "Your fathers ate the manna in the wilderness, and they [still] died" (Jn. 6: 49). Manna was great for those forty years. But all but two of those who came out of Egypt died before they reached the Promised Land. The manna did not solve our death problem. Because the manna did not solve our sin problem. Nor did it solve our spiritual emptiness problem. Bread for our bellies is necessary for daily life. But it is not enough to fulfill human beings. We have deeper needs. We were made for eternity. We need a solution to our soul-deep loneliness. We need a solution to our sin-stained pasts, and our guilt-burdened presents.

Jesus said to them, "For the bread of God is he comes down from heaven and gives life to the world...I am the bread of life. Whoever believes in me shall not hunger....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" (Jn. 6: 33, 34, 51).

The deepest meaning of "Give us this day our daily bread" is "Give us Jesus!"

Jesus is the one who lived out of a heart of perfect faithfulness to his Father. He wants to share his heart with us. He wants to fill this emptiness with purpose.

Jesus is the one who took upon himself the sins of the world. He took the guilt for each of our sins, and he wants us to release the burden of guilt into his atoning care.

Jesus is the one who died and then rose again. He is the solution to all this dying. He wants to share that eternal life with us.

Jesus wants us to taste right now all that he has secured for us. To taste forgiveness, love, faithfulness and everlasting life. Give me the daily bread of your life Lord Jesus. Give me the broken body that heals. Give me the outpoured blood that cleanses us from every sin.

Praying for daily bread is a multi-layered prayer. Sometimes it is the desperate prayer of immediate personal need. Lord, get me through this. Lord, act now or I will perish. I'm sinking! Save me! I can't. You can. It's the prayer of one day at a time, sometimes one minute at a time.

Other times, this is the prayer of deep spiritual need. Lord, I need more. My priorities are all out of whack. I'm not right inside. I'm empty. Discombobulated. Please fill me. Please order me. Please give me yourself. Work your life in mine. Take me deeper *into* your life so I can live more fully *from* your life.

And always, this prayer involves us in the lives of others. It's not just an "I" prayer. It's a "we" prayer. Give *us* this day *our* daily bread. We're all connected. This is a prayer I have to pray on behalf of those in need. Sometimes that's all I can pray when the need seems so overwhelming. Father, I have less than five loaves and two fish and I don't know how to feed five thousand. What I have is yours. And into the impossible, I pray on behalf of these in need, "Give us this day our daily bread." Work with your provision in the places of the world's need. These are God-sized problems that I ask you to solve.

But I know how Jesus works. When we pray his prayer, he gets us involved in his mission. I pray "Give us this day our daily bread" and know that he sends me to his brothers and sisters. In my family, on my street, in our church, in our city, in our world. God is the multiplier of the five loaves and two fish, but I am to make those available to him in thanks and prayer for him to provide.

We realize that we are called to a life of continual reliance on Christ to fill us even as we continually offer ourselves in his service. It's the dynamic of receiving and sharing daily bread. It's the dynamic of daily receiving Christ's love and daily offering ourselves to him. It's a life of daily worship so that we may participate in his kingdom work. Give us this day our daily bread.