

“Pray Like This: Our Daily Bread”

John 6:25-35

First Presbyterian Church, Corpus Christi, TX

Rev. Charles S. Blackshear • June 7, 2015

For the last few weeks we've been studying together the Lord's Prayer and today we come to the major turning point in the prayer. When Jesus' disciples asked him to teach them to pray he began by teaching them to approach God as Father—daddy, actually—and to praise God because He is holy. Jesus then told them to pray that the Kingdom of God would expand on earth. The Kingdom of God is anywhere that God's will is being done. Heaven is the place where the will of God is perfectly done. When we pray for God's Kingdom to come to earth, we are praying that it would come beginning with me and with you. When you pray for God's will to be done on earth, you're praying that God would have complete control of your life. That means your thoughts, your actions, your relationships, the way you spend your money and your time. And you're praying that God's Kingdom would spread from your own life to your family and your church and your community.

But now we come to the next line, “Give us this day our daily bread.” So we're getting close to lunch time now. Anyone thinking about eating? I'd be willing to bet that most of us here today don't worry from day to day whether we will even get something to eat or not. All of us have access to food. So we come to this line in the prayer and just sort of pass over it. Give us bread for today. But this line is packed with meaning. So let's look at it.

Jesus says, “give us.” Have you ever thought about that? What right do we have to ask God for anything? Psalm 8 says, “When I look at your heavens, the work of your fingers, the moon and the stars, which you have set in place, what is man that you are mindful of him, and the son of man that you care for him?” In other words, “God, you are holy and I'm not. Why should you care for me?” The answer is found throughout the Bible. The main message of Scripture is that God is dying to have a relationship with you. God is a personal God.

We have fellowship with Him. Psalm 8 goes on to say, “You crowned man with glory and honor. You have given him dominion over the works of your hands.” That's kingdom language.

God wants to bless us and He wants us to ask. In Matthew 7, as part of teaching the disciples how to pray, Jesus says, “Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you.”⁸ For everyone who asks receives, and the one who seeks finds, and to the one who knocks it will be opened.⁹ Or which one of you, if his son asks him for bread, will give him a stone? ¹⁰ Or if he asks for a fish, will give him a serpent? ¹¹ If you then, who are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father who is in heaven give good things to those who ask him!” James 4:2 says, “You do not have, because you do not ask.”

But what exactly are we supposed to ask for? Jesus says to ask for bread. So much for your low carb diet, right? Actually, bread is an important subject in the Bible. In ancient times, bread of some kind was the basic daily meal. For some people it was the only food they had to eat most of the time. Bread was essential to staying alive.

In our reading in Exodus, the Israelites had barely escaped Egypt by crossing the Red Sea that God had parted. They experienced God providing the way out and watched as the Egyptian army was wiped out. Almost immediately they began to complain about a lack of food and water. They wanted to go back to Egypt. But God provided for their needs. He told Moses, “I'm going to rain bread on you.” It wasn't actually bread yet. They had to bake it. But it was a fine, flaky flour-like substance that could be made into small cakes and cooked. We usually call it by the Hebrew word, manna. The word manna literally means, “what is it?”

What we find is that God promises to meet our needs. That doesn't mean that He promises to provide me with everything I want, just what

I need. Asking for bread means asking God to get us through the day and to give us what we need to make his Kingdom come to people around us.

Notice that Jesus says, “give us our bread for today.” The Israelites were commanded to only gather enough manna for one day. Some of them tried to get more. They wanted to have a little extra they didn’t have enough the next day. What they discovered is that it quickly spoiled. They couldn’t keep it. They HAD to trust God to provide. How often do we do that? We say, “I trust God to provide,” and then we say, “I can’t be as generous as I would like. What if there’s not enough later?” Asking for our daily bread means trusting that God will provide what we need. You have to let go of the rest.

Have you ever watched how some people go bowling? They send the ball down the lane but then they get all worked up about where it’s going. When you let it go, let it go. Trust that God is going to provide, just like he does for the rest of creation. Live every day like it’s your last one and you’ll discover the great joy that comes from living in the Kingdom of Heaven right now.

But in the Bible, bread has an even greater meaning than just our physical needs. Bread, which is a source of nourishment, represents life. Just as we need life in our bodies, we need life in our soul. In verse 27 of our passage from John 6, Jesus says, “Do not work for the food that perishes, but for the food that endures to eternal life, which the Son of Man will give to

you.” There are two Greek words in the New Testament that are both translated as life. The first one, *bios*, is where we get words like biology. It has to do with physical life. But the other word, *zoe*, refers to the life that comes from the Holy Spirit. It’s the life that lasts, spiritual life. That’s the word Jesus uses here in John 6. He says, don’t spend all your time and energy focused on something that doesn’t last. Work for the life that lasts forever.

The crowd had eaten the bread and the fish the day before when Jesus fed the crowd. They got hungry again. They wanted more. Jesus uses their desire to point them to something far better. He says, “I am the bread of life; whoever comes to me shall not hunger and whoever believes in me shall never thirst.” When are we reminded of those words? Communion.

When we take communion, the bread represents Jesus, the bread of heaven. But it’s more than just a symbol. When we come to communion, Jesus is really here with us. We really do get life from participating. John Calvin said that just as bread nourishes our bodies, Christ nourishes our soul. When we participate in communion we are nourished spiritually. But it’s also true that just like you get hungry a few hours after eating, you need to feast on Christ regularly. We do that by worshipping together and reading the Bible. That’s where we get the “true bread of heaven,” and we ask for it every day.

Amen