

“Our Daily Bread” – Lord’s Prayer Sermon – Matthew 6:25-34; Heidelberg Cat. Q&A 125

Introduction

We live in the age of Pinterest, Instagram, Facebook, and our daily bread is ever before our eyes (if you don’t know what those social media websites are, you are probably in better shape than most of us!). But even outside of social media we can watch various cooking shows on T.V. or download apps that help us prepare food better and healthier. These are good things!

- a. But if we are honest, sometimes we obsess over our daily bread and the things on our “to do” list (what eat, drink, and wear). We can wake up and just dive right in to our duties subtly acknowledging that we are sufficient in ourselves to handle things.
- b. We can also worry about our daily bread “how will I make ends meet in the future.” Or, on the other hand, we can take for granted what God has blessed us with, and abuse his good gifts. Jesus knows all these things, and that is why he teaches us to pray this petition in light of who God is and His Kingdom.
- c. Our daily bread is important. But we want to reflect this morning on the source of our good things we have, and for what purpose God gives us each day our ‘daily bread.

***If we keep the pattern Jesus gives us in the Lord’s Prayer, it provides the proper perspective on our needs, and helps us to ask in confidence and faith for the things we need. When we know God is our Father who is able to do all things as Almighty God, and is willing to do them because he is a faithful Father, we ask for our daily needs from the right heart. When we seek to hallow his name and actively dedicate ourselves to his revealed will, it puts our needs in the right perspective.

Why does God provide us “daily bread”? Bread is for *Obedience*

1. God gives us our daily bread so that we can be strengthened in our bodies to serve him. Bread is not an end in itself, nor is bread to be sought above doing God’s will.
 - a. I once visited church where I came across an elder, who said to me – “young man, never take bite of food in morning until you have chewed on God’s word.” While I don’t think this is absolutely necessary, his focus was right.
 - b. In the OT - Israel was “bread-focused.” Shortly after being redeemed gloriously out of Egypt, we find God’s people in Exodus 16 grumbling about what they will drink and what they will eat. Their eyes should have been fixed on God’s glorious salvation, but instead they were focused only on their bellies, and on their immediate needs.
 - c. But God was gracious, and he provided for Israel manna from heaven for 40 yrs. On Fridays, he even provided extra bread so that they might gather enough for the Sabbath. It was delicious bread – tasted like wafers mixed with honey. God said, don’t keep any left overs, or it will go bad. Trust me. This setup was to test him.
2. The bread God gives us is for obedience, but that does not mean our bodies are unimportant. We are creatures who are made up of both body and soul, and so we need bread!
 - a. There have been some in the Christian tradition who suppress the bodily needs we have, and only focus on the spiritual. May think of monks who live in monasteries – “leave your body at the door.” This kind of thinking has a tendency to pit the body against the soul, and some have even spiritualized this petition, saying it is talking about spiritual bread, or the Lord’s Supper.
3. But this is not the case. Jesus is inviting us to pray for our bodily needs, because God cares about them. God cares for every detail of our lives so that we might be able to seek first his kingdom and his will in our lives. We need bread, but we also need more than bread. Jesus also said, “Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be filled” (Mt. 5).
4. This what we see in Christ’s own example. In Matthew 4, we read of how Jesus was led by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil, just like Israel and like Adam in times of old. After fasting forty days and forty nights, he was hungry. And the tempter came to him and said to him, “If you are the Son of God, command these stones to become loaves of bread.” But Jesus answered, “it is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but from every word that comes from the mouth of God.” (Deut. 8:3).
 - a. Jesus quotes from the section of Deuteronomy where God is reminding Israel of his provision for them during their 40 years in the wilderness. God let them hunger and thirst to test what was in their hearts, and God fed them with manna from heaven that they did not know... and their clothing did not wear out, nor did their feet swell on the forty year journey. (Dt. 8:3-4).
 - i. So Satan is trying to get Jesus to provide manna for himself, and to doubt his Father’s provision.
 - b. But here Jesus demonstrates that he is the faithful Adam and faithful Israelite who obeys God in the midst of temptation. Jesus shows us that obedience to God is of greater importance than seeking our daily bread. In John 4:32,

his disciples urged him to eat, but Jesus said, “My food is to do the will of him who sent me and to accomplish his work.”

- i. Israel was bread-focused, but Jesus’ food was to do the will of his Father. He did not grumble or murmur against God when he was hungry, for he knew his Father would care for him, but he became obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. Even to the point of crying out right before he died, “I thirst!” He was stripped of life itself.
- c. APPL: Beloved, think about how this comforts us. If God gave over his own dear Son for our salvation, will he not also take care of our daily needs? “He who did not spare his own Son but gave him up for us all, how will he not also with him graciously give us all things?” (Rom. 8:32).

We can trust God to provide for us as we seek first his kingdom and his righteousness. We can “Keep our lives free from love of money, and be content with what we have, for he has said, “I will never leave you nor forsake you.” So we can confidently say, “The Lord is my helper; I will not fear, what can man do to me?” – Hebrews 13:5-6

How does our daily bread come to us? – By God’s *Providence* - Matthew 6:26 (“birds and lilies”)

1. Although manna does not fall from heaven to our dinner plate, God is no less the source of all the good we have. HC, “he is the only fountain of all good.” Our food and drink comes to us not by chance, but from his Fatherly hand. James put it, “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” (1:17).

But what is God’s providence? Providence is one of those doctrines the church desperately needs to recover today. Providence refers to God’s ongoing care and absolute rule over his creation for his glory and for the good of his people.

2. God does not create the world, and then walk away into the other room to leave it be, as Deism teaches. Rather, we see in our text we see how God is intimately involved in his creation. In his providence, he provides food for the birds, and even clothes for the lilies of the field.
 - a. “The eyes of all look to you, and you give them their food in due season. You open your hand; you satisfy the desire of every living thing” (Ps. 145:15-16).
 - b. You don’t see too many stressed out birds in the world! You don’t see birds moping around, wondering if God will take care of them! They daily depend on God and he takes care of them.
 - c. Jesus argues for the lesser to the greater here in our text, if God provides food and clothes for these things, will he not much more take care of you? You who bear his image? You who are God’s very own children that he sent his Son to die for?
3. But how can we say that God is providing our daily bread, when we go pick it up our food from the store. *We worship a God who delights to use means. God uses creaturely means and natural processes that he created and sustains to bring us our daily bread. Even when we pray for healing for someone, whether or not God does that healing directly, or uses the means of doctors, medicine, surgeries, etc, it is God who is at the source of healing!
 - a. We must not fall into the trap of secular naturalism on the one hand, which says, everything that happens has a scientific and natural explanation, or on the other hand fall into hyper supernaturalism, which says everything God does must be a miracle! The middle way is recognizing how God is in his ordinary providence governs the natural world through the natural processes he created and sustains.
 - i. We serve a God who said the beginning both, “Let there be,” and it was so (MIRACLE). And also, “Let the earth bring forth vegetation, plants yielding seed, fruit trees, etc,” and it was so (PROVIDENCE).
 - b. We can say, “God healed me,” even when the surgery is successful. The same is true with “our daily bread.” We must not think that the only way we can say God provides is if our manna falls from heaven; he is no less our provider when we go to the grocery store to pick up our food. So the question is not whether or not God is involved in every aspect of our lives but how God is involved.
4. The way he gives us our daily bread is through the vocations of farmers, millers, and bakers. We might add truck drivers, factory workers, bankers, warehouse attendants, and even that lady at the checkout counter. Virtually every step of our whole economic system contributes to those eggs we had for breakfast, or that piece of toast we enjoyed. And when you pray around the table, you are right to thank God for the food he provides.
 1. Why??? Because as Martin Luther said, “God is milking the cows through the vocation of the milkmaid.” According to Luther, all these different vocations represent the different “masks God’s wears” to provide for us. He is hidden in these

vocations. We see the milkmaid, or the farmer, or the doctor... But, looming behind this human mask, God is genuinely present and active in what they do for us.”

2. We are to be mindful that God is “wearing these various masks,” and that is why we can glorify him in even the most ordinary tasks of life. Whenever someone does something for you – brings you a meal at a restaurant, builds you a house, cleans up after you – be grateful for the human beings God is using to care for you, and thank him for these unmerited gifts. Did you savor a good cup of coffee in the morning (I know I did!)? Glorify God for how he brought that to you. Are you moved by a work of art or a good book, or a piece of music? Glorify God who has given these gifts to artists, writers, and musicians.
 - a. One theologian I admire (whisper, “I am talking about my wife”) put it this way in a piece she wrote: “The practice of prayers at mealtimes is what separates men from animals – instead of attacking our food and tearing into it as though it could be taken away from us at any moment, humans make a point to acknowledge their Creator and Sustainer in gratitude for his provision for their physical needs.”
1. Of course, remember that God is also working through you in your various callings. You may work and ‘bring home the bacon’ as it’s commonly said, but God is the one who provides you daily strength, health, and the work to do. HC. “Without his blessing, our labors cannot do us any good.” So when we pray this petition, we are acknowledging God’s good providence in caring for our needs, and we are asking that God may give us strength to be a part of his care for our families, and for the world.

How should this affect our prayers?

We have learned the purpose of our bread is for obedience, and that the source of our bread is God himself, caring for us in his providence. As we close I want to simply focus on a few key words found in this petition as we think about how we are to pray for our needs.

1. “Our” Daily bread

1. Again, we are to focus not just on ourselves, and on our own needs when we pray, but we are to think of the needs of others. Both in the church, and outside of the church.
2. We are to ask that God in his Fatherly care would take care of the daily needs of all his people, and we should seek to be part of the means he uses to bring help to those in need.
 - a. Pray for God to bring encouragement to the grieving – perhaps that means we write them a note or give them a phone call. Pray that God would bless the work of these various causes we support, perhaps that means volunteering some of our time to be part of God’s means of blessing.

2. Our “Daily” bread.

1. The adjective “daily” highlights our constant dependence upon God for our needs each day, both for our food and all things we stand in need of as human beings.
2. Furthermore, the word, “daily,” helps control our passions for things that will pass away. We may be tempted in times of abundance to simply pour all our resources on our pleasures, and delight to the point of excess while we forget the Lord. Or we can be poor and sin against God by stealing, or by constantly worrying and lusting after more. But in this petition, Jesus teaches us contentment in our needs, where God has us in life.
 - a. Scripture teaches us that “godliness with contentment is great gain for we brought nothing into the world, and we cannot take anything out of the world.” – 1 Tim. 6:6-8.

I wonder if you have come across the OT prayer for daily bread? In Proverbs 30:7-9

Two things I ask of you;
deny them not to me before I die:
Remove far from me falsehood and lying;
give me neither poverty nor riches;
feed me with the food that is needful for me,
lest I be full and deny you
and say, “Who is the LORD?”
or lest I be poor and steal
and profane the name of my God.

Can you pray this prayer??? Lord, give me neither poverty nor riches, but only that which is needful for me. Daily bread. Does contentment and dependence mark your prayers?

1. “We are to ask only as much as is sufficient for our need from day to day, with this assurance: that our Heavenly Father nourishes us today, and will not fail us tomorrow. Thus, however abundantly goods may flow to us, even when our storehouses are stuffed and our cellars full, we ought always to ask for our daily bread, for we must surely count all possessions nothing except in so far as the Lord, having poured out his blessing, makes it fruitful with continuing increase.” – Calvin

Conclusion

1. *Are you concerned about your daily bread this morning? Are you worried about the future, and how God might care for you? Jesus knows your worries, and he does not say, “forget about your needs,” but he invites you to cast all your care upon the Lord, because he cares for you. He calls you to seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, knowing that all these other things the Father will provide for you. If in God’s providence feeds the birds of the air, and clothes the lilies of the field, will he not much more care for you, his child?
2. God is the source of all the good we have. And he is able to care of our needs as the God who rules in his providence, and he desires to care for us as a Faithful Father in heaven. “What father among you, if his son asks for bread, will give him a stone? Or if he asks for a fish, will give him a serpent? If you then, who are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give good things to those who ask him!” (Mt. 7:9-11). Amen.

*Our Father in Heaven, we do pray that you would take care of our physical needs, so that we come to know that you are the only source of everything good, and that neither our work and worry nor our gifts can do us any good without your blessing. And so help us to give up our trust in creatures and to put trust in you alone. Strengthen us for your service, and bless the labors of our hands for the good of your church, and for this world. We praise you our God, the one from whom all blessings flow. In Jesus name we pray,
Amen.*