

July 20, 2008

**THE LORD'S PRAYER:
GIVE US THIS DAY OUR DAILY BREAD
MATTHEW 6.11**

In teaching us to pray for our daily bread, Jesus tells us of the concern of our heavenly Father for our needs and also tells us that bread is a kingdom concern.

1. GOD'S CONCERN FOR OUR PHYSICAL NEEDS

In the wilderness: bread could include all of our material needs. But there is a reason that Jesus says "bread" not "needs."

"Daily bread" references the story of God's people: their wandering in the wilderness after being delivered from Egyptian bondage.

Jesus is telling us where we are in the story and what we are to be expecting.

Cf. Ex 16: Delivered from Egypt, then begin to grumble about lack of food. Long for Egypt again. God provided "bread from heaven" (16.4). (Manna = what-is-it?). Gather 6 days a week; 2x amount on 6th day for the Sabbath. Ate for 40 years.

Contrast to the children in the wilderness: they were not to grumble and complain but to petition their heavenly Father.

Grumbling and complaining is selfish and assumes that our heavenly Father does not really care about our needs. It is a position of arrogance and thus ingratitude. That is, it reveals the fact that we are not thankful for what he has done for us. Prayer puts us in a position of humility, recognizing our Father's grace and power.

Praying for this bread provides particular context. When the manna was provided, it was provided just after God's people were delivered and before they came into their inheritance. God's people are in the wilderness, waiting to inherit.

Jesus is keeping us firmly fixed on where we are in history. We have not arrived. We still need this wilderness food. But be patient. This manna will one day give way to a land flowing with milk and honey.

The Father is concerned about our particular needs not just the "big picture": Our Father is not a heavenly kingdom CEO who only looks at the big picture, not worrying about the small stuff. Cf. Mt 6.25ff.; 10.30.

Our particular needs will not be met if we make idols out of them. Life is found in the kingdom. That is why we must seek the kingdom of God first, then all of these particular needs will be met.

Food and grace: No disparaging the need for physical sustenance. Kingdom praying and living is not a call to asceticism; i.e., denying the body of food and the like trying to reach a higher so-called 'spiritual' plane. Cp. 1 Tim 4.3-4

Jesus, in teaching us to pray for bread from our heavenly Father, affirms that our bodily hunger is something given to us by God.

From creation food was a basic Creator-creature distinction. God gives food to eat immediately after creation (Gen 1.29). There is no sin in the world. Hunger does not represent a deficiency in our humanity. It is a part of being a creature who is dependent upon his Creator.

Food is a daily reminder that we do not have life in ourselves. We are not like God in that way. We are dependent while he is independent. Every time we eat something we are saying—whether it is confessed or not—that we are not God.

Food is not simply a *pointer* to God's grace. Food *is* God's grace. Food is edible grace. Grace is God's favor toward us. Food is the means by which God sustains us. His provision of food is the tangible, edible expression of his favor.

God in his grace "resurrects" dead food in our bodies so that it nourishes us. There is no life in food. We could have all the food we ever desired, but without God's blessing upon it, nourishing our bodies, we would die.

The presence and power of food at every point—from its growth, to our table, to our nourishment and enjoyment—are all the tangible grace of God; a grace that we are to recognize, pray for, and receive gratefully.

Food and work: Petition is also a calling. Here there is a call to work. We are to participate in the gathering, preparing, and eating of food. Even children of Israel had to go out and gather the manna in the morning and prepare it.

Cf. 2Thess 3.10-15: “If a man will not work, neither let him eat” (2Thess 3.10-15). This is not dealing with someone who *cannot* work or who has fallen on difficult times. This is dealing with someone who *refuses* to work.

2. THE RELATIONSHIP OF OUR NEEDS TO THE KINGDOM

Whether we eat or drink... The kingdom is concerned about things on the earth. It is concerned about material, visual, tangible things in the world. Concerned about uniting heaven and earth; not keeping them apart.

Remember the context of this petition: “Then YHWH said to Moses, “Behold, I will rain bread from heaven for you” (Ex 16.4). Cf. also Ps 78.25, this was the bread of angels, heavenly food.

This miraculous supply of bread was indicative of what God always does in what we would consider more ordinary ways. God is the supplier of all of our bread. All of our bread, in some sense, is heavenly bread.

Cf. 1Cor 10.1ff. manna = “spiritual food;” i.e., food of the Spirit. The people were feeding on Christ. Manna = sacramental.

Weren’t the sacramental meals distinct? Wasn’t this supplying their daily needs of sustenance? Yes. But in this way we see that every meal we eat, though it is not the same as the Lord’s Table in worship, is, in some sense sacramental because our life—total life—depends on Christ.

Kingdom life is everyday life. It involves you eating breakfast, lunch, and supper. Our daily feeding upon Christ in these ways is concerned about sustaining our kingdom life because all of life is kingdom life.

The food-kingdom: God relates to his people through food from the beginning. Provides food for their nourishment and enjoyment in the Garden, but also will give them life or death by food (the Trees). Food was a blessing and a test. It was the substance of worship or the substance of disobedience.

- Promised Land = a land flowing with milk and honey, the place God would dwell with them and their inheritance.
- Tabernacle worship: food is the substance of worship in one form or another. The sacrifices are either consumed by the fire as food for God, shared with the priests as they eat with God, or shared with the priests and the people as they came to worship God.
- The Feasts: Three times a year the men of God’s people were required to gather before God for worship. These were the three Feasts of Israel: Passover/Unleavened Bread, Weeks, and Tabernacles.
- The coming kingdom = a feast (Isa 25; cf. also Mt. 22.1-14)
- Jesus eating with people; esp. tax collectors and sinners of all sorts. As a prophet of the kingdom, he was including them as citizens
- Consummation: the Wedding Feast of the Lamb (Rev 19.6-10).

Our need and request for bread is a desire and request for the kingdom itself.

The bread of tomorrow today: Possible translation: “Give us tomorrow’s bread today.” Mean something like: “We want to taste the kingdom age even now. We want to participate in that feast that is to come in the present.” (Cp. Num 13)

Those who follow Jesus want to eat of that land in the present. We long for the coming of the kingdom in its fullness and we want tastes of it now; not to be over-reaching or grasping, but to taste and see the Lord’s goodness.

Our daily bread: We are to be concerned about the need of others in the kingdom. The Father meets the needs of others through our imitation of him.

Cf. Mt 25 and the judgment. The meeting of physical needs is not a sideline issue or a means to a more “spiritual end.” Meeting these needs *is* kingdom work. (Cf. also Ac 11.27-30; Gal 2.10).

1. Whether you have much or little, it is still appropriate to pray for daily bread. 2. An attitude of gratitude, not grumbling, should characterize our petitions. 3. Your Father in heaven does care about your needs.