

SUNDAY 11TH JUNE 2023

Unpacking the Lord's Prayer.



The Lord's Prayer in Aramaic.
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=R0M5EpCQUlg>

We are now turning a corner in the Lord's prayer. You may notice that there is one word that characterizes the first half of the prayer and another word for the second half.

The first half is **YOUR** – Your name, Your kingdom, Your will. This is Jesus' way of teaching us that we are to begin with God's concerns – not ours first.

The second half is characterized by the word **US**. Give us, forgive us, lead us.

Give us this day our daily bread.

The focus of the Lord's prayer clearly shifts from God our Father to our own basic needs with this petition – and not simply to “my needs,” but to “our needs.”

It is hard to imagine saying – “Give me this day my daily bread.” In this petition, we are asking God to supply the basics of what's necessary for us to survive and find satisfaction and meaning. Necessities go beyond actual bread; it is affirming our reliance on God to meet our most basic needs from one day to the next.

Bread in Scripture is a symbol for all the material needs of life. We are not praying for physical bread, but for all the physical and material needs of life.

In Exodus 16: God rained down bread or manna from heaven for the Israelites but provided only enough to last them one day. This was to test them to see if they would obey God's instructions.

They would have died if God had not met their needs. We too would die without the essential gifts provided by God.

What about the word "daily?"

The Greek word translated "daily" means either "buy it daily" or "buy it today." In the Lord's prayer it means "for this very day" or "for the day that is about to come."

Martin Luther said "our daily bread" meant everything to satisfy our needs – food, clothing, shelter, and health. Interestingly he added – a respectful spouse, good children, good and faithful rulers, good government, seasonable weather, true friends and faithful neighbors.

The fact that Jesus mentions bread teaches us that material things do not lie outside the realm of prayer. It is not unspiritual to pray for physical needs. We are not just a soul or spirit, we are real people, living in real human bodies.

If it is food – then prayer teaches us to pray for food.

If it is money – then prayer teaches us to pray for money.

If it is a job, we pray for that.

If it is health – prayer teaches us to pray for that.

If any physical thing is what we need, if it is a legitimate thing, we can bring it before God.

Everything of value we possess comes in one way or another from the hand of Almighty God. This truth ought to make us grateful for the gift of life itself.

We pray for what we really need, not for every wild desire that comes into our mind. How different this is from the way many of us live.

Sometimes when I ask someone how they are doing – the automatic reply is: “I am having a bad day.”

You may have a bad day occasionally, but when your response remains the same, this is a luxury you are giving yourself.

Pouting, being miserable or having a pity party, feeling sorry for yourself.

We all have choices in our lives. Happiness is a choice, so is anger, and gratitude, and kindness, and sloth, and patience, and doubt and faith.

We are the way we are because we choose to be that way, and we stay the way we are because we choose not to change.

We can desire all sorts of things for ourselves, but this does not dismiss the communal, corporate, and global dimensions that Jesus taught.

Therefore, we should consider the impact of the Lord’s prayer on the way we live. If we are asking God to “give us this day our daily bread” we may need to look at how, in today’s culture, we continually consume and seek our own desires for pleasure.

We need to thank God for the “daily bread” that has already been provided and challenge ourselves to be content with enough, rather than constantly searching for more.

Who is the “us” we are praying for?

Jesus had compassion on hungry people and hunger itself is contrary to the kingdom of God that Jesus was ushering in.

1 John 3 states: If anyone has material possessions and sees a brother or sister in need, but has no pity on them, how can the love of God be in that person?

Mark 6 states: Jesus had compassion on the large crowd who had gathered to hear Him speak. When His disciples urged Him to send the crowds away to fend for themselves, Jesus answered: YOU give them something to eat.

Most of us will have all we want to eat today and tomorrow, maybe even for the rest of the week, yet our world is filled with starving people. When we pray “give us today our daily bread” we can never pray as if we were the only people in the world. We must pray, thinking about the need around us.

A.W. Tozer once remarked that “a thankful heart cannot be cynical.” A cynic is a person who, having seen the bad side of human nature so often, finds it hard to take anything at face value.

On one hand this can be positive if you are comparing them to the “pie-in-the-sky” dreamers who never question anything. But like any virtue it can quickly become a vice. The heart of gratitude comes from realizing that God alone is the source of all our blessings.

Life is a journey with many twists and turns.

The true cynic doubts that God knows, or cares and they therefore give into doubt, anger and sometimes despair.

But those who know their God know that He knows even when they don't ask and instead of giving in or giving up, they give thanks.

Daily bread living means believing that because God is God, He will give you what you truly need when you truly need it.

Has God ever provided for you in a way that surprised or even puzzled you?

Thank God for wonderful surprises you have had in your life.

Prayer: Gracious Father, teach us to trust You more and more. When we are tempted to do it ourselves, bring us down to the place where we must cry out for your help. Forgive us for living as if we were God and You are not. We thank You for giving us exactly what we need, when we need it, not a moment too soon, and not a moment too late. Having received so much from you, we ask one thing more. Give us grateful hearts. Amen.