

“Give Us This Day Our Daily Bread”

I’ll have the Chef’s Special!

Matthew 6:11

August 30, 2015

(Part 5 of *Lord’s Prayer* Sermon Series)

Dear Friends in Christ,

Ordering at an ethnic restaurant can be a daunting experience. For one, many of those places have a menu that’s as thick as a phone book. If you diligently read through all the entree choices, it may take you longer to pick your meal than to eat it! For another, unfamiliar words like pho (Vietnamese noodle soup), lamakun (Turkish pizza), and shabu-shabu (a Japanese meat dish) make the ordering experience that much more agonizing. What if you pick something you absolutely can’t stomach? It’s best to go to such restaurants with someone who knows the food. Better yet, go to an eatery where the chef knows you. Then you can simply order whatever the chef suggests trusting that, because he knows you, he will cook up something you’ll like.

I’m talking about food this morning because we’ve come to the Fourth Petition in our sermon series on the Lord’s Prayer. When we pray, “**Give us this day our daily bread**,” we’re entrusting our physical needs to our loving heavenly Father who knows us well. In a way we’re saying, “**I’ll have the Chef’s Special!**” With the Fourth Petition we’re expressing our thankful trust that God will give us whatever we need, whenever we need it.

Let’s begin our study with a closer look at the last word of the Fourth Petition: “**bread**.” Bread is one of the basic foods at any meal in just about every culture. Even when we serve pasta we like to have a bit of French bread to mop up our sauce. So with the word “**bread**” Jesus is teaching us to ask for the basic necessities of life – not just for food but for clothing as well. But why ask for these things when Jesus himself tells us that God has already promised to give them to us (Matthew 6)? When you work long hours to put food on the table it’s easy to start thinking that *you* provided the bread. But you wouldn’t have been able to go to work had your heavenly Father not given you the strength and smarts for the job! And so with the Fourth Petition we’re not so much asking as we are gratefully *acknowledging* that God has given us what we need.

But has God really given us all that we need? You’ve been praying for a job with better pay and benefits but nothing has come along yet. You asked for a Mercedes Benz but got a Mitsubishi instead. You also asked to be spared the flu bug but it still put you flat on your back for a couple of days. Is the Fourth Petition a request that God does not intend to answer all the time? It may seem that way but remember, Jesus taught us to ask for our daily “bread” and not our daily “cake.” Nowhere has God promised to provide us with the luxuries of life, and much of what we ask for are luxuries. Instead the Apostle Paul said that *if we have food and clothing, we will be content with that* (1 Timothy 6). And so with the Fourth Petition we pray for God to supply our need, not our greed.

That’s a struggle for us though when we look at what God has given to others and wonder why we don’t have as much. I confess that when I pray the Fourth Petition I’m often really thinking: “Give me this day *Bill Gates’* daily bread. Yeah Lord, make me rich like he is so that I can eat out every day if I wanted to, and travel to exotic locations in my own private jet.” But that isn’t what we are to pray. Instead we are to ask, “Give us this day *our* daily bread. Lord, give *me* what I need this day. I trust you know what that is better than I do.”

If, in order to be a faithful pastor, God thinks it’s necessary for me to have a good computer and a nice study, he will provide those things. If he wants you to be a good electrician or mechanic, he’ll give you the brains and the brawn you’ll need for the job. If he wants you to be a successful musician, he’ll bless your hours of practice and open the doors into the industry. On the other hand if he sees that what we need is to bear the cross for a while so that pride or self-sufficiency is quashed, he will give us a crisis to send us scurrying back to him and his Word.

The bottom line, Friends, is that God will take care of you whether or not there is bread around. Didn’t he demonstrate that in the life of Jesus? When Jesus went without food for 40 days in the wilderness shortly after his baptism, Satan came to him and suggested that he turn stone into bread to feed himself. Jesus refused however, not because the suggestion had come from Satan, but because Satan was trying to get Jesus to start

relying on himself instead of his heavenly Father. But for 40 days his heavenly Father had successfully sustained Jesus without bread, why would he stop now? That's why Jesus replied: "***Man does not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God***" (Matthew 4:4). When a friend invites you over for dinner do you pack a few sandwiches in case your host fails to feed you adequately? Of course not! You know that your friend will feed you something good and that there will be plenty of it! If we can entrust ourselves to our friends who are weak and frail human beings, we certainly can trust that our heavenly Father will give us what we need since he has promised to do so.

But now why does Jesus direct us to pray for our "daily" bread? God doesn't want us to trust in him once in a while for what we need; he wants us to turn to him daily for our necessities. I'm not so sure we 21st century North Americans are good at this. We've been told that we need to have three months living expenses on hand in case we lose our job. Now God wants us to be good stewards and to plan for the future just as Noah did when he packed sufficient food in the ark to last through the flood, but because we often have a cash reserve built up I wonder if we haven't become self-reliant instead of God-reliant? If you have such a cash reserve, use the Fourth Petition to daily thank God for this blessing. And if you've just gone through the last of your savings, use the Fourth Petition to express your humble trust that God will still give you what you need when you need it. No, God may not give you enough to pay for cable TV and to eat out every week. You may have to cut out these expenses to make ends meet but remember, God promised to give us bread, not cake; he promised to fill our need, not our greed.

If God *has* blessed you with more than you need, keep in mind the other reason we pray, "Give us this day *our* daily bread." We're asking that God would provide the needs of others too. Could it be that you are the answer to this prayer? Does not God bless us abundantly that we may share our wealth with those in need? Sure he does.

The reason we may not think of helping the needy so much, however, is because we've come to expect our government to do this. Doesn't that show what good government we enjoy? Here in the USA you can be certain that many of your tax dollars are being spent on making life better for others and not just enriching a select few at the top. Good government is another material blessing we can thank the Lord for when we pray the Fourth Petition. If we didn't have a strong government to enforce the laws, thieves and thugs would make getting our daily bread more difficult. And so with the Fourth Petition pray that God bless our governing officials. Pray by name for our President, our Governor, and for our Mayor. Pray that God would grant them wisdom and the courage to govern not for party interests but for the good of the whole community and nation.

When it comes right down to it we're praying for quite a few blessings with the Fourth Petition, aren't we? That's why I think it's helpful to remember that with the Fourth Petition you're really saying: "I'll have the Chef's Special!" Why can we put in that "order" with confidence? As a family we used to love to go to Shakey's Pizza in Tsukuba City, Japan. Why? Not just because it was a bit of the USA and we loved pizza. Also because the chef knew what kind of pizza our children like and he would make whole pizzas just for us and serve them on the Hieb table. Now that's service!

No chef in Cleveland may know you that well but you do have a heavenly Father who knows all your needs. Keep going back to him in prayer and ask him for his Chef's Specials because you know that he will supply them. You can be confident of this because he's taken care of your greatest need – the need for forgiveness, a need he didn't spare any expense in supplying but even gave up his own Son to make it happen. If your host uncorks a rare and expensive wine, his best wine for you before dinner, you know that the meal to follow is going to be awesome too. Like a fine red wine poured out to the last drop, Jesus shed his rich blood to cover all of our sins – sins of greed, sins of complaining, and sins of relying on ourselves. Since this blood has been shed for us, will our heavenly Father withhold anything else we need? No. And so we will pray with grateful confidence: "Give us this day our daily bread, Lord. Give us the Chef's Special for that will be enough." Amen.