**Give us this Day**

John 6

Here is what we’ve covered so far in our series on prayer:

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| “Our Father in heaven” | Prayer is a miraculous relationship |
| “Hallowed be your Name” | of worshipful communion |
| “Your kingdom come…”  | And total surrender |

The phrases of the Lord’s prayer are not magic words - they are **guideposts on the journey** of prayer, showing us the steps we should take to draw closer to God in prayer.

* Approaching ***God as our Father*** reminds us of the intimacy and access of the relationship; but immediately we remember He is in heaven so we should never forget the miracle of grace it is that we can dare come before His throne.
* For **God’s Name is Holy** - His entire being is set apart, glorious and unstained by evil. As we pray “Hallowed be your name” we not only acknowledge the truth of His holiness, but we express the desire that more and more people would come to join in that expression.
* And last week we studied **the kingdom** - at the center of the kingdom of God is King Jesus Himself. The only reason we can pray directly to God is because we come in Jesus’ Name, trusting in His sacrifice for us and devoted to His rule in us and through us.

These are the first three essential steps of prayer: relationship, worship, and surrender. Today we come to the fourth phrase of the Lord’s prayer, “Give us this day our daily bread.” It is important to ***observe the order and priority:***

**Prayer’s Progression:**

1. Relationship “Our Father”
2. Worship “Hallowed be”
3. Surrender “Your kingdom”
4. Petition “Give us”

 ***Often we think of prayer PRIMARILY as petition*** - bringing our requests to God. The Lord’s prayer immediately corrects this misconception. Prayer INCLUDES petition - and our loving Father invites us to seek Him and ask Him for whatever we need. But prayer does not begin with requests because it does not begin with US - prayer begins by orienting ourselves toward GOD, the One to whom we pray.

And in a fascinating twist, when we study what Jesus means by “our daily bread,” can you guess where he is going? Try this multiple choice quiz:

**What did Jesus mean by “our daily bread”?**

1. A loaf of Wonder Bread
2. A daily devotional
3. Our list of demands
4. A closer relationship with Him

Now, when I put it that way, you can probably guess the right answer is D. Here is the proof text.

**What did Jesus mean by “our daily bread”?**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| 1. A loaf of Wonder Bread
2. A daily devotional
3. Our list of demands
4. A closer relationship with Him
 | “If you… know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will the heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him?” Luke 11:13 |

***Luke 11*** is the parallel text to Matthew 6, and is where Jesus provides an abbreviated version of the Lord’s Prayer. He follows it immediately by ***a parable about asking for help***. Your generally unfriendly neighbor would give a loaf of bread in the middle of the night if you just keep knocking and being obnoxious - so don’t you think God can do better than your unfriendly neighbor? And parents generally know not to give their kids snakes and scorpions, but instead to give our kids fish and bread and eggs - so can’t we give God the benefit of the doubt and trust that He knows what we need and will give it to us?

In the Luke passage here we see **the ultimate good gift** that we need and that God gives us WHEN WE ASK: the Holy Spirit. In other words - more of Himself; a closer relationship with Him.

So that’s where we’re heading today as we seek to pray, “Give us this day our daily bread.” What we are asking is that our loving, Almighty, all-Wise Father in heaven will give us everything we need - knowing that ***the primary thing we need is HIM,*** which of course, fits perfectly with the Lord’s prayer to this point. So the Lord’s Prayer does not teach us to bring our long list of demands for God as long as we precede it with some religious sounding phrases first. “Give us this day our daily bread,” continues ***exactly in the themes already introduced*** - relationship, worship and surrender.

Now, let’s look at Jesus’ expanded teaching on this in John chapter 6. After feeding around 20,000 people Jesus used the opportunity as a teachable moment to remind people to ***distinguish REAL NEEDS from FELT NEEDS***. He said, “I get it. You like free food. You would love a King who would give you a lifetime supply of Happy Meals. But that’s not what you really need. What you really need is the KING, not the Happy Meals He could give you.” Look at verse 15:

“Perceiving that they were about to come and take him by force to make him king, Jesus withdrew again to the mountain by himself.” John 6:15

With 12 baskets of leftover bread that apparently came from NOWHERE, the Jewish crowd concluded that ***Jesus was the true and better MOSES***. And of course, He was. So they tried to compel Him to become their King and lead them to overthrow Rome and take His rightful seat on David’s throne in Jerusalem. But that was not the way Jesus came to rule at that time. He came to set up His Kingdom SPIRITUALLY, and only later will ***He return to set up that Kingdom PHYSICALLY***. And He used BREAD to illustrate that point.

“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.” John 6:27

***Prayer calls the question for us*** - will we focus on the physical or the spiritual? Will we fix our minds and hearts on this world or heaven? Will we ask God for things of this life or things of eternity? ***What kind of BREAD do you want today?*** What kind do you know you really NEED? Hear this warning in John 6 - “do not work for the food that perishes, but for the food that endures to eternal life!”

In this chapter we will hear the Lord Jesus calling us to **three commitments in prayer.** First:

“Give us today our daily bread”

1. **Trust** in the Lord Jesus

“This is the work of God, that you believe in him whom he has sent.” John 6:29

When the crowd he had fed chased him down on the other side of the Sea of Galilee, they asked, “What must we do, to be doing the works of God?” (v. 28). This was Jesus’ answer: the work of God is to trust in Jesus.

Immediately the crowd **asked Jesus for a sign** to prove he was worthy of their faith. And they were kind enough to give him an example they would accept - saying in verse 31, “Our fathers ate manna in the wilderness,” for God gave them bread from heaven to eat.

Remember, the day before Jesus had just fed around 20,000 people with just one little boy’s lunch. And yet they come asking for another sign. Jesus directs them back to the meaning of the sign they mentioned - ***the manna from heaven***.

“Give us today our daily bread”

1. **Trust** in the Lord Jesus

“The bread of God is he who comes down from heaven and gives life to the world.” John 6:33

Jesus made it clear - it wasn’t MOSES who provided the Manna, it was God the Father. Then Jesus used the manna as a metaphor for HIMSELF. “Yes, God provided physical bread for a while - but now He has provided spiritual bread in ME. I AM the bread of God.” The crowd says, “Sir, give us this bread always,” obviously thinking he meant literal bread. To which Jesus responded:

“Give us today our daily bread”

1. **Trust** in the Lord Jesus

“I am the bread of life; whoever comes to me shall not hunger, and whoever believes in me shall never thirst.” John 6:35

And in case they still missed the point Jesus spelled it out a few minutes later - “I’m talking about **my BODY** - you have to eat my flesh, which is real food and drink my blood, which is real drink.” This was a challenging and confusing teaching, and many in the crowds found it too much and turned back from following him at that point. Even his disciples told him, “Uh, Lord, that was a bit much, don’t you think?”

“Give us today our daily bread”

1. **Trust** in the Lord Jesus

“I am the living bread… if anyone eats this bread, he will live forever. And the bread that I will give for the life of the world is my flesh.” John 6:51

Clearly, **Jesus was talking about the cross**. He was setting up the institution of the ***Lord’s supper*** when believers would remember His literal, physical body that enabled Him to truly die - and His blood that He literally shed to make atonement for sin. We celebrate the Lord’s Supper once a month. But the Lord’s Prayer reminds us that we should celebrate His body and blood every day! When we pray “Give us today our daily bread,” the first thing it means is, “Remind us again of your body which is our bread and of your blood which is our drink! We depend on your sacrifice to sustain us, Lord Jesus, just as we depend on bread and water to keep us alive!”

That’s the first commitment of this prayer - expressing our complete trust in the Lord Jesus for salvation, eternal life, the Holy Spirit - all we need. The second commitment follows naturally.

“Give us today our daily bread”

1. **Ask** for more of Jesus

“Unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you have no life in you.” John 6:53

Jesus’ body and blood are the food and drink we need to live spiritually. His body is real food. ***His blood is real drink.*** I’m not teaching transubstantiation here - that the elements in the Lord’s Supper transform from normal bread and juice into the literal body and blood of Jesus. The point of the teaching here is that trusting in Jesus and “feeding on Him” is just as real - if not more real - than bread and water. To commune with Jesus in daily prayer is just as necessary - if not more necessary - than to eat food and drink water.

“Give us today our daily bread”

1. **Ask** for more of Jesus

“Whoever feeds on my flesh and drinks my blood abides in me, and I in him.” John 6:55

***What does this mean to feed on Jesus’ flesh and to drink his blood?*** It simply means to draw closer to Jesus - to seek Him in prayer. **Prayer is an exercise of faith** by which we recognize our need for Him and slow down our normal routines enough to commune with Him.

***Is that how you think about prayer?*** Is prayer a time of FEEDING for you? Do we draw real sustenance from our time in prayer? If prayer is abiding in Jesus, connecting with Him, communing with Him, then **it should nourish us** just as food nourishes our bodies.

**This kind of teaching runs all through the Bible**. God was trying to teach His people that what they needed was HIM. Yes, He gave them water when they needed it and He gave them food in the form of manna and then quail. But those provisions were symbols of His much greater provision of HIMSELF.

“Give us today our daily bread”

1. **Ask** for more of Jesus

“He fed you with manna… that he might make you know that man does not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of the Lord.” Deut. 8:3

***Manna was about DAILY DEPENDENCE on the LORD!*** It was about trusting in Him one day at a time. And it was about much more than BREAD. It was about God’s love for His people, His presence with them and His desire for daily personal relationship. Of course, the nation of Israel did not appreciate it or treat it that way.

In spite of God’s continual faithfulness and generosity to them…

“Give us today our daily bread”

1. **Ask** for more of Jesus

“Their heart was not steadfast toward him; they were not faithful to his covenant.” Psalm 78:37

Instead of loving the Lord their God with all of their hearts; instead of being grateful for all He provided for them, their hearts turned away from Him and they went after other gods. They did not want more of GOD - they only wanted more of His GIFTS.

Oh, doesn’t this challenge us where we live? ***When we pray do we seek the GIVER or the GIFTS?*** The gifts God gives us - food, shelter, clothes, friends, work, health - all that God so generously provides for us - are signs of His great love for us. He gives us all of these things, just like the manna in the wilderness, so we will trust Him, so we will be grateful to Him, but above all, so we will draw closer to Him in relationship. Look back in Luke 11.

“Give us today our daily bread”

1. **Ask** for more of Jesus

“And I tell you, ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you.” Luke 11:9

Remember, this teaching comes immediately after the shorter version of the Lord’s prayer. He talks about **the unfriendly neighbor** and the importance of making the audacious, desperate request - simply because you need the help. And then this is the summary application: ***SO ASK!***

One writer on prayer has said, ***“God answers prayer because His children ask.”*** It really is that simple. God invites us, like His beloved, favored children, to come to Him with everything we need. For brand new Christians we teach them to pray about everything and bring all of their requests to God. And as believers mature in the faith we don’t stop asking for those routine things, our daily needs. But increasingly we learn that the One Thing we really need is God Himself. Which brings us back to Luke 11:13.

“Give us today our daily bread”

1. **Ask** for more of Jesus

“How much more will the heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him!” Luke 11:13

We ask for bread, we ask for water, we ask for clothes and shelter and work and health - and our loving, attentive, all-powerful Father in heaven knows that we need all of those things. But **the ultimate gift** - the gift our Father most loves to give us - is the Holy Spirit - more of HIMSELF!

“Give us today our daily bread.” ***Lord Jesus, give us more of YOU.*** Your body, given for us, is the bread that we need today. Your blood, your cleansing, purifying, life-transforming blood of the covenant is what we most desperately need. And if you have given up your life, if you endured the full punishment for sin for us on the cross - ***how can we not also trust you*** for the day to day little things that we worry about?

As we pray for daily bread we commit to trusting fully in the Lord Jesus; we ask for more of Him because that is what we truly need. And one more commitment:

1. Focus on the **Spiritual** and the **Eternal**

“For this is the will of my Father, that everyone who looks on the Son and believes in him should have eternal life, and I will raise him up on the last day.” John 6:40

**What matters more** - the health of your ***physical body*** that will last, at best, 80-90 years - or the health of your soul that will live on for endless ages of eternity? Only a fool would seek to gain the whole world while forfeiting his soul. It is possible to live a long life in luxury and self indulgence, giving lip service to the Lord Jesus, and stand before Him in judgment only to hear Him say, “Depart from me, I never knew you.” That is the ultimate folly!

Now, I know that we all know better - when we pray, “Give us this day our daily bread,” ***we are not praying for that first million*** before we are thirty. We know better than to pray for a $100,000 bonus - that would be silly. We know better than to ask God to crush our competitors and put them out of business so we can thrive more financially. At least I hope we know better. We are praying for “daily bread,” not a massive financial windfall. Jesus didn’t teach us to pray, “***Give us today a huge inheritance*** from some rich relative we didn’t really know and so won’t be too sad that they are dead but somehow we knew them well enough that they left us most of their money!”

We pray for DAILY BREAD. **What we need for TODAY**. Bread, not even an orange scone or Asiago cheese bagel or one of those huge Cinnabon cinnamon rolls just dripping with frosting.

And we’ve already seen that the real meaning of the prayer is not about food - it’s about JESUS. He is the bread from heaven that we really need and should really be praying for. So the application of that is to focus on prayers on SPIRITUAL and ETERNAL matters, not physical and temporary matters.

If you study, even very briefly, **the prayers of Paul** in the New Testament you very quickly find that what he prays for is ALWAYS spiritual. Not one time in all of his written prayers does Paul pray for the physical health of the believers or for their financial well being. He is certainly concerned for both things because he mentions them in his letters. But he NEVER prays about them in writing. Now, we can safely assume Paul did pray about physical and financial matters verbally and personally. But the Holy Spirit led Him to make an important point - what we all need MOST is no the physical and temporary what we need most is the spiritual and eternal. Just look at one example in Ephesians 1 - that the “Father of glory”...

1. Focus on the **Spiritual** and the **Eternal**

“May give you the Spirit of wisdom and revelation… that you may know what is the hope to which he has called you, what are the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints.” Eph. 1:17-18

Paul prays that the Holy Spirit would open the eyes of the believers in Ephesus to truly KNOW the hope of their eternal inheritance. This is a miraculous work of God we have to pray for - for ourselves and for those we love - that God would help us see and trust in and rejoice in the FUTURE GRACE that awaits us when Jesus Christ is revealed.

This is what Peter meant when he wrote, “**Set your hope FULLY** on the grace to be given you” on that day. As Jesus said in John 6:

1. Focus on the **Spiritual** and the **Eternal**

“Whoever feeds on my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up on the last day.” John 6:54

***Eternal life. The resurrection.*** John 17 tells us that “this is eternal life, **to KNOW the One True God** and the Lord Jesus Christ whom He has sent.” We can already have a foretaste of eternity as we draw close to God in prayer. We get glimpses of the eternal joy we were really made for in moments of worship, in times when God opens His Word to us and shows us more of His glory and goodness.

1. Focus on the **Spiritual** and the **Eternal**

“It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh is no help at all. The words that I have spoken to you are spirit and life.” John 6:63

***How do we access this deep and lasting joy?*** Through the WORDS OF JESUS - the gospel, all of the teachings of Jesus. Our own flesh - our own efforts; our own wisdom - is no help at all. And yet so often, when we don’t pray, when we don’t slow down enough to draw close to the Lord - ***we walk in the flesh*** instead of in the Spirit. And it is no help at all.

**But when we do slow down**; when we do take time to get away and draw close to the Father; when we set aside time to listen to God’s Word; when we feed on the body and blood of the Lord Jesus by remembering His sacrifice for us; when we drink in the water of the Spirit, being refreshed in the cleansing power of the Lord Jesus - when we trust in the Lord Jesus; when we ask boldly for MORE of Jesus; when we focus on the spiritual and eternal instead of the physical and temporary - then we experience the teaching of this passage. “My body is real food. My blood is real drink.”

Oh, Lord Jesus, “Give us today our daily bread.” His body is that bread! His blood is true drink! The Lord Jesus, is the One we need!

https://www.wholesomewords.org/missions/biotaylor3.html

The Lord taught **Hudson Taylor** some of these vital lessons in prayer even before he set out for China. Raised by devout Christian parents, the young Taylor nevertheless strayed from his childhood faith. But one day his mother felt led to pray for 17 year old Hudson, and locked herself in her room, resolving not to leave until she felt the Lord had answered her prayers for the soul of her son. After several hours of wrestling prayer she felt a deep sense of confirmation that the Lord had granted her request.

Two weeks later Hudson came home to share some exciting news with her. Of course, she was not surprised at all for ***she knew the day and hour of his conversion*** from her own time in prayer. It turned out that, two weeks earlier, while Mom was wrestling in prayer, Hudson went looking for something to read just to pass the time. What he found was a gospel tract and he thought to read the story and skip the sermon in it. But the message of that little tract hit home directly - showing him the beauty and glory of the finished work of Christ.

So praying in faith was a part of Hudson Taylor’s life from the first moment of his conversion! And he resolved, while starting to raise support to get to China, **not to ask anyone for financial support**, but to leave that entirely in the hands of God.

This commitment was, of course, immediately tested. A local doctor was responsible for giving Hudson his quarterly salary. And Taylor refused to remind the doctor or even bring it up - making it entirely a matter of prayer. One time, he was down to one coin in his pocket, worth around $5. His ministry led him to the home of a poor family of non-believers. He went to pray for the sick mother who may be dying - and saw the children without food and the family without money. He assured them of God’s faithful love and fatherly provision for all of His people. And even as Hudson was about to start praying for them, “Our Father,” he couldn’t get the words out as he knew he had to give them that final coin.

In doing so, he felt immediate and **immense relief to obey the leading of the Lord** and fulfill his promise to trust in his heavenly Father. The next morning, though he didn’t usually get mail that day, a letter came with a blank sheet of paper folded around a coin, worth around $20. 400% increase from 12 hours of faith! The forgetful doctor delayed another 2 weeks before finally realizing the poor missionary had not received his salary. Still Hudson would not mention it. One night a wealthy patient of the doctor paid him in cash, and the doctor - spontaneously, so he thought - passed a couple of bills over to Taylor as an “advance” on his full salary. Again, Taylor had just run out of money altogether.

On the journey to China, in 1854, their ship was **near the shores of New Guinea** when it was becalmed. The captain grew worried when the vessel was swept into a ***strong ocean current*** and he saw in the direction they were now being drawn, sunken reefs waiting there - for the ship to be broken up on them. Natives on the shore saw the ship in distress and began to light fires, dance and cheer - and the captain knew in this part of New Guinea the natives were cannibals.

The young Hudson Taylor saw the distress on the captain’s face and asked what was happening. The captain explained their imminent danger and in despair said, “There is nothing that can be done. ***Our fate seems to be sealed.***” To this Taylor responded, “There is yet one thing that can be done.” And he grabbed the other three Christians on board, set them to earnest prayer, each alone in their chambers.

A few minutes later Taylor came back on deck and finding the first mate in charge the young missionary **told the sailor to lower the main sail**. The first mate, a godless man, resisted saying, “What good would that do, there is not a breath of wind?” Taylor assured him, “A few of us have just been praying for a breeze and ***we believe the Lord will send it, but the sails must be lowered immediately***!” The first mate grumbled but set to the work.

Sure enough, as the sails came down, a breeze came up - and just in time it was, for they were nearly upon the sunken reefs. Taylor later summed up that event:

"Thus God encouraged me, ere landing on China's shores, to bring every variety of need to Him *in prayer,* and *to expect that* He *would honor the name* of the Lord Jesus and give the help which each emergency required." Hudson Taylor

Taylor resolved early on to **trust** completely in the Lord Jesus. He refused to ask people and only came to **ask his Father** in heaven for his actual daily bread - especially financial provision. And he kept his **focus on the spiritual and eternal** - devoting the next 40 years of his life to reaching lost idolatrous sinners in inland China.

Here is the motto of Hudson Taylor -

"God and God alone is my hope and I need no other." Hudson Taylor

May we learn to pray like Hudson Taylor when we pray “Give us today our daily bread” may it express our conviction that God and God alone is our hope and our only desire!

Let’s pray.