

“Give Us This Day Our Daily Bread”

Exodus 16:1-5; 13-21, Luke 12:13-31; John 6:31-33

In 2023 the average price of a loaf of white bread in Michigan is \$.88. In Canada the average price of a loaf of white bread is \$.84 CD or \$.61 US. The most expensive loaf of white bread in the United States can be found in Hawaii for an average price of \$3.24 and the least expensive found in of all places, New Jersey, for \$.67. You draw your own conclusions on where you want to shop for bread. Perhaps a road trip to Sarnia is in order!

This third petition does not begin by asking God, “Give me bread”, but rather with the words “**Give us**”, not “give me” or “gimme”. In fact, I would ask you to notice a shift that takes place here. “Hallowed be *thy* name...*thy* kingdom come...*thy* will be done” now becomes “Give *us* this day.

First, whenever we pray “**give us**” we are not only praying for ourselves, but for all of Creation, that God might supply all humanity with physical and spiritual bread. Again, the Lord’s Prayer is not a “me-oriented prayer” but a “we-oriented prayer”!

What I have always appreciated about this congregation are the prayers of the people, especially those prayers for different people around the world, the Palestinians and the Israelis, the Ukrainians, and all who suffer. The victims of the Hamas-Israeli War are the children, especially the children in the Gaza Strip. The victims are the children who have no food to sustain them. When we pray, give us this day our daily bread, the us is them!

We can not pray this prayer and not think of them. We can not pray this third petition and have our own hearts broken because of this. If not, how callous are we? How “Christian” are we?

Second, whenever we pray “give us **this day**” it is to remind us that every new day and every new opportunity comes to us courtesy of the Creator. Whenever we pray “give us **this day**” it is to strengthen us against worry and anxiety over things we can not control.

In Luke 12 Jesus tells the parable of a Rich Fool who is always working to accumulate things for the future so much he tears down perfectly good barns before enjoying the time that he has today. He does not appreciate what he has already been given. He works himself to death striving for

MORE. He does not need to put in the overtime, but he does. He does not acknowledge or thank God for what he already has TODAY.

Jesus spins his interpretation on this parable and says:

Can any of you by worrying add a single hour to your span of life? If then you are not able to do so small a thing as that, why do you worry about the rest? Consider the lilies, how they grow: they neither toil nor spin; yet I tell you, even Solomon in all his glory was not clothed like one of these. But if God so clothes the grass of the field, which is alive today and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, how much more will he clothe you—you of little faith! And do not keep striving for what you are to eat and what you are to drink, and do not keep worrying. (Luke 12:25-29, *NRSV*)

And third, “**Give us this day our daily bread**” means we are to focus upon God’s resources for us, not check our rising or falling retirement accounts first thing in the morning on the home page of our internet browsers! God is present now for our daily needs today. We may know who holds the future but we need to be in the moment now!

So what is this daily bread? It is the physical food or fuel we eat to sustain our bodies that are vessels for our souls. It is food composed of flour mixed with water and baked; the Israelites made it in the form of an oblong or round cake, as thick as one's thumb, and as large as a plate or platter.

It can also refer to any food. Jesus calls himself “the Divine Word come from heaven”. He, who containing in himself the source of heavenly life, supplies nourishment to souls that they may attain to life eternal.

Mindful connection with him is our minimum daily requirement. We can not store it up but need to seek it, to connect with Christ each and every new day. There was a good reason why the manna that fell in the wilderness for the people of Israel was only “good for a day”. “Day old manna” was no good. It was not like the “day old bread” that we get on sale in the bakery.

Manna was a grain-like substance, considered to be food from heaven, which sustained the Israelites in the wilderness and foreshadowed Christ, the true Bread from heaven. The small round grains or flakes, which appeared around the Israelites’ camp each morning with the dew, were

ground and baked into cakes or boiled (Ex. 16:13-36). Their name may have come from the question the Israelites asked when they first saw them: "What is it (*mahnah*)?"

God caused manna to appear at the right time and place to meet His people's needs." However, because of their fear and greed, the people hoarded the manna, their "daily bread", against God's command:

But they did not listen to Moses; some left part of it until morning, and it bred worms and became foul. And Moses was angry with them. Morning by morning they gathered it, as much as each needed; but when the sun grew hot, it melted. (Exodus 16:20-21, NRSV)

The lesson for us to ask God to "**give us this day**" is that whenever we allow ourselves to be driven by our fears of the future beyond today instead of trusting God for the strength we need "this day", things begin to stink!

Give us the manna for today which will permit us to continue our journey to the Promised Land! Give us for this coming day strength to meet the challenges of the known events in our schedule--an important decision to be made, a person to be met, all the things I know that I will be doing "this day."

In the New Testament when Jesus says "I am the bread of life" he is identifying himself in a spiritual way as the very manna that the children of Israel ate in the wilderness:

Our ancestors ate the manna in the wilderness; as it is written, 'He gave them bread from heaven to eat.' Then Jesus said to them, "Very truly, I tell you, it was not Moses who gave you the bread from heaven, but it is my Father who gives you the true bread from heaven. For the bread of God is that which comes down from heaven and gives life to the world. (John 6:31-33, NRSV)

Jesus is "the bread that gives life." When we ask God for Christ's presence with us, who is "our daily bread," we are saying that we trust God to give us the "daily bread," a daily portion of Christ's grace to face all the unexpected things which can happen in life: happiness or misfortune, sickness or health, length or brevity of days on earth. Give us this day our daily bread.