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Scripture: Matthew 6:11

Subject: Part - 36, The Disciples Prayer - Part 3: Our Daily Bread

Give us this day our daily bread

Standing in the local supermarket looking at the shelves of different types of bread, it's hard to imagine in the natural sense, the relevance of this verse for today. Yet stating our need for God's provision is very relevant, even for our daily bread. We may not pray with the same fervency, as say, when we had more need than money. But none-the-less, we realise how blessed we are to have both the means and the available provision, which gives us reason to praise the Lord. These ingredients for prayer that the disciples were taught went beyond them, to all of God's people everywhere, beyond the culture and race barriers as well as time. Despite the simplicity of the words, Jesus wants to teach us something of great value as His disciples that have been called out from the world.

Christ presents to us the proper way to pray, the proper pattern for praying. We noted that this prayer has two sections: the first one dealing with God, and the second one dealing with man. Jesus puts our requests for things in its proper order. Jesus teaches us to acknowledge God as our heavenly Father, to honour God's name, and to submit to God's will, before praying for our daily bread which is one of the elements of praying. This doesn't assume that we have or don't have bread, but it's here in this verse so let's deal with it.

Let's first look at this word '**bread**' in the verse. Throughout the church age "bread" has been understood in a variety of ways; such as; the bread broken at the Lord's supper (I Corinthians 11:23-26). The spiritual bread of God's Word (Matthew 4:4). Jesus proclaiming Himself to be the "bread of life" (John 6:35), and the bread of the Messiah's heavenly victory banquet (Luke 14:15).

As wonderful as these are, that is not exactly what is being taught here.

Bread, in this verse, represents man's physical basic needs, encompassing food, clothing, and shelter. It is therefore, a prayer for man's physical needs to be fulfilled. Isn't it both amazing and thrilling, a complete wonder to know that God who is Divine and Holy, God of space and beyond time, God who is the creator of all the universe, and the sustainer of all things, care's for our physical needs. God is concerned that we have something to eat, something to wear and even a place to rest. God is very concerned not just about our spiritual lives but also about our physical needs in our lives. Martin Luther saw 'bread' in this verse as

“everything necessary for the perseverance of this life is bread, including food, a healthy body, good weather, everything.”

He saw all of the physical elements of life, the necessities. This part of the prayer is really a petition, which is a request, an appeal. It is also an affirmation, that is a confirmation or a declaration by those who are blessed to have provision and are mindful of the blessing that comes from the Lord. It is a very precious thing to know that our God cares about our physical needs.

We must consider the source from which these blessings come. *Does the world give thought or thanks to God for these blessings?* They certainly do not. Yet the danger is that we can be religiously flippant and give no real thought as to how blessed we really are. When all our needs are met and all is going well in our lives, we are inclined to think we are carrying our own load. We earn our own money, buy our own food and clothes, pay for our own houses. Yet even the hardest-working person owes all that he earns to God's provision as we see in Deuteronomy 8:18, which says - :

“And you shall remember the LORD your God, for it is He who gives you power to get wealth, that He may establish His covenant which He swore to your fathers, as it is this day.

Our life, breath, health, possessions, talents, and opportunities all originate from resources that God has created and made available to man. We read about this in the Book of Acts, turn to Acts 17 verses 24 to 28 -

God, who made the world and everything in it, since He is Lord of heaven and earth, does not dwell in temples made with hands. ²⁵ Nor is He worshiped with men's hands, as though He needed anything, since He gives to all life, breath, and all things. ²⁶ And He has made from one blood every nation of men to dwell on all the face of the earth, and has determined their pre-appointed times and the boundaries of their dwellings, ²⁷ so that they should seek the Lord, in the hope that they might grope for Him and find Him, though He is not far from each one of us; ²⁸ for in Him we live and move and have our being, as also some of your own poets have said, 'For we are also His offspring.'

God provided for man even before He created man. Man was God's final creation and the crown of His creation, and after He made and blessed Adam and Eve He said in Genesis 1:29, *"Behold, I have given you every plant yielding seed that is on the surface of all the earth, and every tree which has fruit yielding seed; it shall be food for you"*.

Since that time God has continued to provide an abundance of food for mankind, in almost unlimited variety. Even in times of great disasters the world has more than enough to share with those in need. Thankfully there is still the generosity of mankind who wants to share and show compassion for our fellow man.

Yet Paul tells us in 1 Timothy Ch 4 verses 1 and 3 to 5 that *"the Spirit explicitly says that in later times some will fall away from the faith, . . . and advocate abstaining from foods, which God has created to be gratefully shared in by those who believe and know the truth. For everything created by God is good, and nothing is to be rejected, if it is received with gratitude; for it is sanctified by means of the word of God and prayer"*.

The Word of God sanctifies the bread by way of creation, and we sanctify it when we receive it with grateful prayer. Every physical thing we have ultimately comes from God's provision. It is therefore the sin of indifference and ingratitude not to daily recognize His gifts in thankful prayer. There is a little poem that reminds us of this fact and it goes like this -

***Back of the loaf is the snowy flour, And back of the flour is the mill,
And back of the mill is the sun and the shower
And the wheat, and the Fathers will.***

The first word of this verse is supplication. We find that in the word *'give'*. That is the heart of the petition, because it recognises need. JI Packer says,

“The prayer of a Christian is not an attempt to force God’s hand, but it is a humble acknowledgment of helplessness and dependence.”

Even though God may already have provided all our physical needs, we ask Him for it in recognition of His past and present provision as well as in trust for His future provision. The only thing that could make Jesus’ instruction and our petitions valid is the promise of God. Remember it is all of grace, the grace of God. We don’t receive because we earned it, or deserve it, nor does God own us anything, but in His grace, He bestows it.

We could not expect God to give what He has not promised. We can pray confidently because God has promised abundantly. David counsels us in Psalm 37 verses 3 and 4 - ***“Trust in the Lord, and do good; Dwell in the land, and feed on His faithfulness. Delight yourself also in the Lord, And He shall give you the desires of your heart.”***

Stay in Psalm 37 and move down to verses 10 and 11 - it says:

For yet a little while and the wicked shall be no more; Indeed, you will look carefully for his place, But it shall be no more. But the meek shall inherit the earth, And shall delight themselves in the abundance of peace.

God does not bind Himself to meet the physical needs of everyone, but only of those who trust in Him. In Psalm 37 David is speaking to believers who ***“trust in the Lord”*** (v. 3), those who ***“delight in the Lord”*** (v. 4), all who ***“commit their way to the Lord”*** (v. 5), and who ***“rest in the Lord and wait patiently for Him”*** (v. 7), ***“cease from anger”*** and ***“do not fret”*** (v. 8). He says in verse 25 - ***“I have been young, and now I am old; yet I have not seen the righteous forsaken, or his descendants begging bread”*** .

After the supplication - *'Give'* in this verse, the next word we come across is the seekers, which of course is the ***“us”*** in this prayer. Those who belong to Him. Speaking to believers, Paul wrote in 2 Corinthians 9:10 and 11, ***“Now He who supplies seed to the sower and bread for food, will supply and multiply your seed for sowing and increase the harvest of your righteousness; you will be enriched in everything for all liberality, which through us is producing thanksgiving to God”***

In Luke 18 verses 29 and 30, it records Jesus saying, *"Truly I say to you, there is no one who has left house or wife or brothers or parents or children, for the sake of the kingdom of God, who shall not receive many times as much at this time and in the age to come, eternal life"*

God looks after His own in the most amazing ways, and His provision is wonderful. There are times when we have to stand back and acknowledge the miracles of God. Every day that we open our eyes on this earth, it is a gift from God and all His provision is His grace manifested to us. God always has a way. Elijah may have been exiled, but God used the birds to feed him in that lonely place. The poor planning and lack of money of the disciples on the hillsides of Galilee did not stop Jesus from feeding the multitudes. God always has a way.

Many of us can testify with the psalmist in Psalm 34:6 - *"This poor man called, and the Lord heard him"*

We have been there, and God has wonderfully supplied our needs. Sadly, world hunger comes from human greed, ignorance and control. It really is a spiritual problem when we get right down to it.

We see this when we look around at other religions and how they approach man's basic physical needs. For example - to the Hindu, man's soul is continually being reincarnated, as either animal or human depending on his previous life's sins until he completes enlightenment by ways of good deeds and until he reaches perfection and then he can pass on to a state of blessing. They see poverty, disease, and starvation as acts of divine punishment for the person involved. It is man's own fault that he finds himself where he is and he must do penance in order to be born into a higher form. To help a person in poverty or sickness is to interfere with his karma and therefore do him spiritual harm.

Due to this belief, all animals are considered to be incarnations either of men or deities. Cows are held to be especially sacred because they are incarnated deities, of which Hinduism has some 330 million. Cows not only are not to be eaten but add to the food problem by consuming 20% of India's total food supply. Even rats and mice, which eat 15% of the food supply, are not killed because they might be one's reincarnated relatives.

Just as paganism is the great plague of India, Africa, and many other parts of the world, Christianity has been the blessing of Western Society. Though never fully Christian in any biblical sense, none-the-less, they have been immeasurably blessed because of strong Christian influence. The great concerns for human rights, care for the poor, orphanages, hospitals, prison reform, racial and slave reform, education and a host of other concerns did not come from paganism or humanism but from biblical Christianity.

On the other hand, the current degraded view of human life is reflected in the low view of the family. The growing legal and social approval of abortion, infanticide, and euthanasia are the intergrating legacy of humanism and practical atheism. This is life without God. It is on the physical level, and that's all it is. We as children of the Most High, true and living God have so much to be grateful for because Jesus tells us - ***“But your Father knows you have need of these things.”*** God, as our Father knows our need and as our Father, He will supply all our physical needs.

Without a proper view of God, there cannot be a proper view of man. Those who have a right view of God and also a right relationship to Him through Jesus Christ are promised the provision of their heavenly Father. ***“For this reason,”*** Jesus says, ***“I say to you, do not be anxious for your life, as to what you shall eat, or what you shall drink; nor for your body, as to what you shall put on. Is not life more than food, and the body than clothing? ... For all these things the Gentiles eagerly seek; for your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things. But seek first His kingdom and His righteousness; and all these things shall be added to you”*** (Matthew 6:25, 32-33).

God has sometimes provided for His children through miraculous means but His primary way of provision is through work, for which He has given life, energy, resources, and opportunity. His primary way to care for those who cannot work is through the generosity of those who are able to work. Whether he does so directly or indirectly, God is always the source of our physical well-being. He makes the earth to produce what we need, and He gives us the ability to procure it.

After supplication and the seeker, the next word in verse 11, is the schedule in the word ***‘daily’***. The schedule of God's provision for His children is daily. The meaning here is simply day-by-day God supplies us our needs. We are to rely on the Lord one day at a time.

He may give us vision for work that He calls us to do in the future, but His provision for our needs is daily not weekly, monthly, yearly or even a 5 year plan. It's amazing how many Christians trust God for eternal salvation but not for His daily provision, not for our needs to be met. *Why?* Because often we are caught up with our plans and not God's purpose. We can be practically flippant, thinking we are certain of what each day brings but Proverbs 27:1 tells ***"Do not boast about tomorrow, For you do not know what a day may bring forth."*** We can be so presumptuous that just because yesterday was o.k. we can automatically think so too will today or tomorrow be. But only God knows what each day holds, and therefore we can only be truly dependent on the Lord for each day, and what we have each day, regardless of how good or how bad our circumstances are, God and God alone will and does meet our needs day after day after day. To accept the Lord's provision for the present day, without concern for our needs or welfare tomorrow, is a testimony of our contentment in His goodness and faithfulness. It is also a testimony of our trust in God.

Now when we stand back from this verse, have you noticed that the verse says, ***"Give us this day our daily bread"***? Not "Give me", which sounds very selfish and poverty stricken. ***"Give us"*** has the ring of comradeship and relationship. This ***"us"*** petition shows that what we ask for ourselves is exactly what we desire for all members of God's family. There's something special about the Lord's people gathering around tables. It has been true in every generation since creation.

On that first Resurrection Sunday, Jesus walked with two people to Emmaus. Though they did not recognize Him, they invited Him to spend the night in their home and to eat with them. Luke described it: ***"When he was at the table with them, he took bread, gave thanks, broke it and began to give it to them. Then their eyes were opened and they recognized him"*** (Luke 24:30-31). Jesus was revealed in breaking bread together. His presence was felt. When we meet around a meal where Jesus is present, we are always enriched, and we often discover wonderful new perspectives about God and ourselves.

In the first report by Luke of the Early Church, the Christians ***"devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts praising God and enjoying the favour of all the people"*** (Acts 2:42, 46-47). No meal tastes as good as one eaten in fellowship with the people of God.

The Lord's Prayer shows us that it is important to express our gratitude to God not only for what He gives to us but also what He gives to our brothers and sisters. His giving is not simply to me and for me alone but that I may share with those in need. Today in the world one of its features is greed, holding on tight to everything. Perhaps it's because they have no other security. The generosity of God's people has helped countless others who are not even believers, which we have alluded to previously. It's our daily bread which teaches us to daily depend upon the Lord. Not tomorrow but just for today.

We cannot pray properly in regard to our own situations until God is given His proper place but also note that when we get to this part of prayer, in relation to man, it doesn't set God aside. In the first half of this prayer God is primarily exalted and in the second half He is also exalted, because we can only have these things, and do these things by His power and through His grace. This is the first petition that rises from the heart of a child of God to the Father and it is a petition regarding physical need. There's nothing wrong with seeking God in regard to this, as long as the motive and attitude is that through it, His name be hallowed and through it, His kingdom come and through it, His will be done. He is the one who desires to meet our physical needs. And of course we know from James 1:17, *"That every good and perfect gift cometh down from above, from the Father of lights, in whom there is no variableness, neither shadow of turning."*

God is concerned with giving His people the very basics of life, just as any earthly father would be to his own. So when we pray, *"Give us this day our daily bread,"* what are we saying, what are the implications? We are trusting God as the source to supply all the physical needs of our lives and we are affirming that because we are His children, because we are walking in righteousness, in obedience and in willing submission to His will, we know that He will take care of all those things. We can trust Him, and so, we lift up our hearts in gratitude while setting our affections on things above. Prayer focuses on God as the One who provides. Jehovah Jireh - God my Provider. It acknowledges that He is the source of all our physical needs, and it teaches us to live one day at a time in the confidence that He will meet these needs. What a great, great, petition this is.

Amen