

# Give us today our daily bread

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Date: 29 January 2018

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[0:00] In your Bibles, we'll be looking at various passages, but if you have it open around Matthew 6 and 7, that would be useful. Now, I guess most Christians are aware of the time when Jesus went into the desert for 40 days, and he was tempted by Satan to change stones into bread.

And Jesus' reply, so I guess most of us know this, Jesus answered, it is written, man does not live on bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God.

So I guess most of us are familiar with that, but how many of us have bothered to go and look up the passage that Jesus was actually quoting from? And if you do, you find it's quite interesting.

He's quoting, in fact, Moses from Deuteronomy chapter 8, and it has an exodus. Reference, because this is what Moses actually said.

The Lord humbled you, causing you to hunger, and then feeding you with manna, which neither you nor your fathers had known, to teach you that man does not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of the Lord.

[1:28] The manna that they had in the desert was actually meant to teach them that man does not live by bread alone. It provided the bread they needed in the desert, and yet it was there to teach them that man does not live by bread alone.

So we've been looking into the Lord's Prayer, and one thing I'm sure that's struck us as we've been doing that is the conciseness of it, the brevity of it.

Jesus has said, hadn't he, when you pray, do not keep on babbling like the pagans, for they think they will be heard because of their many words.

But as Jesus pointed out, that God knows what we want before we ask him. So what matters in prayer isn't the quantity, if you like, but the quality. And we have this central petition.

Give us today our daily bread. It's almost shockingly brief, isn't it? There seems to be no qualification, no explanation.

[2:41] Just these few terse words. In that brevity perhaps lies the possibility of misuse.

Of actually not understanding what it is we're really praying. So I think we need to look at this. So if we're to make this petition as Jesus intended, we need to understand it in the context of the rest of the prayer, and in that body of Jesus' teaching, which we call the Sermon on the Mount, because of course it's an integral part of the Sermon on the Mount.

And in the Sermon on the Mount, and also in John 6, as you may be aware, Jesus has an awful lot to say about bread, in fact. So it's worth thinking about.

And we notice also, what about the immediate context? Well, the petition's place in the prayer is introduced by the second part of chapter 6, verse 10. Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Last week, Jerome was reminding us that the kingdom of heaven is both to come and present now. As Chris was reminding us this morning, redemption is already accomplished, but is also to come.

[3:59] And the prayer refers both to the future and the present. And so verse 10, in a sense, is the link.

It's the link between heaven and earth, and it's the link between future and present. And then verse 11, obviously, give us today our daily bread, is located in the here and now.

And yet, as I think we'll see as we look at it, it remains a kingdom petition. The whole of the Lord's Prayer, really the whole of Matthew's Gospel, is about the kingdom, and the coming kingdom, and the kingdom now.

And so it remains a petition relevant to the kingdom. So, what I'd like to do this evening, quite simply really, is just pull this petition apart into its three components, and then put them back together again.

So, first of all, we'll look at give us, and then we'll look at the significance of the word today. And then we'll ask what it is we're actually praying for.

[5:13] What is our daily bread, anyway? What are we asking God to do? When are we asking Him to do it? And what are we asking for?

The action, the time, and the object. So let's start by looking at give us. The word give, in English, can have a variety of shades of meaning.

And that does actually seem to be true of the Greek word, which is *didomai*, which it translates. So we need to be sure, we understand exactly what shade of meaning is meant, by give us, here.

Because a robber might say, give me your money and credit cards, or I'll knife you. He doesn't really mean give, in any usual sense of the word, does he?

But we do use the word that way. It means, hand over, or I'll shoot you, your money or your life. And yet surely, this is the very opposite of what is meant here.

[6:20] It is not a demand. Why do we know that? Well, because Jesus has told us, in verse 8, that we should not be like the pagans, because, the father knows what you need, before you ask him.

He's there, ready to give. He's not, we're not, forcing him to give, as some, seems to be the case, perhaps, with some pagan rituals, that if you know, if you press the right buttons, then, the, God might shell out.

But that's not what we're asking for here. The father knows, before we ask him, what we need. So, it's not a mugger's license. It's not a high women's, cry, you know, your money or your life.

That's not what is meant here, by give. But, another meaning of give, is, give me, because I can't be bothered, to, to work for it.

So, is this, perhaps, the lazy request, of a scrounger? Is it a sluggard's charter? Is it the attitude, of one, who cannot be bothered, with the labor, of growing food, but hopes instead, that God will just, drop it into his lap?

[7:43] Now, actually, if you briefly, read the sermon, on the mount, I suppose, you might give that impression, get that impression. But, closer inspection, shows this is not, what Jesus means. This isn't a, sluggard's charter.

On the contrary, it's all about, striving and desiring, an effort. Verse, Matthew 5, 16 says, blessed are those, who hunger, and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled.

The verbs in the sermon, are all active. Ask. Seek. and you will find, knock, and it will be opened. Build on the rock. Enter, by the narrow gate, climb, the narrow path, the steep path.

This is not, a recipe for inactivity, this give at all. Paul. And, just in case, you think, I'm misinterpreting that, let me remind you, of some words of Paul.

[8:56] In one, in two Thessalonians, even when we were with you, we gave you this rule, if a man will not work, he shall not eat. We hear that some among you are idle, they're not busy, they're busy bodies.

Such people, we command and urge, in the Lord Jesus Christ, to settle down, and earn the bread they eat. And, one reason for doing that, is so we might have something to share, with those, in need.

In Proverbs, we read, the sluggard craves, and gets nothing. It's the desires, of the diligent, who are, fully satisfied. A sluggard, does not plow in season, so in harvest time, he looks, but finds nothing.

Jesus is not recommending, inactivity here. quite the opposite. He's, recommending that we ask, and seek, and knock, and build on his words.

And as I say, neither is he, suggesting that we sit, and wait for our food, to drop in our lap. Of course not. So if this word, is neither a mugger's license, or a sluggard's charter, what does it mean?

[10:22] And actually, it's quite interesting, to look at Deuteronomy, chapter 26, and the verses there, verses, we could read the whole thing, from 9, chapter 26, verse 9, through to 15, but, I won't quite read, all

of it.

One reason, I couldn't get it, all on the slide. I wanted to, emphasize, we could do the sort of, word count, that Phil does sometimes, just see how many times, the word give, is used here, except I've done it for you, because I've, put it on the slide in red.

Deuteronomy 26, 9 to 11, and then verse 15. The Lord brought us to this place, and gave us this land, a land flowing with milk and honey, and now I bring the first fruits of the soil, that you, O Lord, have given me.

Place the basket before the Lord your God, and bow down before him, and you and the Levites, and the aliens among you, shall rejoice, in all the good things, the Lord your God has given to you, and your household.

Look down from heaven, your holy dwelling place, and bless your people Israel, and the land you have given us, as you promised on oath to our forefathers, a land flowing with milk and honey.

[11:38] Notice this passage is all about giving. The people are giving, if you like, bringing the first fruits, of the harvest to God.

After all, they've grown it themselves, didn't fall into their lap. And yet, they're bringing it to God, acknowledging, that, it is because the Lord has, brought them there.

It is the Lord who, waters the seed, and makes it grow. It is even the Lord, who gives them the health, that they need to, dig the ground, and sow the seed, and produce the crop.

As the old Church of England liturgy says, when they have a collection, all things come from you, O Lord, and the responses, and of thy own have we given thee.

And that's very biblical, isn't it? Where you bring, the first fruit of the crop, or our money, or whatever it is we bring, to the Lord's service, that reminds us, we're only giving him back, what he's given us, in the first place.

[12:49] So this passage, is all about giving. So what are we to make, of this word, give? When we say, give us this day, our daily bread, we're acknowledging, aren't we, that all that we have, and that includes, the labor that produced, the crop in the first place, comes from God.

When we say grace, at the beginning of a meal, we, thank the Lord, for giving it, the food, don't we? That's the first thing we do, we may say thankful, thank you to those, who produced it, but in fact, probably we should, but, we should thank the Lord, for those who produced it.

Most of the cooking, in my house, is done by my wife, who many of you know, is an extremely good cook. And, but, and sometimes, I hope, probably not nearly enough, but I do sometimes, compliment her, on cooking, and thanking her, for doing it, probably not nearly as much, as I should do.

But both of us pray, we thank the Lord, for the food, that is, has been supplied. I've just sat there, and it has in a sense, landed on my plate, that Brenda has, worked at it, and produced it.

And we both, thank the Lord, for that. There's a psalm, written by, wise Solomon, which says, unless the Lord, builds the house, it's built as labor in vain.

[14:16] Unless the Lord, watches over the city, the watchmen, stand guard in vain. Solomon is not suggesting, that the bricklayers, don't do their stuff, the carpenters, don't get their sores out, of course not.

What he's saying, is that in fact, the skills, of the bricklayer, and the carpenter, the very fact, that they have, energy and food, and can actually work, come from the Lord.

And in fact, if that were not the case, then the house, would never get built. The watchmen, could guard the city. If the Lord, is not watching, over the city, then, they're, wasting their time, they stand guard in vain.

And that's why I read, some of chapter 7, because it says there, if you then, though you are evil, know how to give good gifts, to your children, how much more, will your father in heaven, give good gifts, to those who ask him?

So, what is this give, that we're saying, give us? It's not the demand, of a mugger, but we might think of it, perhaps as a child, who knows where his dinner, comes from, but who wants to know, if it's dinner time, who comes in from school, or from play, and says, is dinner ready yet?

[15:38] Remembering, just acknowledging, that the, dinner has been provided, by his parents. And so, when we make this petition, give us, we're acknowledging, that without God's blessing, all our own labour, is

useless.

So, what about this word, today? And it's emphasised, isn't it? Give us today, our daily bread. And, that is the case, in the Greek as well.

Different words, today and daily, today, but, they both mean, well, the translation is, pretty well exactly, what it says. What about this word, today?

Well, firstly, as you've already noticed, it embeds the prayer, in the here and now, doesn't it? This is not some, future expectation, or some future aspiration.

It is a prayer, for the satisfaction, of our current need. it's, living in the kingdom, now, acknowledging, that, the full, power of the kingdom, has not yet come, but, acknowledging, that we live, nonetheless, in the kingdom, now.

[17:00] We may keep, our treasure in heaven, but we also need, to eat now. But, the word, today, actually does much more, than just embedding it, in the present.

It actually restricts, the scope of the prayer, doesn't it? Have you ever thought that? We ask for our daily bread, today. We don't ask for, this week, or this month, or this year.

Neither, for that matter, do we ask for this hour. Give us this hour, our hourly bread. It's a day.

What's a day? One work period. It's the, a period of activity, between two sleeps.

If we're on the march, it's the distance, between two campsites. And, what we are praying for, is that, we will have, what we need, today.

Now, why is that? Why does Jesus tell us, to focus on today, here? We've already noticed, that prudence, and diligence, are good things.

[18:16] Scripture, certainly encourages, both of those things, for us to be prudent, and to be diligent. And, it's right, to plan ahead, to sow the seed, in due time, in the expectation, that, the seed, at the right time, will get a harvest.

So, it's not, prudence, or diligence, that Jesus is, warning against. What it is, well, we saw it, didn't we, in that passage, at the end of chapter 6, it's worry.

Prudence, and diligence, are good, but worry, is bad. And, that's why, we have all these, Exodus references, and pilgrim references. You can't, carry enough food, to cross the desert, and particularly, you can't, if it's going to, take you 40 years, to do it.

There has to be, provision, in the desert, for the, pilgrim march, today. A pilgrim, if you like, to put it that way, travels light.

And so, that's why, Jesus says so much, about worry, in, in verses 25, to 34. Just, flick through it, with me, just have it open, there, and have a look at it.

[19:34] What does he say? First of all, those who worry, too much about, food and clothing, have the wrong priorities. Chapter 6, 25. They're not focused, on the kingdom.

they lack, faith. faith. Chapter 6, verse 30. They've forgotten, that the Father knows, we need these things.

Chapter 6, verse 32. In fact, they lack, a kingdom perspective, verse 33. And so, in fact, they belie, the very prayer, of chapter 6, verse 10.

And so, what is Jesus' conclusion to this? Therefore, do not worry, about tomorrow, for tomorrow, will worry, about itself. Each day, has enough trouble, of its own.

The petition, reminds us, not to worry, about the future, to give us today, our daily bread. It's not a, a plea, for inactivity. It's not a plea, for, lack of planning, or lack of diligence.

[20:45] It's, a plea, to focus, on the kingdom perspective. A plea, to remember, that God knows, that we need these things.

And that, if we're going around, scratching for them. If we're, constantly, inact, constantly, seeking, and searching, and worrying, about things.

Then, that will distract us, from the, work of the kingdom. It's one of the, things in the, parable of the, sorrow, isn't it? The, the, weeds, come up, and choke us.

Choke the word. And so, this, is a petition, not to worry, about the future, in that sense, but to give us today, our daily bread.

What we need for today, what we need for this march, today, what we need for today's project, what we need for, today's activity. We need to travel light.

[21:53] Now, let's think about, what it is we're actually, praying for anyway. Seems very simple, doesn't it? Our daily bread. Slice of white toast, maybe, or a good healthy, whole meal loaf.

Perhaps you, like a bit of brioche. Perhaps you have, French tastes. But of course, it's actually much, something much more, significant than that.

Bread here, has an almost mythic, significance. Remember, there were no potatoes, in the ancient Middle East. Bread was the, carbohydrate staple.

It's what, sustained life. And for the Jews, particularly, bread had many resonances, didn't it? Resonances, didn't it? Particularly evoking the Exodus.

So there was, we already noted, the bread that was made, from manna, in the wilderness, that they could only gather, enough for that day. There was the unleavened bread, bread, which marked the Passover, and escape from Egypt.

[23:03] And of course, the point of unleavened bread, is that you can't sit around, waiting for it to rise. It has to be, you have to travel light. You have to carry it with you.

And then there was the show bread, wasn't there? The loaves that were put, in front of the lampstand, you can read about it, in Numbers, I think it's chapter 6, and various other places, where the, there was one loaf, for each tribe, and they were placed, before the lampstands, and the lampstand, on the table of show bread, and the lamps, shone on the table, on the bread.

And that reminded them, the loaves there, represented the life, of the people, themselves, each tribe, and the lampstand, represented, God shining his blessing, on the peoples.

So bread, had all sorts of, resonances, from the, for the Jews. But it also, actually, has a mythic significance, for us as well, doesn't it?

Does that which, sustains life, we still use it that way. If you're a fan, of Tolkien's, Lord of the Rings, you know that when, Frodo and Sam, are struggling, through Mordor, what keeps them alive, is the elven way bread.

[24:25] The, thing that can sustain, life, in a hostile environment. Well that's just fiction, of course, but it, fiction that relates, to a, a real truth.

That it is bread, which sustains life, in difficult circumstances. And there's even a contrast, isn't there?

In the promised land, there's milk and honey. But in the wilderness, there's bread. Bread made, from the manna. Bread is basic.

Bread is what, will keep you alive, under stress. And remember, what happened to the Israelites, when they ate quails, in the desert. Well they got food poisoning, made them ill.

But the manna, sustained life. So bread, here stands for, what is necessary, for life. Of course, we do, like a bit of luxury, as well, don't we?

[25:26] We fancy, the milk and honey, as well. But, sometimes indeed, God does provide that. Indeed, the promised land, was described, as a land, flowing with milk and honey.

But, if we forget, it comes from him, it makes us, fat and self-centered, doesn't it? Luxury is dangerous.

Let me remind you, of that parable, that Jesus told. This is in Luke, chapter 12. Jesus told them, this parable.

The ground of a certain, rich man, produced a good crop. He thought to himself, what shall I do? I have no place, to store my crops. Then he said, this is what I'll do.

I'll tear down my barns, and build bigger ones. And there I will store, all my grain, and my goods. And I'll say to myself, you have plenty of good things, laid up for many years.

[26:23] Take life easy, eat, drink, and be merry. But God said to him, you fool, this very night, your life will be demanded from you. Then who will get, what you prepared for yourself?

This is how it will be, with anyone who stores up, things for himself, but is not rich, towards God. It's not, the luxury itself, the bountiful crop, that was this, rich farmer's problem.

It wasn't even really, sticking the stuff in barns, and saying, I've mourned enough to eat. It was forgetting, that this, came from the Lord.

And that's what happens, with luxury too much, isn't it? We remember, that bread sustains life, and that comes from the, from the Lord. when we have milk, and honey, and luxuries, then we tend to forget that, and think, it's by our own efforts, we've earned them, and that we've, you know, we deserve them, and that we've, and that we've, you know, we need more, and more of them, and they're never satisfied.

Sometimes, God does give us, more than just bread, in a sense, does give us, things more than that. but, it's very dangerous, when he does, we need to be very careful.

[27:48] We need to remember, to thank him, for them. And, remember that there are those, who do not have these, extras. You know, how many of us actually, just live on bread?

We don't, probably nobody here. And yet, there are those, who would be, glad of just a, a slice of bread, to keep them alive, for the day. Do we remember, that all these things, come from God, and, whether we have much, or little, it is the Lord, who sent them, and the Lord, who sustains life.

And we must, to make sure, we're not, the one who stores up, things for himself, but is not rich, towards God. That was the, problem, that that rich farmer had, not that he had, had a successful crop, but that he, attributed it to himself, and was not rich, towards God.

So what are we actually, praying for, when we pray, for our daily bread? I think, what we need to think of it, is standing, for that which, sustains life.

And certainly, that includes, the necessities, of this life. We need food, don't we? We need clothing, we need shelter, and we need family.

[29:10] If you look at, Matthew 6, 33, or Matthew 7, verse 9, it is our families, that provide the food, and shelter, often that we need. So it does, I'm sure, refer to that, which we need to live, today.

But actually, I think we need to make it, broader than that. I'm not saying, it doesn't include that, I'm sure it does. But we need also, to remember, that, we do not live, by bread alone, but by every word, that comes from, the mouth of God.

We need to remember, those words, which we read, in chapter 6, verse 25. Therefore, I tell you, do not worry, about your life, what you will eat, or drink, or about your body, what you will wear. And what's the reason, why we shouldn't do that?

Well, Jesus tells us. He says, is not life, more important, than food? And the body, more important, than clothes? Man does not live, on bread alone.

Notice that he doesn't, notice the word, is there, alone is there. Jesus is not denying, that we need bread. But, what he's saying, is that there's something, even more important, to sustain life, than, a loaf of bread.

[30:32] Because life, itself, comes from God, and we need more, to sustain life, than just grain. And so, Jesus, taught, this, do not work, for food, that spoils, but for food, that endures, to eternal life, which the son of man, will give you.

On him, the father, has placed his seal, of approval. That's John 6, 27. And, a bit later in John, he says this, I, Jesus declared, I am the bread of life, he who comes to me, will never go hungry, and he who believes in me, will never be thirsty.

Jesus says, that, the real bread of life, what we really need, is the Lord himself. So, when we pray, for our daily bread, I'm sure, that we are, praying, for our food, tomorrow, and our shelter, and our families, because the Lord, Father does indeed, know that we need, these things.

But more than that, we're praying, that he will give us, the bread of life, the son. And again, today, remember, not, 30 years ago, or five years ago, whenever it was, we first, turned to him.

But give us today, our daily bread. we need our portion, of the Lord Jesus, today, and we'll need another one, tomorrow, and the day after that.

[32:04] So, let's put it together then. Let's pray this prayer. Give us today, our daily bread. Let's be like the child, who comes in, from play, and says, is it dinner time?

Mom, Dad, I'm really hungry. Let's, go to the Lord, hungering, and thirsting, as he tells us to, but hungering, and thirsting, after righteousness, is what he, tells us really, to hunger, and thirst for. And let's travel, pilgrim style. Let's travel light. Not, carrying too much with us, that will weigh us down.

And on the other hand, if the Lord, does give us, things of this world, which sometimes he does, we should be, thankful to him. It's been said, that the Christian life, is not ascetic.

It is right, to rejoice in the gifts, that God gives us. And often he does give us, the milk and honey, as well as the bread. But, we need, not to think, we provided those ourselves.

[33:11] We need to hold them lightly. Being able to put them down, if necessary, if they start, weighing us down. God doesn't tell everyone, to put aside riches, but he did, to that young man, who came to him, didn't he?

And said, sell all that you have. Why? Not because, there was anything wrong, actually, with him being rich. But because, it was weighing him down. It was blinding him, to his need.

It was, making him think, he trusted in that, rather than, on the Lord, who gives life. So let's learn, to travel light. These words, have an enormous scope.

We're not praying, them as a thief, demanding something, we're not entitled to. We're not praying, as a scrounger, hoping to avoid effort. I said, we come as a child, to his parents, asking, is dinner ready yet?

Because the child knows, that the parents know, that he needs dinner. And he knows, indeed, that the parents, have already provided. But he comes, the request acknowledges, his dependence, on that parental, provision.

[34:27] What we're praying for, is everything, that is necessary, for life today. So we travel light, but we don't travel, carelessly. We ask for enough, for today.

We can't live on nothing. We do need, food and clothing, and shelter. But even more vital, is that which sustains, our spiritual life. The presence, today, of the Lord Jesus, through the Spirit.

So let's, pray that prayer now, perhaps with more, of an understanding, of what we're really praying.

So let's, just say the words together. Just that simple phrase.

Give us today, our daily bread. Amen. Amen. So.