

"Daily Bread"

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[0 : 0 0] Good morning, church. It's good to see you all this morning. Would you turn with me to the Gospel of Matthew, chapter 6? That is page 761 in the Pew Bible. If you're new to Trinity this morning, let me welcome you. This year, this academic year, we've been studying perhaps one of the most famous passages in all of the New Testament, what we've come to call the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus' Sermon on the Mount. And in the center of the Sermon on the Mount, where we're at this morning, is what we call the Lord's Prayer. Here, Jesus is teaching His followers how to pray.

He gives us a model in the Lord's Prayer to shape and to guide our own prayers. Of course, you can pray the Lord's Prayer exactly as Jesus has given it to us, word for word. That's good. But I think Jesus meant for this prayer also to become a template, a guide for our own praying, like the train tracks along which the steam engine of prayer can run. After all, a train without tracks is pretty useless, right? Or it's pretty dangerous. But if you put a train on a set of well-constructed tracks, then it becomes a thing of beauty and a thing of power, right? But I think one of the problems that we encounter with prayer is that it feels hard to get the train moving, doesn't it? Maybe you've had the experience of sitting down to devote some time to prayer, and you just don't know where to begin.

And these last couple of weeks, as we've looked at the first three petitions of the Lord's Prayer, hallowed be Your name, Your kingdom come, Your will be done, these wonderful, powerful prayers, well, they can at times be a little bit intimidating, right? It's like these prayers, they feel like the peaks of the Himalayas, but I'm down here, right, in the foothills of prayer.

I'm just at the corner of State and Grove Street. How am I going to get way up there to the heights of those prayers? So, prayer can be overwhelming, can be kind of intimidating even.

How can I pray in the face of such mystery and majesty? How can I scale those peaks? And in that place, it can feel like our prayers never get rolling down the track.

[2 : 3 2] Or maybe you've had this experience. You know, you sit down to pray, and you want it to be rich, you want it to be full, you want it to be weighty, you know? You want your prayer experience to blow your hair back.

But your mind wanders to the cares and concerns of the day, right? You think about what you need to make the kids for breakfast. Your mind's preoccupied by the work meeting scheduled for later that day. You just can't seem to settle in to prayer. The train just seems stuck at the station. In other words, it can feel like the daily anxieties press us away from what we think of as the depths of prayer. But when we're in that place, that's where the next petition of the Lord's Prayer that we'll consider today is so helpful and so necessary for us.

We come today to the fourth petition, give us this day our daily bread. Here is a prayer that connects to the concerns of everyday life, and it gets the train of prayer moving down the track in power and in beauty. So, as we've done these last few weeks, let me read from the Lord's...let me read the Lord's prayer from Matthew 6, and then we'll consider this fourth petition in more detail. So, Matthew 6, verses 9 through 13, Jesus says, All right, let's pray and ask for God's help as we consider this passage. Father in heaven, we come confidently to You because of Jesus our Lord. We ask in His name that You would bless the reading and the preaching of Your Word. We thank You that Your Holy Spirit has inspired and preserved

Your very words for us in the words of Scripture. Guide our thoughts, guide my words as we seek to understand what You're saying to us this morning, and may our communion with You deepen as a result that we might live lives to the praise of Your grace. Amen. All right, so what are we praying when we pray, give us this day our daily bread? Well, I want to make three observations about this petition, and my hope is that each one will help us to pray this prayer with a deeper understanding and deeper connection to God and God's kingdom. And the first observation is simply this.

When Jesus invites us to pray, give us this day our daily bread, He wants us to see that God cares about your every need. God cares about your every need. This is a prayer, after all, for bread, the most basic, simple human need. This is a prayer that says, God, You know and care and are intimately involved in the most basic details of my life, down to the simplest act of the food that I eat.

[5 : 54] You know, the truth is that we tend to make prayer too complicated when what God wants is for us to come to Him as our heavenly Father and lay before Him any and every care and thought and concern and distraction that might be on our minds. Is it the breakfast you have to make for the kids?

Is it the work meeting you have scheduled for later in the day? Is it the nagging aches and pains of getting older? Is it the desire to find a friend or two in a new city or a new school? God wants you to bring all of that to Him every day. We have this idea that such prayers are too simplistic or too immature, but here is Jesus Himself, the most profound, the most mature person to ever walk the face of the earth, and He says, pray like this, give us today everything we need, even our daily bread.

So we're in very good company, friends, if we pray simple prayers. But still, we can have this nagging feeling that our prayer life ought to be more profound.

Don't we eventually leave those petty concerns behind? Doesn't that all just become too self-centered? Should I not need anything from God and just pray for His glory? Well, friends, have you considered that a prayer life like what Jesus invites us into here, a prayer life that isn't afraid to bring even our smallest concerns to God, our every anxiety, our every care, that that is the sort of prayer that gives God the most glory? How so? Well, when we don't ask God for these things, when we don't pray for our daily bread, as it were, what are we saying about God?

We're saying either that He doesn't care about those things, or we're saying that He can't really do anything about it, or we're saying that we aren't really dependent on God after all. But friends, God does care, and God can do something about it, and we are completely dependent on God for everything. God is worthy to receive all of our praise just for who He is, yes, but God is also worthy to receive all of our needs and all of our cries for help. God is glorified in our dependence on Him. That was one of the first sermons that Jonathan Edwards ever published, God glorified in our dependence. God wants to be magnified in the smallest details of your life because, friend, the reality is your life is the sum of a series of small details. So if you're not praying those things, then you're living a life of practical atheism.

[9 : 12] God wants to be magnified in the smallest detail. God wants every one of them to shimmer with His care and with His love. God cares about your every need. Now, just think of the peace that you and I might experience in the midst of our daily cares and anxieties if you and I prayed this sort of prayer.

If you took every care and concern to your heavenly Father who cares for you. The Apostle Peter writes about this in chapter 5 of his first letter, verses 6 and 7. He says, Humble yourselves, therefore, under the mighty hand of God, so that at the proper time He may exalt you, casting all your anxieties on Him because He cares for you. Cast your burdens on Him because He cares for you. The Apostle Paul also picked up this theme in Philippians chapter 4. In Philippians 4, 5 and 7, He says, The Lord is at hand. Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. Now, this does not mean that all of our anxieties will simply disappear. Some of us are more prone to worry or anxiety than others.

In fact, the Apostle Paul could speak about his own cares and worries frequently throughout his letters, the greatest of which was his concern for the health and perseverance of the churches that he planted.

So, a prayer life doesn't just evaporate all of our cares and concerns and all of our anxieties, but in the midst of those cares, your cares and my cares, we can experience God's care and God's peace in the midst of those things.

So, brothers and sisters, don't let yourself get too tripped up in prayer, thinking that you need to be more sophisticated, less every day. Come to God as you are. Humble yourself, Peter says, and cast your cares on Him. That's how the train of prayer gets moving down the track.

[11 : 40] And friends, isn't this principle not at the heart of the gospel itself? Is it not at the heart of the gospel itself? The message of Christianity, the good news about Jesus Christ, is not try hard to be spiritual and good, and then God will accept you on that basis. No, friends, the gospel is very opposite.

You come to God as you are humbled by your flaws and your sins. You come with empty hands, and God accepts you. And on what basis will you be accepted? Only on the basis of Jesus.

He opened the door so that you could walk in. He was worthy to call God Father. We in our sin are not but Jesus through His life and death and resurrection gives us the right to be called children of God freely by grace. So, praying these simple prayers is an outflow. It's an expression of the gospel itself.

We bring all of us, and God receives us by grace and glorifies Himself as the God of grace. God cares about our every need.

Second observation, when Jesus invites us to pray, give us this day our daily bread, He's helping us to see God's hand at work all around us. He's helping us to see God's hand at work all around us. In other words, He's helping us to see and trust what we call God's providence.

[13 : 32] How does the food we eat get onto our tables? I don't know about you, but when my family sits down to a meal, we don't sit around an empty table, close our eyes, and pray, give us this day our daily bread, and then poof, dinner magically appears, right? That's not how it happens. How does it happen?

Someone had to cook the meal and serve it, right? Someone had to go to the grocery store and buy the food. Someone had to package and deliver the food to the grocery store. Someone had to plant and raise and harvest the food that got packaged and delivered. And even prior to that, the sun had to rise, the rain had to fall, the seasons needed to turn. It's staggering when you think about it, all the details and people and processes that need to be in place just to have a meal around your table.

But press a little further. How did you get to the store to buy the food? Well, you drove on a road maintained by the city, and a lot of people had to work hard to maintain all those roads and that infrastructure. How did you cook the food? You used gas or electricity to run your stove provided by the utility companies and that entire infrastructure. Where did you get the money to even buy the food?

You went to work and perform your job with your colleagues and clients and co-workers. And friends, suddenly the interconnected web of people and places and institutions becomes almost infinitely thick and intricate just so we can eat a simple meal. Give us this day our daily bread. What are we praying for?

Well, when you step back, we are praying for something massive. We're praying for God's hand to be at work, sustaining, guiding, directing, not just the rhythms of nature, but the systems and institutions of human culture.

[15 : 39] Martin Luther put it this way. He said, "Daily bread includes everything that has to do with the support and needs of the body, such as food, drink, clothing, shoes, house, home, lands, animals, money, goods, a devout husband or wife, devout children, devout workers, devout and faithful rulers, good government, good weather, peace, health, self-control, good reputation, good friends, faithful neighbors, and the like." You see, praying, "Give us this day our daily bread," forces us to acknowledge that God is God in all spheres of existence." When we pray this seemingly simple prayer, it forces us to see God's creational care of all things. It lifts our eyes to see what we call God's providence.

One of my favorite definitions of God's providence is from the Heidelberg Catechism written in the 1500s, and it goes like this, "God's providence is His almighty and ever-present power whereby, as with His hand, He upholds heaven and earth and all creatures, and so governs them that leaf and blade, rain and drought, fruitful and barren years, food and drink, and wealth and sickness, and riches and poverty. Indeed, all things come to us not by chance but by His Fatherly hand." And then the Catechism asks, what does it benefit us to know that God has created all things and still upholds them by His providence?

How does that benefit us? Answer, we can be patient in adversity, thankful in prosperity, and with a view to the future, we can have a firm confidence in our faithful God and Father that no creature shall separate us from His love, for all creatures are so completely in His hand that without His will, they cannot so much as move.

Give us this day our daily bread. It's a prayer that starts with our immediate needs and then flows out to encompass God's providential, sustaining care of all things for our good.

Our culture talks a lot about cultivating gratitude, doesn't it? Gratitude has become sort of one of the staples, one of the like stock and trade of the wellness and self-care kind of literature and TikTok videos or however you sort of imbibe that stuff. Maybe not TikTok for that much longer.

[18 : 40] But friends, do you see how this prayer, give us this day our daily bread, is the key to real, lasting gratitude? Because this prayer helps us to see that God's fatherly providence has been at work to answer our prayers time and time and time and time again.

We often wonder if God hears or answers our prayers, and yet when we pray, give us this day our daily bread, we start to see all of existence as an answered prayer. All of life is a prayer of gratitude to our good, loving, faithful, sovereign God.

And again, does not the gospel itself teach us this truth in the most pressing and profound way? In Romans 8:32, Paul writes, "He who did not spare His own Son, but gave Him up for us all, how will He not also with Him graciously give us all things?" The Father was willing to give us His own Son, bread from heaven.

How will He not also keep His promise to care for us now in this life, and prepare for us in the life to come something unimaginably good?

Give us this day our daily bread. It's a prayer to help us realize that God cares about your every need, and it's a prayer that helps us to rest and rejoice that God's Fatherly providence is directing all things.

[20 : 19] There's one more observation I want to make. When Jesus invites us to pray, give us this day our daily bread, He's inviting us into a life of kingdom-centered simplicity.

He's inviting us into a life of kingdom-centered simplicity. Note that Jesus tells us to pray for our daily bread.

The fallen human heart wants to amass wealth, to gather up as much as we can in, if we're honest, greed.

But Jesus says to His followers, not so with you. Don't pray, God, fill our bank accounts with exorbitant wealth. I promise I'll tithe.

But rather, give us this day our daily bread. May our hearts be content with daily bread. May our hearts be weaned from their addiction to material wealth. May our hearts be turned away from the God of money.

[21 : 31] And may our hearts rest in the provision of daily bread. Proverbs 30, verse 8 says, Give me neither poverty nor riches. Feed me with the food that is needful for me.

Give us this day our daily bread. You see, friends, as we pray this prayer with assurance that God wants us to bring all of our needs and concerns to Him, and as we pray this prayer with gratitude that God's fatherly providence has been at work to answer our prayers time and time again, we find that we also cannot pray this prayer, give us this day our daily bread, without also thinking about those.

We cannot pray this prayer for daily bread without also thinking about those for whom daily bread is not a given. As we pray this prayer, we immediately think of those who struggle to find daily bread, the hungry, the poor, the displaced, the refugee, the outcast.

So we are praying then that God would give us hearts of kingdom-centered simplicity so that we might have something to share with those in need.

Friends, in the early church, there was such a freedom in Christ that when others were in need, in their midst, they would freely sell property, belongings, and share with those in need.

[23 : 12] The church became a new human community that ran on just different principles, principles where money and wealth didn't rule people's hearts. Instead, they were so captivated by God's grace in Christ, so caught up in the wonder and reality of the resurrection and all that it meant, they had clung so tightly to the resurrected Lord that they could freely open their hands and practice solidarity with the poor in their midst.

You see, they had found and they had tasted a bread that satisfied every longing. They had found a wealth, they had found a treasure that could never fade. They found a dignity that money could never buy. They found a security that wealth could never provide. They had come to know the risen Christ.

They had tasted of the age to come. They had been risen with Him and even seated with Him in the heavenly places.

Paul could say to the early churches, all things are yours. And brothers and sisters, the same is true for you today in Christ.

You were dead in your trespasses and sins, but God has made you alive in Christ Jesus. He has raised you up and seated you in the heavenly places with Him. You will reign with Him forever.

[24 : 42] All things are yours. Why would we cling to the passing wealth of this world when the kingdom has been given to us? That's why the church prays, give us this day our daily bread, and then we use whatever wealth we have to meet the needs around us.

Now, of course, poverty alleviation is a many-sided thing. It takes much wisdom, much cooperation, much prayer, much time, much effort, much community.

Acknowledged. But only when our hearts are trained in the simplicity of this prayer will we have the freedom to not chase wealth and its empty promises as if it will answer all of our deepest longings.

But we'll have hearts that are trained to view any material good that we have as resources to be used for God's kingdom. And friends, in this church we have seen so much of that. I wish I could tell you all the stories of generosity and solidarity I've seen the Spirit do in our midst. We have much to be grateful for.

The deacons and their work of care, small group members rallying around one another, some of you starting intentional communities to seek the practical good of your neighbors, families providing for the needs of their children and the needs of your extended family, caring for the widow, for the refugee, for the fatherless. God's Spirit has been answering this prayer again and again in our midst. May God continue to do so and make a salt and light to our city, to make us that new kind of community that is so enthralled by the resurrection of Jesus that we just run on different principles. Give us this day our daily bread. Friends, the train of prayer doesn't need to be stuck on the tracks. God isn't waiting for you to find the right word or take up the right topic. He wants you to know that He cares about your every need, that He's at work in everything around you, and that His kingdom has begun right in the midst of our everyday lives.

[27 : 16] So bring your cares and concerns to Him. That's where the prayer train starts rolling down the track, and those simple prayers will pick up steam, and by God's grace we'll begin to experience in deeper and deeper ways His loving care, and His faithful providence, and His healing kingdom. Let's pray.

Father, we pray as Jesus taught us, give us this day our daily bread. Make this prayer our own this week, this month, this year, and all the years to come, train our eyes through this prayer to see your hand at work all around us. Train our hearts through this prayer to become people of kingdom-centered simplicity.

Make our church through this prayer a signpost of your kingdom and a witness to your resurrection life, Lord Jesus. In your name we pray. Amen.