

"OUR DAILY BREAD"

Luke 11:2-3 (p. 1614)

March 15, 2020

*[Jesus] said to them, "When you pray, say:
'Father, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come.
Give us each day our daily bread.
Forgive us our sins, for we also forgive everyone who sins against us.
And lead us not into temptation.' "*

Luke 11:2-4

What to pray for

One day Jesus was praying in a certain place. When he finished, one of his disciples said to him, "Lord, teach us to pray, just as John taught his disciples."

Luke 11:1

Q 118. What did God command us to pray for?

A. Everything we need, spiritually and physically, as embraced in the prayer Christ our Lord himself taught us.

Lord's Day 45

- 1) Include SPIRITUAL and TEMPORAL
- 2) Ask WDJPF? → WHAT DID JESUS PRAY FOR?

The fourth petition means

"Give us each day our daily bread."

Luke 11:3

Jesus answered, "It is written: 'Man does not live by bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God.' "

Matthew 4:4 (p. 1500, also Luke 4:4, from Deuteronomy 8:1-5)

- 1) God PROVIDES
- 2) I don't GET THE CREDIT
- 3) There is so much more TO LIFE THAN BREAD

Becoming the answer to this prayer

*I know what it is to be in need, and I know what it is to have plenty.
I have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation, whether well fed or hungry,
whether living in plenty or in want. I can do everything through him who gives me strength.
Philippians 4:11 (p. 1830, also 1 Timothy 6:6, p. 1850)*

1) Contentment: _____

2) Stewardship: _____

3) Generosity: _____

Heidelberg Catechism, Lord's Day 50

Q 125. What does the fourth petition mean?

A. "Give us this day our daily bread" means:

Do take care of all our physical needs¹ so that we come to know

that you are the only source of everything good,²

and that neither our work and worry nor your gifts can do us any good without your blessing.³

And so help us to give up our trust in creatures and trust in you alone.⁴

¹ Ps. 104:27-30; 145:15-16; Matt. 6:25-34 ² Acts 14:17; 17:25; James 1:17

³ Deut. 8:3; Ps. 37:16; 127:1-2; 1 Cor. 15:58 ⁴ Ps. 55:22; 62; 146; Jer. 17:5-8; Heb. 13:5-6

Resources

John Calvin's comments on "your kingdom come" at <https://www.monergism.com/thy-kingdom-come-0>

Eric Raymond's comments at <https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/blogs/erik-raymond/mean-pray-thy-kingdom-come/>

Michael Horton's article at <https://www.monergism.com/thethreshold/articles/onsite/giveus.html>

Allistair Begg's sermon at <https://www.truthforlife.org/resources/sermon/give-us-each-day/>

Greg Anderson's *Cancer and the Lord's Prayer* at

https://www.goodreads.com/book/show/762254.Cancer_and_The_Lord_s_Prayer

Deffinbaugh's "Teach Us to Pray" message at <https://bible.org/seriespage/38-teach-us-pray-luke-111-13>

Augustine on the Lord's Prayer at <https://archive.org/details/sermonsonselecte16augu/page/90/mode/2up>

Horatio Bonar's "How Much More" at <http://grace->

[ebooks.com/library/Horatus%20Bonar/HB_Light%20%26%20Truth%20Gospels.pdf](http://grace-ebooks.com/library/Horatus%20Bonar/HB_Light%20%26%20Truth%20Gospels.pdf)

I like J. C. Ryle's short commentary on the Lord's Prayer at <https://www.gracegems.org/Ryle/111.htm>

Keathley's "Principles of Prayer" at <https://bible.org/article/principles-prayer-luke-11>

The Lord's Prayer, Luke 11:2-4

Father,

hallowed be your name,

your kingdom come.

Give us each day our daily bread.

Forgive us our sins,

for we also forgive everyone who sins against us.

And lead us not into temptation.

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Horatio Bonar's "How Much More" at http://grace-ebooks.com/library/Horatius%20Bonar/HB_Light%20%26%20Truth%20Gospels.pdf

Rick Monday saving the flag: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hbr1hNp-nI4>

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Give Us Today Our Daily Bread

by Dr. Michael Horton

After robbing a market, one of the arrested youths involved in the crime simply replied, "If you don't look out for yourself, who will?" The root of theft is the failure to trust God as a provider. "But how can I trust God?" asks the homeless person who lost everything in a bad business deal, including his family, and has given up hope in God and people.

It is important to notice that our Lord first draws our attention to things heavenly: God and his name, his kingdom, and his will. Similar to the Ten Commandments, the Lord's Prayer begins with our prayer concerning God and his name and then descends to contemplate our own needs and the world around us. Apart from God, the most important relationships between people and ideas are without definition, meaning, and purpose. When we begin with God, even the most mundane, common, every-day activities somehow become rooted in eternity.

Furthermore, we begin with God and things heavenly because, frankly, God is more important than we are. That is an odd thing to say because, on one hand, it seems so obvious to say and yet, on the other hand, it sounds too offensive. It cuts across the grain of our modern sentiments to think that God exists for his own happiness, not ours and that we, in fact, are merely part of that universal design to bring pleasure to the Holy One of Israel. By putting God first in the prayer, Jesus puts theology before our needs, that which is universally true before that which is practical for one's own personal life.

Today, we want to run immediately to the "practical" or the "relevant," as if God were irrelevant. What we consider practical is not the study of God, but the study of how we can become happier and more fulfilled. But here, Jesus insists that we be chiefly concerned with the glory of God and the holiness of his name and only secondarily concerned about our own needs, whether real or felt. This is a priority we must get right and a priority which, I fear, the church growth movement has gotten wrong in its insistence that the primary purpose of the church is to meet the "felt needs" of the unchurched rather than to teach and lead the unchurched to recognize their greatest priority as worshiping the one true God and believing his Word. It is God's command (the Law) and God's invitation (the Gospel) that form the community of faith, not our own felt needs.

Having said that, our needs are important. After all, just because they are secondary, it does not follow that they are unimportant. There are many things of secondary importance that are vital. For instance, an education for our children is very important, but it is not essential to their very existence, as the experience of countless people around the world and in our own country can attest. By petitioning God for "our daily bread," we are engaging in an act of worship. God is pleased to see us acknowledging what is true whether we acknowledge it or not: that apart from his fatherly goodness and care, which he owes to no one, neither spiritual nor physical life is possible. The irony is that even the most bitter atheist depends on God for the oxygen he uses to curse him and requires divine provisions of food and drink to sustain his rebellious existence.

There are, it seems to me, two very important things we need to learn from this petition. First, that God is the source of our whole existence, not just of redemption. Second, that his providence extends over every person, not just believers and preserves culture, not just the kingdom of God.

First, God is the source of our whole existence. I have always liked Peter and found enormous personal comfort in knowing that the chief of the apostles was slow on the uptake. The first time he was confronted with the power of Christ to provide for daily needs was on a fishing trip. At this point, Peter was "Simon," and had no idea and probably little interest in Jesus' sermon as the Master stepped into his boat and continued teaching. "Put out into deep water, and let down the nets for a catch," Jesus instructed. I have been on deep sea fishing trips with real fishermen and one thing I've learned, especially with those who have no aversion to using very strong language, is how important it is to keep my mouth shut. However many times Jesus had gone fishing and

he was not as experienced as someone who had done this for a living. Nevertheless, with a characteristic boldness that came from his confidence that he was God incarnate, Jesus told Simon to put down the nets even though it was the end of a rather unproductive fishing day. But because Jesus was a rabbi and even the most irreverent sorts tipped their hats to the men of the cloth, Peter agreed to humor the man. You know the rest of the story. The nets began to break, they were so full of fish, and then another boat arrived and both boats began to sink with their booty. And then Luke records a most astonishing response from Simon Peter: "When Simon Peter saw this, he fell at Jesus' knees and said, 'Go away from me, Lord; I am a sinful man!'" (Lk.5:1-11).

That is a strange response, isn't it? Imagine a healing crusade today, where the most common response was fear rather than joy. A strange power, this, and being in the presence of someone who had such control over common things surely must be divine and the presence of the divine is the presence of the holy. It is this presence that makes us uncomfortable. Notice that the most surprising miracles are not when we see God exercising power over the sun, moon, and stars, but when he intervenes in the most common, everyday affairs. In fact, it is more difficult to see God as active in the mundane than in the dramatic moments in history. We can very easily see the hand of God in an earthquake or in the collapse of Communism, but we often miss his fatherly hand in providing for us every day in kind and unusual ways.

The Enlightenment had a lot to do with the way we look at God's involvement in daily affairs, Deism insisting that God is the creator who sets things into motion, but leaves the real running of the universe to laws of nature. Ironically, even those today who so emphasize "signs and wonders" and think they are defending the biblical supernaturalism against deistic naturalism so easily fall into the Enlightenment way of looking at things. When, for instance, Pat Robertson writes that instead of praying for things, "We are to command the money to come to us..." (*Answers*, CBN Edition, p.76) and that poverty "is a curse that comes upon those who either have not served God properly, or who are not following certain laws of God,..." (ibid., p.155), and suggests "spiritual laws" that are just as real as physical laws, he is accommodating the Christian idea of miracle to the deistic, Enlightenment notion. When miracles depend on laws and principles, they are easily controlled, manipulated, predicted, and obtained through technical know-how. But then, it is not a miracle. One does not expect a miracle! A miracle astonishes, as Simon Peter was astonished. A miracle contradicts laws of nature as well as our expectations of the way things should happen, rather than conforming to them. Ironically, the "signs and wonders" movement has probably done as much to undermine a supernatural view of miracles (since it is merely a mechanical thing dependent on laws) as accommodation to the Enlightenment rejection of miracle. It is important for us to recover the doctrine of providence.

When legs are lengthened and the blind can see, we say, "Ah! Now there's God at work!" But when we go to work or enjoy a good meal with friends or raise a family, these are mundane, common, everyday things that don't really demand God's involvement. But this is far from the biblical view, which presents God as active in the most minute details of our lives, even the most trivial. For instance, "The lot [dice] is cast into the lap, but its every decision is from the Lord" (Prov.16:33). (You were looking for someone to blame for the outcome of that trip to Vegas, weren't you?) "Are not two sparrows sold for a penny?" Jesus asked. "Yet not one of them will fall to the ground apart from the will of your Father. And even the very hairs of your head are all numbered" (Mt. 10:29-30). Paul told the Athenians the identity of the "unknown God": "He is not served by human hands, as if he needed anything, because he himself gives all men life and breath and everything else. From one man he made every nation of men, that they should inhabit the whole earth; and he determined the times set for them and the exact places where they should live" (Ac.17:25-26). God is as much at work in the days we forget as in those we remember; he is always there, providing, caring, ruling, and protecting. He has been there all along, even in our suffering and lack.

He Cares for Everyone

So much is said today as if God took care of the believer and one reason for becoming a Christian is that God brings blessing and prosperity their way in material terms. Nevertheless, providence is not, like redemption, something that is limited to the realm of believers. While God's saving grace extends only to the elect, his common grace or providence does not ask whether one is a believer. In fact, our Lord uses this kind of

"common" love or favor as an example of how we are to love our enemies. "He causes his sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous" (Mt.5:45). You love your friends? Big deal, Jesus says. "Love your enemies" (v.46).

This helps us when we realize that there are many who never pray for God's name to be hallowed, but instead profane it; who could care less about God's kingdom and will, as they are too preoccupied with their own. And yet, these same people have the provision of their daily bread, just as the Christians. That almost doesn't seem fair, does it? And yet, we must remember that creation and providence embrace all of humanity. Every person is created in the image of God and every person is cared for by that Creator because of his goodness. Redemption and providence are two distinct categories, and this is why some pagans enjoy prosperity, while some believers have to serve them in poverty and disgrace. If this still doesn't seem fair to us, we ought to remember that God is giving us all more than we deserve even if all we have is breath.

Who Is This?

I mentioned at the beginning that Simon Peter experienced at least two life-changing trips out on the Sea of Galilee with Jesus. The second one is recorded in Mark 4:35-41. One night, Jesus and his disciples set sail to the other side of the Sea and got caught in a furious storm. Sleeping on a cushion while the boat was being swamped, Jesus was awakened by his desperate disciples. He stood and simply commanded, "Quiet! Be still!" "Then the wind died down and it was completely calm." Again, the response was astonishment rather than joy. More important than realizing their lives had been spared was the realization that there was somebody on their boat who had more power over their lives. Perhaps this gave a bit more definition to Jesus' statement, "I tell you, my friends, do not be afraid of those who kill the body and after that can do no more. But I will show you whom you should fear: Fear him who, after the killing of the body, has power to throw you into hell. Yes, I tell you, fear him" (Lk.12:5). With good reason, the disciples were more worried about the man in the boat than the storm in the Sea. "They were terrified and asked each other, 'Who is this? Even the wind and the waves obey him!'"

Just as we often like to think we are responsible for our being saved, so we also like to take the credit for our advancement at work, our success at school or in raising a family, our health or prosperity. It is almost easier for the poor and suffering believer to trust God as his or her daily provider because the hand of God is most clearly seen in the presence of lack, not plenty. When we do not have it, we tend to blame God; when we do have it, we tend to praise ourselves. And yet, it is time we put ourselves out on that boat, where we realize that we are actually joined in an inseparable union to the Creator, Sustainer, Provider, and Redeemer of the world. If we recognized him as the author not only of the dramatic (our salvation, a miraculous recover, etc.), but of the mundane (our daily provision and delights), we would see him as powerfully active in providence as he is in miracle. Perhaps we could even see every day as an opportunity to marvel, "Who is this? Even the wind and the waves obey him!"§

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<https://www.truthforlife.org/resources/sermon/give-us-each-day/>

Give Us Each Day...

by Alistair Begg [Luke 11:3](#)

We can fail to trust God's daily provision by becoming greedy and expecting more or by overworking to provide for ourselves. Throughout Scripture, however, He promises to give us "our daily bread." In this sermon, Alistair Begg reminds us that our heavenly Father knows what's best for us and is deeply concerned with our personal and practical needs. Because of this, we are able to work hard, live in security, and be content in God's perfect providence.

Sermon Transcript:

And now, Father, with our Bibles open before us we look to you that the Spirit of God will be our teacher. We thank you that you have given to us the Bible, the Word of God, in order that we might find in it he who is the living Word, even Christ our Savior. And so it is with expectation that we turn our gaze to these holy pages. Meet us now, we pray, and teach us. For your glory we ask it. Amen.

We are in the prayer which Jesus has taught his disciples to pray. In the request of one of them, "Lord, teach us to pray,"^[1] Jesus has now provided a form of words that his disciples are given to use in the course of prayer. We've noted on these early occasions that the prayer begins with God and his glory. Before ever it comes to man and his need, the issue is that we might address God as Father, reminding ourselves that this is not an invitation to everyone by dint of their existence, but those may call him Father who have become by grace what we are not by nature—namely, his children through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. And we've said on each occasion that one of the reasons that a number of us find little if any value in the saying of the Lord's Prayer is because we stumble at the very first word, and we are unable to address God in this intimate fashion because we have never come to trust in his Son the Lord Jesus. And so, there is an inherent and immediate evangelistic thrust as we look at this prayer.

Then we noted that it had a concern for the name of God, because his name represents the character and essence of God; and then for his kingdom, as we looked at it last Sunday evening, praying that the kingdom of God would come into the lives of men and women who do not bow beneath his rule, that it would increasingly be the experience of those of us who name the name of Christ as we acknowledge him to be King and Lord over every area of our existence, and then that we might pray in anticipation of the great consummation of the kingdom of God when Jesus returns and we're left in no doubt that the King rules.

Now, it is after that, and only after that, that we come to the requests which are before us now, and particularly this morning to the first of these in verse 3, "Give us each day our daily bread." It is interesting that in these three requests, as we're going to consider them in time, we first of all seek God for our daily needs, which all of us know that we have; we seek him for forgiveness, which all of us know we so desperately require; and we seek him also in order that we might be preserved from temptation, which all of us understand we face on a daily basis. And in each of these requests what we are underscoring by praying in this way is the fact of our total dependence upon God our heavenly Father.

God Knows Our Needs

Well, let us look then at this phrase, "Give us each day our daily bread"—something that is very familiar to us and a matter that we may have considered on a number of occasions throughout our studies of the Bible. If you have done so, you will know that it has been quite common through the years for commentators to spiritualize this phrase. And so, as you turn to one commentary and another, you will find there are those who suggest that the bread that is being referred to here is the bread of the Lord's Supper. And they seek to tie the Lord's Prayer into the Lord's Supper, into Communion, and they say that the request is to be understood in that way. It's not an unhelpful thought, but I don't believe it to be right. Others suggest that the bread being referred to is the Word of God; so, they're saying, "Give us each day the Word of God." Well, of course, each day we do require the Word of God, but I'm not convinced by the notion that that is the reference that Jesus is making here. Others suggest that it is a spiritual emphasis and that the bread we are requesting is the bread of life—namely, Christ himself.

If bread represents anything in any culture, it represents daily sustenance. When men and women think of bread, they think of that which is the requirement for the most basic of life's concerns.

Now, we needn't spend any further time on that; I simply want to acknowledge them in passing. I believe that it would be right for us to view the request in its most bald and straightforward terms—namely, to understand it as what it so plainly is: namely, a request that we might be supplied with all that we need for our daily existence. If bread represents anything in any culture, it represents daily sustenance. Other things may be elements of human existence, may be luxury items, but when men and women think of bread, they think of that which is the requirement for the most basic of life's concerns.

Now, to think of it in that way is to think of it in keeping with the Old Testament picture, which we read in Exodus chapter 16. And may I remind you of that—and you can survey it again as part of your homework—but the experience of God's people in the forty years of wandering in the wilderness was an experience in which God was teaching them their total dependence upon him and was calling from them absolute obedience. And one of the ways in which that unfolds is in this provision of manna from heaven.

May I just remind you of what we read earlier? God made it clear to them that there was enough for that day, and for that day only. And his purpose was to see if his people would obey him on a daily basis. And of course, right off the bat they immediately disobey the clearest of instructions: "There's only enough for today, and don't keep it for tomorrow," and some of them immediately kept it for tomorrow, failing the test immediately. There was to be no carryover, no doggie bags, no saving it up. "If you do so," he said, "there will be worms and maggots in it, and it will smell."^[2] Nevertheless, look at them waking up in the morning and saying, "Would

you like more of the manna from last night?” Says the gentleman to his wife, “Let me pop up early and get you a little breakfast,” and he brings the stinking mass into the room as an evidence of the fact that he wouldn’t do what God said. Most of the stink in our lives is due to something as simple as that. You want your life to stink, then disobey the clear commands of God. I guarantee it. Indeed, the Bible guarantees it.

Also, on the sixth day, unlike the other days, they were to take a double supply for the Sabbath. And yet, some went out to seek supplies on the Sabbath.

Now, the lessons are clear there in Exodus 16: Number one, daily dependence upon God. Number two, the sanctity of one day in seven. Number three, the sinfulness of selfishly hoarding that which God supplies. Now, when you take that as an Old Testament picture and you come to the phrase “Give us this day our daily bread,” and you understand it in that way, you realize the wonder of God’s plan in teaching his people in every age to trust not in the provision, which, you see, makes us keep more for the morning, but to trust in the Provider, which allows us to trust him for the morning. And we must avoid a sidebar here on the preoccupation with savings, and with individual retirement accounts, and with everything that we have by and large in a very materialistic culture baptized into orthodoxy within the Christian community, simply importing it from the pagan world.

“We have it for today,” he says. “Don’t take any for tomorrow, because I want you to be able to wake up tomorrow and to discover that the same God who provided for you today will provide for you tomorrow. If you try and carry it through, I’ll teach you a lesson. It will stink up your kitchen.” And that is why he leaves them with instructions so that this omer of manna would be kept in the tabernacle. And indeed, when you get to the book of Hebrews 9:4, you discover that still the jar of Aaron is kept in the tabernacle in order that the people might come, see it, and say, “That is a reminder to us that for forty years in the wilderness God never missed a single day in giving to us our daily bread. There was never a day in which he did not provide.” And they kept it so that one generation may speak to the next concerning the wonder of his provision.

So, let’s be absolutely clear, then: bread—“Give us today our daily bread”—sums up our basic material needs. I found myself, as I was studying this last week and then again later on this week, singing from I think it’s *Jungle Book*, “Bare necessities, the simple bare necessities.”^[3] And on another occasion we could all burst into song at this point, but that is exactly what... I can’t remember, I think it’s a chimpanzee or something. Who sings “Simple bare necessities”? “Bare necessities,” yeah, “the simple bare necessities.” It’s wonderful. Now, that’s what Jesus is speaking about: he’s speaking about the bare necessities, the simple bare necessities.

Do you find it interesting at all that this comes first in the list of requests? “Father, hallowed be your name. Your kingdom come. Give us each day the bare necessities.” Do you think if we had composed this prayer we would have put this as the first thing on the list? I’m not sure that any of us would. I’m not sure that we wouldn’t have regarded it as somehow impertinent. “Let’s put something a little more *holy* number one,” we might have said. “No, don’t go to daily bread. I mean, goodness gracious, can’t we think of something else that we could put first?” Jesus says, “When you pray, say: ‘Give us today our daily bread.’” Why? Because God the Father cares about our personal, practical, material issues.

The Father whom we come to know in Jesus is interested in—concerned about—our personal, practical, material issues.

Let me say that to you again: the Father whom we come to know in Jesus is interested in—concerned about—our personal, practical, material issues with which we have come to worship this morning. That Jesus makes perfectly clear in Matthew 6, where he chides his disciples for worrying about what they’re going to wear or what they’re going to eat, and he says, “You remember, the pagans run after all these things, but your heavenly Father knows that you need them. Therefore, seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness—‘Father, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come, your will be done’—seek first the kingdom of God and his

righteousness, and all these things will be added unto you. You take care of my things,” says Jesus, “and I’ll take care of your things.”^[4] Promise, conveyed in this simple request.

Now, the whole Bible is replete with this. I love J. B. Phillips’s paraphrase of 1 Peter 5:7, which in the NIV is “Cast all your [cares upon] him [for] he cares [about] you.” Phillips paraphrases it—and I love this—“You can throw the whole weight of your anxieties upon him, for you are his personal concern.” “You can throw the whole weight of your anxieties upon him, for you are his personal concern.” And as you come to worship this morning, perhaps beleaguered, perhaps disenfranchised, perhaps dreadfully disappointed by an individual or a friend or a colleague or a boss, or whatever else it is, feeling alienated and sidelined by the events of life, you can write down in confidence on the flyleaf of your Bible, “I am God’s personal concern.” And the verse that I love to quote with frequency: “If we being earthly know how to give good gifts to our children, how much more will our heavenly Father give good things to them that ask him?”^[5] Father knows best. Father knows best. Therefore, we may approach him in confidence, asking that he may give to us all that is necessary for our lives today in order that we might embrace him as our Father, in order that we may hallow his name, in order that we may seek to understand all that it means for his kingdom to come and for his will to be done on earth as it is in heaven.

God knows our needs, and he is able to distinguish between needs and desires. What we may regard as a requirement he may see as superfluous to our best. Each of us as earthly parents understands this, and some of us have not forgotten some of the outlandish requests that we gave to our fathers when we were growing up as well. And we went into our rooms bitterly disappointed that he had not provided for us the 650-cc motorbike that we said would be a tremendous tool for all kinds of things, not least of all helping elderly women with their groceries and so on. And the categorical “No” from our fathers was the best thing that could ever have happened to us, because Father knows our needs and Father knows best.

The writer of Proverbs, understanding the distinction between what we may desperately long to acquire and what we so desperately need, asks with great wisdom in Proverbs 30:8, “Keep falsehood and lies far from me; give me neither poverty nor riches, but give me only my daily bread.” (“Don’t make me really rich, don’t make me really poor; just give me my daily bread.”) “Otherwise, I may have too much and disown you and say, ‘Who is the Lord?’ Or I may become poor and steal, and so dishonor the name of my God.”^[6] No wonder the writer of the Proverbs is called such a wise man! “Give me neither poverty nor scarcity. The one may make me so affluent that I give the impression to myself and everybody else that I don’t need God to provide for my daily needs. The other may make me so desperately impoverished that I may go out and start stealing stuff from the back of people’s cars, and then I would dishonor the name of God. So keep me on an even keel, Lord, would you?”

You see, each of us will have temptations on either side. In an entirely materialistic and affluent environment, one of the hardest things for us is to take this phrase and say it sincerely. The spirit of Marie Antoinette is alive and well. When we say, “Well, maybe I’ve seen on TV, I saw from Tanzania, or I saw from Zambia, or I saw some pictures from the Sudan, and I can understand how those people are praying, you know, ‘Give us today our daily bread.’ But for us, hey, you know, what’s that about? If they don’t have any bread, give ’em cake! I mean, if you don’t have any bread, why don’t you just get a Snickers? What’s your problem?” You see, so much of what we have, acquire, regard as essential, is actually an encumbrance both to an understanding of the Bible and to being able to lay hold upon God’s great and precious promises.

Sharing What We’ve Been Given

So, in praying this way, remind ourselves: Father knows our needs, Father knows best, and also, Father wants us to share what we have. He wants us to share what we have. That, I think, is the significance of this being in the plural. This doesn’t say “Give *me* this day *my* bread,” but “Give *us* today *our* bread.” “Well,” you say, “that’s simply a corporate emphasis; we’re all in it together.” Yes, but I think there’s something also there, and

it is this: “Whatever you give *me* is *ours*. You didn’t just give it for me, did you? So that I could stash it, and look at it, or parade it, or gorge myself on it? Do I have a responsibility beyond myself?”

God gives us all that we need and then some so that we can give it to others, not so that we can hoard it for ourselves.

Now, this is hard for capitalists to recognize. And the answer is yes, we have a responsibility beyond ourselves—that those who have been endowed have a responsibility for those who do not have, both personally, and familial, and economically, and societally, and nationally. Read your Bibles! God says, “You pray ‘Give us today our daily bread,’ I’ll make sure you have what is essential for you, I will distinguish for you between needs and wants, and I will give this to you in the awareness of the fact that to whom much is given much will be required.” And the reason that God gives us all that we need and then some is so that we can give it to others, not so that we can hoard it for ourselves.

2 Corinthians 9:7–8: “Each man should give what he has decided in his heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver. And God is able to make all grace abound to you, so that in all things at all times, having all that you need, you will abound in every good work.” I don’t think there can be anything clearer than that. God says in response to our prayer that he makes all grace abound to us so in all things, at all times, having all that I need, I will be able to abound in every good work.

That’s what James picks up in James chapter 2. And he says, “You say that you are a very good Christian, and that you have faith, and that you are a Bible-believing Christian, and you honor God, and you’ve been baptized, and your faith is really quite exemplary. So, let me ask you a question: What good is it, my brothers, if a man claims to have faith but has no deeds? Can such faith save him? Suppose a brother or sister is without clothes and daily food; if one of you says to him ‘Go, I wish you well, keep warm and well fed,’ but does nothing about his physical needs, what good is it?”^[7] Answer: no good at all! So, do we think for one moment that the prayer here is driven by selfishness? In order that we may amass, that we may accrue to ourselves, that with which we may line our nests and secure ourselves against all the advances and ravages of a world that intimidates us? Or is it not that we are supposed to enter into the benefit of what God has provided in order that we might share that benefit with others?

Now, those of us who have been made particularly prosperous in the world—and I’m not sure but that, in relationship to the totality of the world, that doesn’t include our whole morning congregation, although some of us might want to debate that—but those of us who have been provided for richly in this life have a great privilege and a unique responsibility. And this is exactly what the Bible says: “Command those who are rich in this present world...”—those who not only have their daily bread, but also have more than that; those who not only have a suit of clothes, but have other suits of clothes; those who not only have means of transportation, but the ability to transport others; those who not only have enough to be able to pay their bills, but also to meet the needs of others who cannot pay their bills; those who not only have money in the bank, but actually have significant resources stashed away all over the place. “Command those who are rich in this present world not to be arrogant,” number one, and make other people feel bad when they meet them in a restaurant, or when they drive up beside them at the traffic lights, or when they sit and converse with them in the course of daily parlance. “...not to be arrogant [or] to put their hope in wealth, which is so uncertain.” Not to click on the internet and go to the Dow Jones first thing in the morning and say, “Aha, it’s a great morning, it’s a wonderful day, the sun is out, the sky is blue, and all is well in the universe,” and then it drops five hundred points in the day, and they get ready to run around and jump out of the window. “[Do not] put their hope in wealth, which is so uncertain, but to put their hope in God, who richly provides us with everything for our enjoyment.”^[8] “Who gives us,” in the King James Version, “who gives us [all things richly] to enjoy.”

God is not a cosmic killjoy. He’s not talking about introducing us to some horrible existence where we just sit around in a hair shirt, you know, and count out the last few beans we have, you know, and push a few to some other poor soul who doesn’t have any beans, and then all sit around and say, “Oh, I feel great, I feel so

miserable and wretched today, you know.” No! He gives us all things richly for our enjoyment. We don’t have to apologize for what he gives us! We have to *share* what he gives us. That’s the point. Don’t get arrogant. Don’t think that because you’ve got money in your savings account, you’re okay; it can be gone in an instant. Put your hope in God; he’s given you all things richly to enjoy. “Command [such individuals] to do good, to be rich in good deeds . . . to be generous and willing to share.”^[9] There’s the money ethic. There’s the principle. There is the outworking of the fact that Father knows best, Father desires for us to enter into the enjoyment of it, and Father longs for us to share.

Instead of becoming preoccupied with laying up a firm foundation so that we can eke out our existence as retirees somewhere fantastic, we are supposed to use the wealth God has given us now so that others may enter into its enjoyment.

And in this way, he says, if you need an incentive in relationship to this, “In this way they will lay up treasure for themselves as a firm foundation for the coming age, so that they may take hold of . . . life that is truly life.”^[10] In other words, instead of becoming preoccupied with laying up a firm foundation so that we can eke out our existence as retired people somewhere really fantastic, we are supposed to use the wealth that God has given us now so that others may enter into the enjoyment of it, and God, who took care of us when we were sucking milk from our mother’s breasts, promises to take care of us when we’re in our dotage. Isn’t that what the Bible is teaching? Do you realize how upside down so much of our worldview is in relationship to this? You’re sensible people. You’ve got to think it out.

Thursday night, my children took me for a meal in Santa Barbara to an Italian restaurant. They didn’t pay; they just took me for a meal. Cost more than I had expected, and the volume was vaster than any sensible person could ever have required, and the one relatively frugal member of the group—namely, my daughter—decided that she would take some of it away. It didn’t come in one of those unceremoniously ugly little bags—doggie bag things—which I find a dreadful embarrassment to walk around with, but it actually came in a very nice little canister which had a metal handle on it. I had a couple of thoughts simultaneously: one, “I just bought the canister,” and two, “I hope that she’s really going to eat that.”

As we walked down State Street together, we came again to a gentleman who was sitting in a wheelchair, with no legs from the knees down, slumped forward in the chair like this and holding a cardboard sign. I’d walked past him on the way up, and I had already walked past him on the way back, and I realized that there were only two of us now in the group, and I turned back to find that my daughter was giving to the man the food that she had brought from the Italian restaurant. Big smile on his face, he took it, he thanked her. And then I remembered Proverbs: “A generous person will be blessed, for they share their food with the poor.” Proverbs 22:9.

I didn’t think about it until afterwards, when I was trying to stay awake on the 405 getting to LAX to catch the redeye home, but I had gone in my pocket, and I had a hundred and forty dollars, and so I kept twenty for myself, I gave sixty to one, and I gave sixty to the other. Big deal! But then I thought, “Maybe she’ll think about that.” She never asked for anything; she gave away what she had and what she wanted to eat with her friend in the dorm room when she got back. And before the evening ended, she was sixty dollars better off than she’d been at the start. “If we, being earthly...”

Do you think we can out-give God? Do you think we can give stuff away, and then God’s just going to leave us high and dry? Isn’t that what prevents us from really giving sacrificially and generously? Isn’t that what makes us do what we do, by and large? We do not really get serious about the prayer: “Give us this day our daily bread. I know you got me through yesterday, and I know we made it to today, but tomorrow, Lord, I just don’t want to lay tomorrow on you as a burden, you know. I don’t want you to start worrying about my retirement. Let me worry about my retirement. I’ll take care of all of that.” And then that’s exactly what you do: you worry about it. You worry about death dues, you worry about taxes, you worry about establishing trusts, you worry about who’s going to get it, you worry if your kid’s going to be an idiot and spend it on Harley Davidson

motorbikes, you wonder if the sister-in-law that you never liked will somehow or another be able to get into it when you're gone and it all will blow apart, and you wonder about whether anybody will call you great because you gave money for the next phase of the building, and you wonder if they'll put your name somewhere on a basketball and bounce you all around the gym when you're gone. You want to give money for the gym? Give it today, and I'll guarantee I will have basketballs made with your name on them and we'll bounce them all around the gym. What in the world are we waiting for? (Someone said, "We're waiting for the end of the sermon.")

Now, out of history I found a wonderful illustration of this same principle in the life of John Wesley. As you know, John Wesley had a number of itinerant preachers who preached on the circuits with him and, in a sense, for him or on his behalf. And one of these circuit preachers was a man by the name of Samuel Bradburn. He was much esteemed as a good preacher, and he was known as a good man as well—an excellent fellow.

On one occasion, says the biographer, in a period in Bradburn's life when his circumstances were straightened—when, basically, he did not have enough to make a go of his daily necessities—John Wesley sent him the following letter: "Dear Sammy: 'Trust in the Lord, and do good; so shalt thou dwell in the land, and verily thou shalt be fed.' Yours affectionately, John Wesley." With the letter, he enclosed two five-pound notes, which in today's money would have to be two hundred-dollar bills at least, and probably much more than that. He enclosed with the letter two five-pound notes. The reply was prompt: "Rev. and Dear Sir: I have often been struck with the beauty of the passage of Scripture quoted in your letter, but I must confess that I never saw such ... useful 'expository note[s]' on it before. I am, rev. and dear sir, your obedient and grateful servant, Samuel Bradburn."[\[11\]](#)

Work, Security, and Contentment

Now, three observations and we're through. (Actually, I may come back to these, 'cause I don't think I have time to do them justice. No, let me just say a word on each.)

First of all, work: an observation about work, *w-o-r-k*. Learning to depend upon God as is represented in this phrase in the prayer is not in conflict with earning our daily bread. Work and the ability itself to work are part of God's provision. If we doubt that, we should consider the fact that Jesus worked—that although he came from heaven, was in control of the whole operation, still he worked as a carpenter, thereby dignifying work and establishing the pattern that is laid down by creation in the book of Genesis. The apostles chose to live by faith, and yet at the same time they worked like fury. They lived by faith and they worked like fury. 2 Thessalonians 3:8: "We were not idle when we were with you, nor did we eat anyone's food without paying for it. On the contrary, we worked [hard] night and day, laboring and toiling so that we would not be a burden to any of you. We did this, not because we do not have the right to such help, but in order to make ourselves a model for you to follow. For even when we were with you, we gave you this rule: 'If a man will not work, he shall not eat.'"[\[12\]](#)

And so, you say, "Well, did the apostles not depend upon God? You know, after all, they said, 'Give us this day our daily bread.' If they had really depended upon him, do you think they would have had to go out and work as feverishly as they did?" Yes! "He who works [the] land," says Solomon, "will have abundant food, but the one who chases fantasies will have his fill of poverty."[\[13\]](#)

Now, we have to be recognizing that we can abuse the work ethic at two ends: one, by indolence, and the other, by overactivity. I'm going to suggest that overactivity's the greatest problem for most of us in a congregation like this—not indolence, but overactivity. And therefore we need to pay attention to the psalmist's words in Psalm 127:2, where he says, "In vain you rise [up] early and stay up late, toiling for food to eat." Does that verse trouble you? You read that verse and you say, "What is this about? Why would it be 'in vain' that we would do these things? After all, aren't we supposed to labor with our hands?" The point is this—and I quote a

commentator, it makes it faster: “When God is left out of our reckoning, feverishness and emptiness mark human efforts to earn bread. Nowhere is this more apparent than when the Sabbath principle is ignored. God’s provision does not require work on the one day in seven he gives for rest. If we break the principle, the provision we already have will easily go sour on us as did the manna.”^[14] There is nothing that so reveals the unwillingness of a man or a woman to take God at his word and to trust him for daily provision, says this commentator, than the abuse of the Sabbath principle. “I’m going to have to work all day, every day.” Why? “Because, frankly, I do not trust God to provide my needs. I do not believe I can shut it down today. I do not believe I can ever stop it from running.” And surely all of us feel both a twinge of conscience and a sense of excitement when we stand in front of Chick-fil-A and we see the photo of that man from Atlanta, and he says, “We’re closed on Sundays, come whatever—whatever the impact to our bottom line.” That’s why we know him! It’s certainly not his chicken. (That’s just a little joke.)

Second observation concerns security, and I’ve alluded to it; I’ll mention it and go past. Security. If our Father has assured us that we can trust him for our daily needs, then trust him for our daily needs we must. He is Jehovah-Jireh, “The Lord Will Provide.” And the believer’s security is not in work, but it is in God who provides work. It’s not in food, but in God who gives food. It’s not in my IRA, but in the God who gives me the ability to save. And our hymnbooks are full of wonderful illustrations of that.

In a greedy world, contentment is a compelling testimony.