

Our Daily Bread



Bread is a big deal in our house. Anytime someone is having bread in our

house, it is imperative that we share with Auden. A few days ago, I had a hot dog for supper, and put it on a piece of bread. And all of a sudden, that bread was no longer mine. And it's not even sliced bread. I can count more than a few days where Auden has had a tortilla shell and yogurt for breakfast. And I don't know if you've noticed, but every time we have communion, there's a very excited two-year-old that insists on taking his own piece of bread and receiving communion. And after church, when we're cleaning up, he also insists on serving his daddy communion. Bread is a big deal in our house. It's something that means a great deal to us and had provided Linse and me with hours of enjoyment and Auden with sustenance for the day (because sometimes we don't fight it if he's actually eating.)



Today, we're continuing our series on the Lord's Prayer, and it's all

designed for us to take to heart these words that we say almost every single week. And today, we continue this by looking at Jesus' words, "Give us this day our daily bread." On its face, this seems like the easiest phrase to understand and maybe even make for a boring message. But there's more that meets the eye in this little phrase here. Like I've talked about the past two weeks, there's more to unlocking the meaning of this phrase than just taking it at face value.

When Jesus says, 'Pray this way...give us this day our daily bread...' part of it means what it means. Jesus is suggesting that we rely on God to give to us the sustenance we need for that particular day. When we pray this prayer, what we're doing is acknowledging that God is the one who grants us what we need for the day. And speaking especially to his disciples, a group of Jewish men and a largely Hebrew crowd,

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this particular phrase would have harkened back to a specific national memory as God's people knew this phrase to be literally true. There was a season in their history when God was literally feeding the people of Israel daily bread. After they were freed from Egyptian captivity, the nation of Israel wandered in the desert and eventually longed for the food they were given in Israel. And God heard them and intervened, giving to Israel their daily bread. And it was daily bread. It was there every day, except for the sabbath, and there enough for the whole nation and double on the day before the Sabbath. If they tried to gather enough for the next day on any day that wasn't the Sabbath, and trust me they tried, the bread would go bad. God satisfied their need for the day every day.

God cared about Israel's physical bodies and well-being. And Jesus took on this mantle in his earthly ministry. Jesus spent a great amount of time dealing the ailments of people's physical bodies: restoring sight to the blind, healing infirmities, raising the lame to walk again, and feeding 5,000 men in Israel (not counting women and children) and then 4,000 over in the Decapolis (again, not counting women and children).



God's care for our physical bodies and our actual needs persists to this

day. There are those who when they pray this prayer are really praying in the grand tradition of the Israelites. There are those who pray this quite literally. And when they pray, "Give us this day our daily bread," they're saying what William Barclay wrote in his commentary on this passage, "Give me the things we need to eat for this coming day. Help me get the things I've got on my shopping list when I go out this morning. Give me the things we need to eat when the children come home from school and the family come in from work. Grant that the table is not bare when we sit down together today." Which is why supporting our next month's mission of the month is so

important and why supporting the Backpack program is so important. It breaks God's heart to see the needs in our own communities, and it should break our hearts, too. This phrase in the prayer says, "Give *us* this day *our* daily bread." It's a prayer that God would call us to action. We aren't asking only for ourselves. This prayer isn't only a prayer that we would *receive* our daily bread; it's also a prayer for us to *share* our daily bread with others.



But what if it isn't just about the bread? This phrase in the Lord's Prayer

reminds me of the dining services and campus ministry offices at the University of Sioux Falls. During my senior year of college, some spaces on campus got shuffled and the Dining Services office ended up right next to Campus Ministries. Our campus pastor Rev. Dennis Thum, a clever and punny man, made a sign that said, "Food for the body" with an arrow toward Dining Services and "Food for the soul" with an arrow towards his office.

By praying this phrase in the Lord's Prayer, we are talking about more than our physical needs. We're also talking about our spiritual needs. In our passage from John's gospel that we read, Jesus is addressing part of the crowd of the 5,000 who were fed and they were sniffing around to see if Jesus would feed them again. Jesus starts talking about "the bread of God" that comes down from heaven and gives life to the world; the crowd says, "Well then, give us this bread!" It is Jesus who then says, "I am the bread of life." Part of our daily bread is our physical needs. But part of our prayer, "Give us this day our daily bread," is us as disciples of this same Jesus pointing out our longing that only Jesus can supply. Deep inside of us, we have a longing for the truth of scripture and for true doctrine. We all have a longing within us for essential truth. As disciples of

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Jesus, we realize and acknowledge that praying for God to provide this is why God sent Jesus in the first place. For it is Jesus, the bread of life, who alone can satisfy this longing with us. St. Augustine puts it this way in his Confessions, an autobiography that details his sinful life and conversion to Christianity, “You have made us for yourself, O Lord, and our heart is restless until it rests in you.” By praying this faithfully and authentically, we acknowledge that Augustine was right and that we long for Jesus’ presence the same way that Auden longs for bread in any form.



So, we come back to this: bread is a big deal in our family. And I’m not

just talking about Linse, Auden, Baby #2, and I. Bread is a big deal in this family. Bread is God’s provision for us given to us enough for the day every day. Bread is learning to rely every single day on a God who is far bigger than we can imagine. Bread is being nourished spiritually and engaging in the presence of God. And so we pray, “Give us this day our daily bread.” Amen.