

*The Lord's Prayer 3*

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*Give us today our daily bread.*

Bread has some potent images for us – the smell as the yeast does its work on the combined ingredients – the sound as the dough is pushed and folded and turned and pushed again – the sight and smell of the loaf in the oven, growing and browning to perfection – the taste and texture as we savour it fresh from the oven or cooled and graced with our favourite topping. It is sustaining.

Potent images of bread fill the biblical text as well. Whether it is in the Old Testament or the New – talk of yeast or manna or Jesus eating with sinners or crowds miraculously fed. It is no wonder that Jesus tells us to pray for our daily bread.

It seems a simple – straightforward and uncomplicated petition... *Give us today our daily bread.* However, *daily* bread can be understood as bread for our **physical being** – bread to keep us alive – bread for our day to day existence; **bread for our spiritual being** – bread for our spiritual nourishment and growth; **bread that is nearby** – bread as metaphor for the simple, basic needs of life. In the prayer that Jesus teaches. *Give us today our daily bread...* means all of these and more.

Bread is often identified with the word of God as spiritual food. *Give us today our daily bread...* recognizes that unless we are daily nourished by the word of God our spiritual selves are starved and stunted. And so, we pray that our minds and hearts should be daily enriched by the study of and meditation upon scripture.

Jesus says he is *the bread of life*. Our daily bread then is nothing less than Christ – he is the one without whose help and strength we cannot live.

Yet it is a prayer with significant meaning even when understood at face value – an appeal for daily bread – that God should give us the ordinary things that we need each day to keep body and soul together. Remember that just as we pray **Our Father** rather than **My Father**, we pray not for **my daily bread** but for **our daily bread**. The selfishness and greed of human society is precluded by this prayer – we are joined with the whole community, and in the global village we are all connected.

This sense of being connected – of our actions having importance and impact not only on our lives but on the wellbeing of so many others – this understanding of how linked we are is so relevant today as we experience this pandemic. We have an opportunity to really live the notion of praying for *our daily bread* – praying for everyone affected to receive healing – praying that selfishness and greed will not be the way we behave – praying that we can weather this viral storm together by God's grace.

There are also obvious and immediate applications to all kinds of injustice – hunger, poverty, agism, racism – at home and around the world. What is sobering about this petition is the awareness that hundreds of millions of people on our planet do not have their daily bread. Upwards of 25,000 children die of hunger-related causes each day. What does Jesus' prayer tell us about this? *Give us today our daily bread...* does not mean "us North American, mostly white, mostly well fed folk" does it? What actions or lifestyle choices accompany our prayer?

The *Catechism for Today* from The Presbyterian Church in Canada says that this petition acknowledges our total daily dependence upon God and asks for provision of the necessities of life for all people, especially for the poor and needy.

We do not ask for our lifetime needs to be met in one fell swoop. We are to pray daily for what we need – content to take the present and leave it in the hands of God. The passage from Exodus reminds us that God shows Israel that they have truly been delivered from Egypt's economy of scarcity and are now free to live in the assurance of God's daily provision. This is why they are prohibited from hoarding manna and warned that what is hoarded will rot – God will provide daily even in the wilderness – trust in God's abundant grace.

Hoarding is certainly on many minds these days as is the idea that perhaps the pandemic and subsequent actions to respond to it might be a form of deliverance from the economy we have been used to for most of our lives. What does it say about our world if the economy is crumbling in part because we are only buying what we need? Have we been living in a false economy – a system that thrives on excess and greed and "me first"? God has told us – continues to tell us – that such a lifestyle – such a worldview – is not only not sustainable – it is not God's will for us. Abundance is not ours to store up under lock and key – it is ours to share because it is God's gift to all.

*Give us today our daily bread...* simple food that is enough. We are not encouraged to pray for luxuries. Bread – not delicacies and riches, not fancy clothes and flashy cars, not precious jewels and valued metals. We pray for what we need not for what we want – God is not to satisfy our greed but to assure us of abundant life in Christ.

*Give us today our daily bread...* expresses our dependence on God – our trust in God – and it challenges us to use our effort and toil for the common good.

Our prayer for daily bread becomes a prayer for community within the body of Christ – recognition that Jesus is the bread of life – all that we might need or desire. Life with Jesus is life in the kingdom of God which implies justice for all – including daily bread. It is a prayer that opens out to expressions of gratitude for bread received and for careful living so that all may be fed.

*Give us today our daily bread...* the bread to sustain our physical selves – compassion and will to participate in God's provision for those who are hungry – the bread of scripture to nourish our journey of faith – the *bread of life*, in sacrament and relationship – present with us always. **Amen**