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Sermon: January 24, 2010  
Beverly E.C.C., Chicago, IL

“GIVE US TODAY...”  
Matthew 6:11

- “Give us today our daily bread” (Matthew 6:11).

The basic meaning is {GNB} “Give us today the food we need,” or (as Eugene Peterson paraphrases it) “Keep us alive with three square meals.”

On the surface, this is the simplest part of the prayer. We can flesh it out with three brief observations.

- ✦ Regarding God’s identity, “Give us today” reveals that He is our able and generous Provider.

Some of us can recall times when our resources ran dry. We cried out to God, and the next day a few bags of unexpected groceries showed up, or someone handed us an envelope with enough cash to keep the lights on.

More often the Almighty exercises his kindness in less dramatic ways: He provides us with intelligence, natural abilities, educational opportunities, and personal connections that open the door to a job, by which we earn money to feed our families.

- ✦ When we pray for daily bread we acknowledge that {W. Barclay} “without God we can do nothing,” and “without our effort and cooperation God can do nothing for us,” for prayer without works is dead.

- ✦ As for the nature of **our relationship with God**, Jesus teaches us request “**daily bread**.”

- Think back to the Exodus. After Israel left Egypt, God gave them a kind of bread called manna. It came fresh every morning, and the people were instructed

to gather just enough for their daily needs. At first, some tried to stockpile it; but by the next morning it was rancid and {Ex 16:20} “full of maggots.”

- ✦ We ask for “**daily bread**” – not a *lifetime supply*. This is a call to trust our Father (rather than ourselves, our money or possessions) day by day, and to be content with what He does (and does not) provide.

- We can be like Paul, who testifies {Php 4:12-13}: “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 all this through him who gives me strength.”

- ✦ In regard to our vocation as Christ Followers, Jesus says, “Give us today our daily bread.” Not *me*, “**us**.” Not *my*, “**our**.”

- Individual responsibility to earn one’s own bread in no way diminishes our communal responsibility to share bread with the hungry. As James 2:15-16 puts it, “Suppose a brother or sister is without clothes or daily food. If one of you says to them, “Go in peace; keep warm and well fed,” but does nothing about their physical needs, what good is it?”

- ☑ Food insecurity and starvation are all too common in the kingdom of the world. {Wikipedia} Someone dies of hunger-related causes every 3.6 seconds. The death toll is 24,048 per day. That’s 8,777,520 human beings per year!

- ☑ It does not have to be this way: {ThinkQuest} 90% of the hungriest nations grow enough food to feed their whole populace and export the surplus. The problem is

not over-population and it is *not* inadequate supply; it is inefficient and unjust distribution.

❖ In light of all this our appeal for “**our daily bread**” is a two-fold commitment to share what we have and to do our part (maybe large, maybe small) to reform the social, educational, economic, and political systems that prevent people from getting their “**daily bread.**”

We are going to go deeper.

Chew on the *word* “**bread**” for a moment. The prayer would not have quite the same ring if He had said “Give us today our daily *meat*,” would it? How about *vegetables*, or *casserole*? Bread is so elemental in so many cultures that, with a handful of exceptions (like rice in East Asia), there is no plausible substitute.

☞ {G. Post} “**Bread addresses [physical] hunger with greater pertinence than any other food.**” For that reason, bread points beyond itself to even greater realities. Today we will look at two.

✱ 1<sup>st</sup>, In the kingdom of God bread is a sign of, and the breaking of bread can be a catalyst for, union with God through Christ.

- After miraculously feeding a crowd of thousands the Lord Jesus declares, {Jn 6:48-51}

**“I am the bread of life. Your ancestors ate the manna in the wilderness, yet they died. But here is the bread that comes down from heaven, which people may eat and not die. I am the living bread that came down from heaven. Whoever eats of this bread will live**

**forever. This bread is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world.”**

- At the Last Supper Jesus breaks bread and says, {Mt 26:26} “**Take and eat; this is my body.**”
- {Jn 21:1-19} After the resurrection, Jesus appears to seven disciples and feeds them bread and fish. In *that* context He reconciles Peter to himself and restores Peter to leadership despite his 3-fold denial.
- And in Revelation 3:20 Jesus says: “**Here I am! I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door. I will come in and eat with them, and they with me.**”

✝ Bread is a sign of union with God. The breaking of bread can be a catalyst for that union. So when we pray for “**our daily bread**” we are imploring God to satisfy our souls in oneness with Him, as we respond in trust, reverence and obedience.

✱ In the kingdom bread is a sign of, and breaking bread can be a catalyst for, union with others.

- We might think first of Communion: “**Because there is one loaf, we, who are many, are one body, for we all partake of the one loaf**” (1 Co 10:16-17).
- But that dynamic is also active in ordinary meals when God’s Spirit is present. In Matthew 9 {9-12} Jesus invites Matthew to follow him. They share a meal, and “**many tax collectors and sinners [come] and [eat] with**” them. Some Pharisees ask, “**Why does [He] eat with**” those scum? Jesus answers, “**‘I desire mercy, not sacrifice.’ For I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners.**” Jesus never validates the

sins of his dinner mates. Still, the Pharisees are correct: this table fellowship is an expression of friendship toward sinners.

- Later, Jesus comments: I {Mt 11:19} **“came eating and drinking, and they say, ‘Here is a glutton and a drunkard, a friend of tax collectors and sinners.’”**

Jesus’ critics accuse him of gluttony and alcoholism because: a) they fast twice every week, but He does not (Scripture requires fasting only once per year, on the Day of Atonement {Lev 23:26-32}); and more to the point, b) Jesus eats with **“tax collectors and sinners.”**

Their charge might *sound* petty; but if it sticks, the consequences could be deadly. These Pharisees’ words echo Deuteronomy 21:18-21:

**If someone has a stubborn and rebellious son who does not obey his father and mother and will not listen to them when they discipline him, his father and mother shall take hold of him and bring him to the elders at the gate of his town. They shall say to the elders, “This son of ours is stubborn and rebellious. He will not obey us. He is a profligate and a drunkard.” Then all the men of his town are to stone him to death. You must purge the evil from among you.**

The upshot is that, by calling Jesus **“glutton,” “drunkard,”** and **“friend of tax collectors and sinners,”** his enemies accuse him of offenses that are punishable by death. Their allegation stems, in large part, from the company He keeps at the table.

Consider these observations:

① {S. Bartchy } **“Jesus practiced a radically inclusive table fellowship as a [pivotal] strategy in his proclamation and [formation] of”** the kingdom of God. I assert that that this was equally revelatory of and fundamental to the kingdom as his preaching and his miracles.

② Jesus ate with **“tax collectors and sinners”** even though He knew it would provoke hostility and opposition from the Pharisees. Their vehement reaction to Jesus was 100% wrong; yet, they were right to take his bread-breaking so seriously.

③ As followers of Jesus, it is necessary and right for us to develop similar relationships of humble, compassionate hospitality with modern **“tax collectors and sinners.”**

✝ Bread is a sign of union with others. The breaking of bread can be a catalyst for that union. So when we ask for **“daily bread”** we are imploring God to unite us with other Christians, and to help us connect in redemptive ways with our neighbors who do not know Jesus.

☑ {Gregory Post, The Feast}

**We stand at a fork in the road. In one direction we see a wide path...with many inviting... markets along the route .... To look is to want. But to have is to hunger, for the wares offer but a low crust of reality. The things are real, but they are not real enough ....There is a confusion of signs and a riot of**

**buying and selling and trading....In the other direction we see a...narrow path. It is traveled, but not heavily.... The way is overgrown, the terrain is difficult.... There is only one sign. It reads: True Bread. The footprints tell us that many started down this path and then turned around and took the other one....The smells of the carnival have pulled them. Those messages of frying fat and spinning sugar have drifted over from the other path...But if one stands there and opens one's nostrils – if one concentrates – one can distinguish the smell of fresh, warm, lovely bread. ....**

**Many a pilgrim has passed up God's bakery to feed on sugarcoated vanity. We stand at a fork in the road where a crucial decision must be made. ...we stand here at the beginning of each day. Down which road will we travel? What will we eat along the way?**

**“Our Father in heaven... Give us today our daily bread.” This is the word of the Lord.**