

We're in the middle of a series called *Pray Like Jesus*, which is all about the great model prayer that Jesus teaches all his disciples to pray, including you and me. We of course know it as The Lord's Prayer.

If the Lord's Prayer wasn't familiar to you going into this series, I trust that when the series comes to an end in a few weeks, it will not only be familiar to you, but will actually have begun to transform your prayer life, your relationship with God, and the way you live each day.

Let's begin today's message with a reading of the Lord's Prayer from scripture. In recent weeks we've been reading Matthew's version of the prayer. Today, we'll read the prayer as it's recorded in Luke's gospel, chapter 11, verses 1-4.

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."

He 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."<sup>1</sup>

Speaking of how praying in line with the Lord's Prayer can transform our prayer lives, I want to remind you of The Lord's Prayer Guide resource that is available for free download at the link you see on the screen: [www.cornerstonechurch.ca/lordsprayerguide](http://www.cornerstonechurch.ca/lordsprayerguide) It will help you to pray each day of the week using the Lord's Prayer as a framework. I invite you to check that out if you haven't done so already.

Today, we come to the part of Jesus' model prayer that really represents what people tend to be most interested in when it comes to prayer.

Luke puts it this way:

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<sup>1</sup> Luke 11:1-4 (NIV)

Give us each day our daily bread.<sup>2</sup>

Matthew puts it slightly differently:

Give us today our daily bread.<sup>3</sup>

Bread is a metaphor for our everyday needs. Perhaps the most basic way to paraphrase this part of the Lord's Prayer would be, *Father, meet our needs this day.*

And isn't this why most people get involved with prayer in the first place? You have a need that you want God to meet. You have a circumstance that you want God to change. And so you pray.

This is called petitionary prayer— asking God to meet our needs— and it's what we'll be talking about today. Specifically, we'll be exploring 3 implications of asking God for daily bread.

The first implication of praying for our daily bread has to do with:

### **1. Putting our needs into perspective.**

Question: In his model prayer, where does Jesus place the request for daily bread? Does he place it at the beginning of the prayer? No. He places it pretty much in the middle of the prayer. This is no accident, because as New Testament scholar N.T. Wright, says:

The danger with the prayer for bread is that we get there too soon.<sup>4</sup>

We get there too soon. When we pray, we tend to rush right into asking God to meet our needs. We anxiously wave our wish lists before God as if nothing else could possibly be more important.

Now sometimes, it can be right and fitting to begin a time of prayer by crying out for God to meet your needs or those of someone you love—especially when the need is acute. We see examples of this throughout scripture.

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<sup>2</sup> Luke 11:3 (NIV)

<sup>3</sup> Matthew 6:11 (NIV)

<sup>4</sup> N.T. Wright, *The Lord and His Prayer*, p. 23.

Still, Jesus teaches us that most of the time, we should wait to ask for daily bread until we've first prayed along the lines of what we've been talking about these last several Sundays in this series:

*Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven.*

Once we've prayed this first part of the Lord's Prayer, it becomes much safer, and indeed fully appropriate, to pray, "Give us this day our daily bread."

Why is that? It's because the perspective we have about our needs and wants quite often requires some healing.

This is exactly what Jesus is showing us in the way he structures the Lord's Prayer. Adoration—praising God for who he is and focusing on *his* will and agenda—should generally come before petition—asking God for the things we need or want.

**Adoration gives us the perspective we need to petition God in the right way.**

Adoration comes before petition because you and I need to be reminded again and again (because we're so very prone to forget) just how great God is. How good God is. How loving God is. How in him we have all we need. When we are reminded of these truths, our perspective about what we actually need, about what we actually want, gets healed.

Years ago, Jan and I had one of those top-loading washing machines that often got off-balance during the spin cycle. Ever had one of those? Instead of staying evenly distributed around the centre of the drum, the clothes would all get lumped onto one side. And when the spin cycle kicked in, this would cause an unbelievably loud banging noise, like a giant was pounding a tympani as hard and as fast as he possibly could. The second we would hear that sound, we'd jump to our feet, rush down the basement stairs, open the washer, and re-distribute the wet clothes around the center.

Often, our perspective about what we need and want gets off-balance, out-of-kilter, and we find ourselves banging and clamouring to God in prayer, *Gimme, gimme, gimme.*

When this happens, you've got to take the laundry of your life, as it were, and re-centre it around God. How do you do that?

Well, before I rush into praying for daily bread, I need to be reminded that I'm praying to *Our Father* who loves me unconditionally and extravagantly, and that he has proven it in

Christ. As the Bible says in Romans: *Since he did not spare even his own Son but gave him up for us all, won't he also give us everything else [we really need]?*<sup>5</sup> This settles my anxious heart, and puts my needs and wants into perspective.

Before I pray for daily bread, I need to be reminded that I'm praying to our Father *in heaven*. The one who is closer than the air I breathe. The one who is on the throne and therefore can do abundantly more than I could ever ask or imagine. I can't handle it. I can't manage it. I can't do it. But our Father in heaven is near, and he is able. This builds my hope and confidence in God, and puts my needs and wants into perspective.

Maybe there are times when I want what I'm asking God for more than I want God himself. And so, before I pray for daily bread, I need to be reminded that God is my heart's ultimate treasure. *Hallowed be your name, Father*. More than anything else I might ask him for, what I need most is more of *him*. This puts my lesser needs and desires into perspective.

Before I pray for daily bread, I need to be reminded that bread is first and foremost a symbol, a sign, of God's kingdom. Whatever else I might ask for in prayer, what I need most is more of God's loving rule and reign in my life— more of his will being done in and through me, as it is in heaven. This, too, puts my needs and wants into perspective.

The late Tim Keller explained that lingering on the God-focused first part of the Lord's Prayer renews our sense of satisfaction and trust in him. As a result, when we do ask God to meet our needs:

We do not arrogantly come telling him what *has* to happen. Many things we would have otherwise agonized over, we can now ask for without desperation.<sup>6</sup>

So before you pray for daily bread there needs to be a healing of perspective about your needs. Otherwise, you'll find that your prayers lack the power, peace, and joy that God intends them to have.

The second implication of asking God for daily bread has to do with:

## **2. Growing in dependence on God.**

Again, the request for daily bread is about our everyday needs. It's not a request to be showered with luxuries, but for God to take care of our immediate necessities— physically, spiritually, emotionally, relationally, financially.

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<sup>5</sup> See Romans 8:32

<sup>6</sup> Timothy Keller, *Prayer: Experiencing Awe and Intimacy with God*, p. 177.

The great theologian Augustine once explained that in teaching us to pray for daily bread, Jesus points us back to this Old Testament prayer from Proverbs:

... give me neither poverty nor riches!  
Give me just enough to satisfy my needs.  
For if I grow rich, I may deny you and say, "Who is the Lord?"  
And if I am too poor, I may steal and thus insult God's holy name.<sup>7</sup>

Just enough to satisfy my needs. This is a call to contentment.

It's also a call to take life one day at a time. We're not asking God to meet our needs for the year ahead or the month ahead or even the week ahead— but rather what we most need during this 24-hour period. *Daily bread.*

In teaching us to pray for daily bread, Jesus presents us with a radical challenge— especially considering the culture we live in.

Many of us have become so invested in looking after ourselves that we end up living as if we really don't need God all that much. Author David Benner puts it this way:

Most of us so excel at ensuring our own ongoing supply of life's provisions that we find the idea of having to come back for daily bread offensive. But God invites us to abandon our neurotic displays of self-sufficiency. He invites us to surrender our stolen independence and exchange it for a willingly accepted dependence.<sup>8</sup>

In the book of Exodus, how did God train the people of Israel to trust and depend on him as they journeyed through the desert toward the Promised Land? He literally gave them daily bread. Each and every day for 40 years, he sent them bread from heaven called manna.<sup>9</sup>

*Ultimately I will fulfill my promise, he told them, and bring you into a land flowing with milk and honey, a land of unimaginable abundance. Between now and then, I will give you bread from heaven, one day at a time. Gather only as much as you need for this day, trusting that I will be faithful to send tomorrow's bread when tomorrow becomes today.*

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<sup>7</sup> Proverbs 30:8-9 (NLT), as noted in Keller's *Prayer*, p. 117.

<sup>8</sup> David Benner, *Desiring God's Will*, p. 42.

<sup>9</sup> See Exodus 16:11-36

Along the way, God's people came to realize that God was good for the bread. He always followed through. He took care of their needs each and every day, without fail. And true to his word, he ultimately led them into the Promised Land— the land of abundance. So in teaching us to pray *give us this day our daily bread*, Jesus invites us to join this great Exodus story, so that we too may depend on the God who so faithfully sustains his people each day as he leads us out of our slavery to sin, and into the land of Promise when Jesus returns and all things are made new— when God's kingdom comes ultimately and fully on earth, as it is in heaven.

At the same time, the prayer for daily bread serves as an indictment of our independence, an indictment of our lack of trust in God. Professor Darrell Johnson says that the prayer forces you to ask yourself:

Is the Father of Jesus able to provide for me one day at a time... Will he come through tomorrow and the next day, until we are finally in the Promised Land? <sup>10</sup>

In a healthy family, children trust their parents to provide for them each day. Generally, children don't feel the need to keep a secret stash of breakfast cereal and juice boxes under their bed in case Mom or Dad should fail to put food on the table. Kids live for the moment, and that's as it should be. Kids won't ask you what they can have for a snack next Tuesday or what's for dinner a month from now. They're all about today.

That's because in healthy families, kids instinctively know that the parents have all the provisions. As long as Mom or Dad is there, they needn't concern themselves with tomorrow. They just ask for what they need or want right now.

The same is true of our relationship with our heavenly Father. Theologian Dallas Willard puts it this way:

Today I have God, and he has the provisions. Tomorrow it will be the same. So I simply ask today for what I need for today or ask now for what I need now. <sup>11</sup>

There is of course still a place for wise planning and saving for the future. What hinders our relationship with God isn't the fact that we have a few provisions set aside for the future. What hinders our relationship with God is when we find our security in the provisions themselves, rather than in our heavenly Father. This is what Jesus means when he says:

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<sup>10</sup> Darrell Johnson, *Fifty-Seven Words that Change the World: A Journey Through the Lord's Prayer*, p. 76.

<sup>11</sup> Dallas Willard, *The Divine Conspiracy: Rediscovering Our Hidden Life in God*, p. 260.

Yes, a person is a fool to store up earthly wealth but not have a rich relationship with God.<sup>12</sup>

But as we learn to pray for and depend on God to give us our daily bread, we get freer and freer from worry about the future. We come to say with the writer of the 23<sup>rd</sup> Psalm:

The Lord is my shepherd, I lack nothing.<sup>13</sup>

That kind of contentment and freedom from worry cannot help but transform our life and relationships.

Another reason why I need to depend on God is that unlike me, my heavenly Father has perfect wisdom when it comes what I actually need.

Consider children once more. Kids may *think* they know what they need. They almost always know what they *want*. For example, there was a time when one of my kids— who shall remain nameless (except to say that his name is the same as one of the gospel writers— and it's not Mark, Luke or John— but you won't pry any more hints out of me than that!) there was a time when this kid of ours would have eaten candy, ice cream, and chips for breakfast, lunch, and dinner seven days a week if we let him. I really think he would have.

But if he were to ask his mom and me for a meal of candy, ice cream and chips, do you think we'd give it him? Well, a kid can always dream, I suppose. But in reality— that simply wasn't gonna happen. Why? Because we're unloving, unkind parents? On the contrary. It's precisely because we're trying to be loving parents, kind parents, good parents, that we would say no son, you can't eat a meal of junk food— but if you finish all your vegetables you may have a small piece of mom's homemade chocolate cake. Because as parents, we have our child's well-being, his best interests, in mind.

You see, when we're children, our judgment about what we think would be good for us isn't always the best, is it?

I mean, when I was a kid, we had this game we played in the forest called tree-diving. What that game involved, I'll leave to your imagination, but I will tell you that it was neither safe nor smart. Still, some of us thought it was a good idea at the time.

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<sup>12</sup> Luke 12:21 (NLT)

<sup>13</sup> Psalm 23:1 (NIV)

If you think there's a pretty big difference between the wisdom of a junk food-eating, tree-diving kid, and that of his loving parents, that difference *is but a drop in the ocean* compared to the difference between *our* wisdom and *God's* when it comes to what we really need.

Oh, what a relief to know that God is not the genie of Aladdin's lamp who will grant us whatever we ask for, but rather our heavenly Father who we can always depend on to wisely and lovingly provide our actual needs, what is truly best for us!

The third implication of asking God for daily bread has to do with:

### **3. Praying for (and sometimes meeting!) the needs of others.**

Jesus teaches us to pray, "Give *us* this day *our* daily bread."

Indeed, you will find not find the words *I, me, or mine* in the Lord's Prayer. Beginning with the address—*Our Father*—Jesus steers us away from self-centredness by teaching us to pray with the whole family of God in mind. The petition is meant to teach us to lift our eyes beyond our own needs, and have compassion for one another as sisters and brothers in Christ.

And given the scope of the Lord's Prayer—*may your kingdom come on earth as it is in heaven*— we must cast the net even wider to include all humanity.<sup>14</sup>

By teaching us to pray *give us this day our daily bread*, Jesus is training us to stand in solidarity with others who are in need—physically, spiritually, emotionally, socially, financially.

Preacher Will Willimon hits uncomfortably close to home when he writes that here in suburban North America:

Most of us perish from too much bread rather than too little, filling the gnawing emptiness within through ceaseless consumption.<sup>15</sup>

But as followers of Jesus, do you and I really have any business pursuing a surplus for ourselves in a world marked by poverty?

In teaching us to pray *give us this day our daily bread*, Jesus redirects our proneness to extravagance and waste, and opens our hearts to those who have needs that God wants to meet *through us*.

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<sup>14</sup> David Timms, *Living the Lord's Prayer*, p. 149.

<sup>15</sup> Will Willimon as quoted in Timms, p. 144.



What Jesus wants you and me to ask him is:

**Lord, how can I become your answer to prayer for someone else's daily bread?**

One way you can become an answer to prayer for someone else's daily bread is by sponsoring a child through Compassion Canada. [www.cornerstonechurch.ca/compassion](http://www.cornerstonechurch.ca/compassion) (show URL on screen along with Compassion image provided)

Compassion is one of the world's leading child development organizations. They partner with local churches to lift children out of spiritual, economic, social, and physical poverty in Jesus' name.

Did you know that Cornerstone has a partnership with Compassion Canada, whereby people from this congregation sponsor over 80 children in the Nicaraguan community of Ciudad Sandino? [There they are on the screen.] By focusing our sponsorships on many children in one area, our church family is able to contribute to the transformation of an entire community.

Through Compassion, my family and I sponsor a Nicaraguan girl named Emma who lives in Ciudad Sandino. Is God inviting you to sponsor a child too? You can learn how to do so by visiting the webpage you see on the screen.

[www.cornerstonechurch.ca/roatan](http://www.cornerstonechurch.ca/roatan)

Another way you can become an answer to someone else's prayer for daily bread is by supporting **Roatán Alive Mission**, which does great work each year serving the spiritual, social and material needs of people on the island of Roatán, Honduras. Roatán Alive Mission will be sending a team to the island this July, including several Cornerstone members. To learn more about the mission, and to support it financially, please visit the link you see on the screen.

Yet another way you can become an answer to someone else's prayer for daily bread is through Cornerstone's local outreach ministries ([www.cornerstonechurch.ca/localimpact](http://www.cornerstonechurch.ca/localimpact)). You can read all about those ministries on our Local Impact webpage, including our food pantry, which continually needs re-stocking so we can serve those in our community who are experience food insecurity. You can also read about how you can get involved in and support our Street Outreach ministry in downtown Toronto, where we get a chance to become God's answer to prayer for people's daily bread, quite literally.

Well today, we've considered three implications of asking God for daily bread:

1. Putting our needs into perspective
2. Growing in dependence on God
3. Praying for (and sometimes meeting!) the needs of others

As we begin to prepare our hearts for the Lord's Supper, I'd like to note how the prayer for daily bread ultimately points to our deepest hunger, to our most important need— our need for Jesus himself.

Yes, God once sent bread from heaven each day to feed the Israelites. But now, Jesus says:

I am the bread of life... I am the living bread that came down from heaven. Whoever eats this bread will live forever. This bread is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world... Very truly I tell you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you have no life in you. <sup>16</sup>

The bread that we eat during the Lord's Supper represents the flesh of Christ, which was broken for the life of the world, and the cup represents his blood, which he shed for the life of the world.

What Jesus meant when he said, *"I tell you the truth, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you have no life in you"* is that he, and nothing or no one else, is our source of life.

And if Jesus alone is life, then it means that our own lives are not self-sustaining. Our lives must be sustained and renewed by Jesus. We require constant connection with and nourishment from Jesus. He is our life-source, and apart from him, we have no life.

Too often we live as if our lives were self-sustaining. But in coming to the Lord's Table this morning, you're saying, "Jesus, I need you more than I need my next meal. Jesus, you alone are my Bread of Life— and I need you each and every day. More than anything or anyone else, you're the Daily Bread I need."

## **Communion**

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<sup>16</sup> John 6:48, 51, 53 (NIV)