

Grace and peace to you from God Our Father and from the one who is our
Daily Bread, Jesus Christ our Savior, amen.

Today we're picking up Matthew's version of the Lord's prayer and we'll be looking at the petition, "Give us this day our daily bread." Matthew's version is a bit longer and is part of Jesus' sermon on the Mount. Jesus gives quite a bit more instructions regarding this prayer in Matthew's Gospel. Before giving the Lord's Prayer, Jesus tells his followers not to be like the Gentiles who love to heap up empty words and phrases. He also tells us God already knows what we need, even before we ask. Doesn't it seem odd that God command us to pray and to ask for the stuff God already knows we need? I mean, why doesn't God just give it to us since he already knows we need it? What if there's a need we have, but forget to ask for it? Does that mean God won't give it? I'm not the only or the first to think about these things. Martin Luther asked many of these same questions. In his commentary on the Sermon on the Mount, Luther concluded Jesus was letting us know we don't need to go into great detail or use many words to describe to God what you need or what you want.

Since Jesus says we should pray for it, let's stop and think about our daily bread... In the small Catechism, Luther wrote Daily bread includes, "everything that has to do with the support and needs of the body, such as food, drink, clothing, shoes, house, home, land, animals, money, goods, a devout husband or wife,

devout children, devout workers, devout and faithful rulers, good government, good weather, peace, health, self-control, good reputation, good friends, faithful neighbors, and the like.” I like the fact that Luther included faithful rulers and good government as part of our daily bread. In these times of pandemic and racial unrest we need faithful rulers and good government more than ever. We need leaders from local, state and federal government to lead with wisdom and courage. We need peacemakers, not rabble rousers. I also like the fact that Luther left the list open ended. As societies change the need for daily bread can change as well. In 1865 our society needed to right the wrong of slavery and so we fought the civil war to emancipate the slaves. Our society needed to right the wrongs of overt racial discrimination and so God raised up a great leader by the name of Martin Luther King Jr. This week marks the 57th anniversary of Dr King's great I've Got A Dream speech. Because of civil rights leaders like Dr King the Civil Rights Act in 1965 was passed. Since that time, we've made many steps to improve race relations, but subtle embedded racial attitudes remain buried, sometimes not too far below the surface. That tension is boiling over in violence in some of our cities. What will our society's response be this time? Only time will tell, but I believe when we pray for our daily bread, God will provide what this current generation needs and will raise leaders who are really faith filled and God will provide good government that looks out for the welfare of it's people, not just politicians who

enrich their campaign coffers... Before I get accused of being overly political, please know that I'm not talking about any politician in particular, I'm only making a, probably unfair, generalization of politicians in general...

Let's move away from politics and politicians and take a look at the actual translation, of the Greek word translated as daily. The word is *ἐπιούσιον* and it's only used twice in the Bible. Both times it's used in the Lord's Prayer. Other than in Matthew's and Luke's versions of the Lord's prayer *ἐπιούσιον* it isn't found anywhere else in all of the Bible or any other ancient Greek writings. That makes its meaning vague and unclear because scholars have no other context to help decipher the meaning of the word. Another translation says give us today, what we will need tomorrow. I sort of like that translation. When thought of in this way we're asking God for a little security. We're asking God for, and therefore putting our faith in God for our future. Coming on the heels of asking for God's Kingdom to come and God's will to be done on earth, asking for tomorrow's bread today is a way of looking ahead to a time when Jesus returns, and heaven comes down to earth.

Daily bread is obviously much more than wishing for Jesus' second coming... It's also about a lot more than mere bread... It includes all the

necessities of life. God certainly provides all the basics of life each and every day without anyone asking. God provides the correct mixture of gasses in the atmosphere to supply our need for oxygen. God provides the earth with fertile soil, rain, sunshine, gravity, and everything else we need to have life and have it in abundance! Luther goes on to explain that the reason God commands us to pray for the needs we have, our daily bread, is not in order to have us make our prayers an instruction to God as to what He ought to give us, but in order to have us acknowledge and confess that God is already bestowing many blessings upon us and that He can and will give us even more. By our praying of the Lord's prayer we're instructing ourselves more than we are God. When we ask God for our daily bread we're essentially acknowledging that by ourselves we can't produce, purchase, or store up a single slice of wonder bread, let alone all the complex things God produces and provides free of charge each and every day. Luther wrote, "A prayer that acknowledges God in this way is a prayer that pleases God." When we ask for our daily needs, we're giving God the glory for every good gift in all of creation. We're also acknowledging where all our daily bread comes from. A Christian understands everything they have, even their very lives come from God. To those who say, "I earned what I have by working hard," a truly Christian response might say, "Oh, really? Who gave you the muscle and or brain power to do that?" A Christian wouldn't hesitate to reply, "God gave me the talent and

ability to do that..." The simple act of asking for our daily bread teaches us to recognize who we are and who God is, and to learn what we need and where we can look to have those needs fulfilled.

This phrase about our daily bread also reminds me that as God's people we're in this life together. *We* pray for *our* daily bread. It's kind of funny and I never really gave it a thought before, but even when I'm alone, saying the Lord's prayer all by myself, I use plural nouns and verbs. Now that I think about it, wouldn't it seem strange and maybe a little bit selfish to pray give *me* this day *my* daily bread? That just doesn't sound like something Jesus would teach. Jesus wants us to think and act like an us. If we pray in the singular, where's the concern for our neighbor, for the poor... In the Lord's Prayer, Jesus is reminding us that the greatest of all the commandments is to love God with all our heart, strength, and soul, and to love our neighbor as ourselves. Even in our most alone and private moments of prayer, Jesus teaches *us* to pray for *our* bread and therefore we're automatically including care for our neighbors as well as ourselves.

Some say Jesus gave his life giving us the gift of His Church. In His death and resurrection, Jesus formed those who have faith in him into this thing we call the Church, which is the living Body of Christ in the world. One of the lessons I've learned from repeating this prayer over and over since my childhood is that in asking for our daily bread Jesus is reinforcing the bonds that hold us together as

His Church. Jesus uses this prayer as a way of changing me into we, and I into us. Every time we pray in the plural we're reinforcing the bonds that hold us together as disciples and followers of Jesus. I guess that means having a healthy, thriving community of faithful followers of Jesus is also part of our daily bread...

The reality is we could go on and on about everything that is included in our daily bread. May we continue to unpack the true meaning of our daily bread. May we never be ashamed to ask for tomorrow's bread, the bread of life, that gives salvation and eternal life. May we always pray in the plural, remembering we're not in this life alone, but we're tethered to each other in this community of faith through God's Word, through the Holy Sacraments, and in the way we pray asking God to give *us our* daily bread. Amen.