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**Title:** Teach Us to Pray: Our daily bread

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**Scripture:** [Exodus 1:1-6, 13-15, 31](#)

**Text:** [John 6:25-35](#)

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We are at the turning point in our study of The Lord's Prayer. A few weeks ago as we began, we recognized that The Lord's Prayer may be the single set of words spoken more often than any other in the history of the world; and, it wasn't really meant to be that way. Jesus gave it to us as a model, as a key to unlock the riches of prayer. Yet it

may be an untapped resource because it is so very familiar. So, we are taking it apart, hoping to unleash its power for our lives.

Each week, we've used an exercise of call and response to study the prayer, to turn a microscope on the individual words of the prayer. Let's continue that practice and do a quick review. Ready. Repeat after me. Our. Father. In Heaven. That is the salutation and we acknowledged in the first week that pronouns are important. You'll see that again this week. "Our" is an adoption statement that joins father. Jesus is saying, "You are a part of the family, adopted, "joint heirs with Christ." He is saying, "My dad, (he actually uses the Aramaic word Abba which means daddy), is yours too. He wants us to have the same intimate relationship with God that he has. But at the same time, Jesus wants us to realize that God is "in heaven" and as such, we boldly call upon the power of the one who created heaven and earth.

Following the opening, The Lord's Prayer then has three petitions about God. Note, Jesus encourages us to pray for God's needs and to address God's plans before we pray for what we want. God's program comes first: our agenda is second. So, in keeping with the model of learning that we've used, let's do that, saying those three petitions together. Repeat after me.

"Hallowed be your name." God's name is holy and we are to make it so, on earth just like it is made holy sacred in heaven by the angels and saints.

"Your kingdom come." God's kingdom is coming in the future, but it is also here and near. We bid it come in the way we live, talk and pray.

Your will be done. On earth, as it is in heaven. We prayed for God's will to shape our lives in hope that God's will and ways, the way things work in heaven, will be the way things will work down here, that "up there will come down here."<sup>1</sup>

The first three petitions then are all about God's wants and needs, about God's program and plans. They are about God's name, God's reign and God's will. Now we come to the turning point of the prayer, when we pray for our wants and needs when we offer the next three petitions about our hunger, our guilt, and our fear. Today is about hunger and in many ways, it may be one of the hardest one for us to pray. Let's pray it together. Repeat after me. "Give us our daily bread." Is that really a concern for you?

Any of you who know me, know I love to eat. You can just look at me and see that. I never miss a meal. How about you? Have any of you missed a meal lately? How about refrigerators? Everybody have a refrigerator? Anybody here have two refrigerators, one in the kitchen and another one in the basement or out in the garage to hold your extra food or your drinks? We do.

Anybody shop at Costco or Sam's Club? It is an amazing experience. Buying in bulk can save you all sorts of money and it means you always have food even though sometimes, you buy so much that it goes bad. When Costco opened, I bought a four-pack of mustard. Wow, what a deal I got. Four sixty-four-ounce bottles of French's yellow mustard, 256 ounces! Do you know how long it takes to go through that much mustard? "Give us our daily bread and mustard." We live in a world of abundance, where we have bread for today, tomorrow and then some, where we are just one shopping trip away from storing if not hoarding more food than we can eat before it expires or spoils. Collectively Americans throw out 35 million tons of food a year.<sup>2</sup>

Not so for the people who Jesus taught this prayer. Many in the crowds that followed Jesus were day laborers. When they were able to work, they were paid just enough pay for one day of food. That was all they had, all they got. If you read the stories of the New Testament, you'll find the word "denarius" is often used. It is a Roman coin that was enough to feed a family of four for one day. "Give us our daily bread" made sense for them because it was the way they lived their lives. But I don't think that this was the point that Jesus is making when he said, "Give us our daily bread."

He was reminding them of a story, one which taught them about what this petition is first and foremost about. It is about trust in the giver. Everybody listening to Jesus knew the story.

It was that time in the history of Israel when God rescued them from slavery in Egypt and wiped out an army of Egyptian soldiers chasing them through the Red Sea. Israel found themselves out in the wilderness hungry. And they complained to Moses and Aaron, saying "we had Costco and Sam's Club back in Cairo" and "...we sat by the fleshpots and ate our fill of bread; for you have brought us out into this wilderness to kill this whole assembly with hunger. Then the Lord said to Moses, 'I am going to rain bread from heaven for you, and each day the people shall go out and gather enough for that day.'" (Exodus 16: 3b-4)

They would have enough, just for one day, daily bread. This would be the way of the migration, from Egypt to the Promised Land. God is trying to teach Israel to depend on the Lord, to trust the giver. When we say "give", it is recognition that "Our Father in heaven" is the giver and provides generously far more than daily bread. We have all the necessities of our life taken care of. Every time we pray this petition, we should acknowledge with thanksgiving what we have and trust that God will continue to provide, just as God did for the people in the wilderness. Jesus wants us to trust and trust is a very personal issue for us.

But it is not so personal that the petition does not go on to say, "**give me my**" does it? No, not "give me my" but "give us our." When you pray this prayer, as you do each week at the beginning of worship and in so many other places and time, do you understand the implied responsibility for sharing food with others? I told you that pronouns would play an important role again. "Us and our" is very different than "me and my."

When we pray this part of the Lord's Prayer, we must not lose sight of the words "us and our." In this prayer we are joining in the cry and need of the human family to which we belong; we are praying not only for ourselves but for all the people on earth.<sup>3</sup>

We need only to look around in our own community to discover the "us" that needs our attention. In 2016, an estimated 1 in 8 Americans were food insecure, equating to 42 million Americans including 13 million children.<sup>4</sup> That's just in our community, our country, alone. After several decades of decline, global hunger is on the rise again, affecting 815 million people in 2016 or 11 percent of the global population.<sup>5</sup> When we pray, "our", we are accepting the responsibility to care for and feed a hungry world. The blessings of abundant food that God so readily gives us is not for me and mine but are for all of us.

It's not that we don't have enough. The abundance is there but humanity has done a horrible job of managing the resources God has given. Whether it is feeding our neighbors in this community or around the world, we need to actively find ways to distribute our abundance. Jesus was all about distributive justice. When the disciples recognized that the crowd of 5,000 was hungry and they wanted to send them away, Jesus said, "No! You give them something to eat." They didn't see how it was possible. So, Jesus took what they had, five loaves and two fish, broke it, blessed it, gave it and when they distributed it, there was more than enough.

He is modeling behavior and he included it in his model prayer. When we pray "give us our" we are praying for the hungry in our community and our world, accepting our responsibility to give them something to eat. "Give us our" puts us to work to see that bread gets to those who need it. Say it that way, before we get to daily bread, say it emphasizing with a commitment to share. "Give us our." Now, "daily bread." "Daily bread."

It doesn't take long to hang around the gospels to realize that Jesus likes to eat, as much as I like to eat and bread is important to him. Bread is bread; but for Jesus, bread is always something more. When we began this series, I offered that Jesus' model prayer was originally prayed in Aramaic, in Jesus' native tongue and the word father would have been Abba. You heard that in our review earlier in this sermon.

No one believes that Jesus ever taught or prayed in the Greek language, even though all of his teachings are recorded in ancient Greek. But in early manuscripts of the Gospel of Matthew, an interesting thing happens when the Lord's Prayer comes up in Matthew 6. The scribes write the prayer in Aramaic. They stop writing in Greek and just naturally write the prayer in Aramaic, the way it was first prayed by Jesus, the way they learned it, the way they prayed it. We know from this and other records that "In Palestine, the Lord's Prayer was prayed uninterrupted in the original Aramaic by the Jewish-Christians well into the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> centuries."<sup>6</sup>

This is important because the Aramaic word for "bread is "lachma." It has multiple meanings. It means food, although not just bread alone, it also means "understanding" literally a food that feeds us on all levels. Jesus is talking about physical bread but at the same time, he is meaning food for understanding, a bread that nourishes the soul.

This shouldn't surprise us given the fact the day after Jesus' miraculous feeding, the crowd looks for Jesus. When they find him, Jesus knows they want to be fed again, to experience another multiplication of the loaves.

Instead, he offers clarification about bread, about "lachma." He reminds them again of the time when God's rained bread down from heaven in the form of manna and that the bread of God that comes down from heaven gives life.

They say, "Give us this bread." "Jesus said to them, "I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me will never be hungry, and whoever believes in me will never be thirsty." (John 6:35) Suddenly the disciples had a new understanding of bread.

This was the understanding of the first Christians praying Jesus prayer and should be ours as well. We aren't just praying for the bread that sustains us physically, even though that is very important and essential. We are also praying for the bread of life which Jesus brings because it too is essential. Jesus brings to us the fullness of life. In him all our hungers are fed, our longings nourished, and the desires of the heart are fulfilled. In Jesus, the bread of life, hunger is sated, and the thirst for life is quenched.

But the original Aramaic reveals even more in the word "daily" which is "mahar." Like the word Aramaic word for bread, it also has two meaning. It can mean daily or specifically today, but it can also mean tomorrow. In fact, the literal meaning of "daily bread" in Aramaic would be "our bread for tomorrow, give us today." But the meaning of tomorrow wasn't just the next day, it meant the great Tomorrow. <sup>7</sup>

Suddenly, we are catapulted into the God's future and reminded of last week's petition, "your kingdom come." We are reminded of the great banquet which God will prepare for his people, "...a feast of rich food, a feast of well-aged wines...that will swallow up death forever. He will wipe away the tears from all faces." (Isaiah 25:6-7) We hear the promise of the Psalm that says the Lord "will prepare a table before us." The banquet, the party, is a sign that God is acting, at last, to rescue his people in the kingdom banquet. <sup>8</sup>

When we pray for daily bread we should hear and remember Jesus saying that the bread is his body and hear him promise not to eat or drink again at the table until the kingdom of God comes. The drama and promise of the Lord's Table is there in the Lord's Prayer. "Our bread for tomorrow, give us today."

Wow. Did you ever imagine? You can see then why we are taking it apart, trying to unleash its power. All of this by simply praying "Give us our daily bread."

The fourth petition of the Lord's Prayer is to address all of our hungers,

- a prayer to trust the giver to feed our physical hunger
- a pledge to feed the hungry of the world
- a petition to feeds our hungry souls, and
- the promise that tomorrow, in the great tomorrow, we will sit at the banquet table in heaven with our Lord, where we will hunger no more.

Unbelievable. Incredible, this gift offered to us by Jesus, our model prayer. Pray it then, with me, not just with new insight but with the hope that comes with it, a pray to feed all our hungers.

“Give  
us our  
daily bread.”

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<sup>1</sup> John Ortberg. The Kingdom of God. Pepperdine University 2014, retrieved @ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TOJ8Jrrc8vs>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.cnbc.com/2015/04/22/americas-165-billion-food-waste-problem.html>

<sup>3</sup> Stroman, Dr. John A. Pray in This Way: Sermons on the Lord's Prayer (Protestant Pulpit Exchange Series) (Kindle Locations 561-563). Abingdon Press. Kindle Edition.

<sup>4</sup> <https://hungerandhealth.feedingamerica.org/understand-food-insecurity/>

<sup>5</sup> <http://www.who.int/mediacentre/news/releases/2017/world-hunger-report/en/>

<sup>6</sup> Jeremias, Joachim. “The Prayers of Jesus. SCM Press, LTD. 1977. Pg 100.

<sup>7</sup> Jeremias, pg. 100.

<sup>8</sup> Wright, N. T. The Lord, and His Prayer. Eerdmans, 1996. Pg 25.