

August 5, 2007 – Patchogue Church of the Nazarene
THE PROVISION OF JESUS
THE PRAYER OF JESUS (Part 5)
A Study of Matthew 6:11; Proverbs 30:7-9
(Based on a series by Dr. Stan Reeder)

INTRODUCTION:

At a birthday party, it came time to serve the cake. A little boy named Brian blurted out, “I want the biggest piece!”

His mother quickly scolded him. “Brian, it’s not polite to ask for the biggest piece of cake!”

“Well then” he asked his mother, “How do you get the biggest piece?”

That’s a question that many people have seldom outright asked.
The Lord addresses that human desire for the biggest piece in His Prayer.

Let’s start by praying the Lord’s Prayer as it is recorded in the KJV in Matthew 6:9-13:

***Our Father which art in Heaven,
Hallowed be thy name.
Thy Kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread.
And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors.
And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil:
For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever. Amen.***

Dr. Elmer Towns tells of a man who was in his Bible class many years ago. This man always wore a hat to work, although he worked in the appliance section of the department store. Everyone knew him as the tall man wearing the straw hat, white shirt and tie, and sleeves rolled up past the elbows. People thought he wore the straw hat everywhere because he was bald. Although he was bald, that was not why he wore the hat.

He had a “patterned” way of closing a sale...

After Dr. Towns taught the Lord’s Prayer in his Bible class, the bald-headed salesman came up to him one day after class to tell him the secret of his sales ability. He wore his hat for one reason, the salesman explained. A written prayer was attached to the inside of the hat band. When he looked inside his hat, he was praying what was written there:
Give us this day our daily bread.

He explained that every sale was his “daily bread” to feed his family. He prayed that prayer while looking into the hat, then he continued praying the Lord’s Prayer till the sale was finalized.

Still, it may seem a little odd today to pray *Give us this day our daily bread*, after all, in our technological age, we have produced more bread and more of many other kinds of food than we could ever imagine.

Take corn, for example. Our agricultural science has produced more ears per cornstalk, more cornstalks that can grow closer together and more kernels of corn per ear, producing a greater yield than any nation in the world, any time in history.

If all the harvesting equipment in America were lined up, they could harvest Iowa in one day. If America harvested corn in the same manner as most in the third world, it would take 31 million people using 62 million horses to harvest Iowa in a day.

America alone produces enough corn to fill enough boxcars to stretch around the world several times. Our food production alone is worth \$100 billion annually. So to pray “Give us this day our daily bread” does not seem like a major prayer request.

In fact for many of us our prayer is more like: *Lord, help me to lose a little of this extra bread around my waste!*

Jesus’ teachings are timeless, so I have to believe there is relevance to this part of the Lord’s Prayer for us today just as there was to the original hearers. In fact the whole prayer balances on this petition. It is the central thought of the prayer – look again.

If you notice the words used, you will see a shift in the focus at this point in the prayer. There is a change from “Your” to “our.” This is the point where divine and human connect.

Daily Bread is the pivot on which the whole prayer style and the lifestyle of the follower of Jesus rests. This demonstrates whether we depend on God’s grace and provision or not. Remember that we just honored God as our provider when we prayed “hallowed by Thy name.” What Name? Yahweh Jireh – The LORD provides – our daily needs.

In that culture and time period there were no preservatives, and bread was a basic necessity of life and a central component in the home. Without refrigeration, bread spoiled overnight. In the O.T. God provided manna in the wilderness every morning, and it spoiled if they tried to keep it overnight. God wanted them and wants us to depend completely on Him for our basic necessities each and every day. In the N.T. we are told that Jesus is the manna from Heaven, the Bread of life and the means of God’s grace.

After His resurrection, He was with His disciples and they didn’t recognize Him until He broke bread with them. When we celebrate Holy Communion together we recognize Jesus as the Bread of life. The bread is a means of God’s grace to us and available to all who would acknowledge Him personally as Savior and Lord. There are physical and spiritual levels to the daily bread concept.

We pray at meals giving thanks for God's provision as an acknowledgement of our dependence on Him. In Revelation John tells of times where people won't be able to buy food in the market place unless they receive the mark, but believers are warned not to align with the enemy. We are to remain faithful to the Lord no matter what! He will take care of His people; we need not fear the threats of the enemy especially when it comes to our daily rations (actual translation of the word 'bread' in the Lord's Prayer).

Give us today our daily bread – God promises to provide, and he is our provider.

PREVENTATIVE BENEFITS OF PRAYING FOR DAILY BREAD:

1. It prevents independence (Proverbs 30:7-9; Colossians 1:17).

Praying *Give us this day our daily bread* reminds us that we are not independent. The Scripture says *in Him all things hold together (Colossians 1:17)*.

Back of the loaf is the snowy flour
And back of the flour, the mill
And back of the mill is the field of wheat,
The rain, and the Father's will.

Everything you eat today can be traced back to the Father's gracious will. He is the giver of all good things.

Further, this phrase of the Lord's prayer is a prayer for balance. Jesus would have had the proverb which contains this phrase in mind when he taught the disciples to pray it. Proverbs 30:7-9 - *Two things I ask of You, O Lord; do not refuse me before I die: Keep falsehood and lies far from me; give me neither poverty nor riches, but give me only my daily bread. Otherwise, I may have too much and disown You and say, 'Who is the Lord?' Or I may become poor and steal, and so dishonor the name of my God.'*

2. It prevents false hope (Jeremiah 17:7-8; Psalm 33:16-18, 20-22).

The stock market depends upon your and other investors' money . . . don't be dependent upon the stock market, or the government, or the economy . . . place your hope in the Lord alone. He is the only sure thing and His promises are trustworthy historically.

Jeremiah 17:7-8 - *But blessed is the man who trusts in the Lord, whose confidence is in him. He will be like a tree planted by the water that sends out its roots by the stream. It does not fear when heat comes; its leaves are always green. It has no worries in a year of drought and never fails to bear fruit*

Psalm 33:16-18, 20-22 - *No king is saved by the size of his army; no warrior escapes by his great strength. A horse is a vain hope for deliverance; despite all its great strength it cannot save. But the eyes of the Lord are on those who fear him, on those whose hope is in his unfailing love . . . We wait in hope for the Lord; he is our help and our shield. In him our hearts rejoice, for we trust in his holy name. May your unfailing love rest upon us, O Lord, even as we put our hope in you.*

The heritage of America is “In God we trust”. In the last 40 years we have been systematically removing our trust from God. We have been attempting to remove God from our education, from our business ethics, from our justice system, from the public square. God has not forsaken America, America has forsaken God. ***May your unfailing love rest upon us, O Lord, even as we put our hope in you!***

3. It prevents love of money (1 Timothy 6:6-10).

America is caught in the clammy grip of the love of money. One of the greatest symbols of this love of money is the rise of gambling. I’ve heard pastors preach against playing the lottery and gambling, but then add, “But, if you win, remember the church!”

Here are some statistics:

Back in 1994, in all 50 states, Americans spent \$8 billion on movie tickets.

In the 36 states where gambling was legal Americans sent \$24.4 billion.

In 1999, more than \$600 billion was waged in the US – more than we spend annually on groceries!!

The massive Las Vegas casino, “New York, New York” was completed in 1996 at a cost of \$460 million. It was paid off in two years.

The INTERNET – gambling sites increased 200% in 3 years with an estimated 14 million gamblers last year.¹

As many as 3% of Americans are addicted, compulsive gamblers. 5-8% of all youth are addicted to gambling. They believe with Jimmy the Greek:

The next best thing to gambling and winning is gambling and losing
- Jimmy the Greek

*There are two times in a man’s life when he should not gamble...
when he can afford it and when he can’t.*
- Mark Twain

Once the longing for money comes, the longing also comes for what money can give: superfluities, nice rooms, luxuries at table, more clothes, fans and so on. Our needs will increase, for one thing brings another, and the result will be endless dissatisfaction. This is how it comes.² (Mother Teresa)

The Lord’s prayer doesn’t say, “Lord, give me everything I want and give it to me now.” It says, ***Give us today our daily bread.***

¹ All statistics from James Dobson, “Focus on the Family Newsletter, Jan 1999.

² Mother Teresa, “Jesus, the Word to Be Spoken” Christianity Today, Vol 39, #12.

The Lord *promises* to meet our daily needs, not our daily greeds.
He promises the necessities, not the niceties.

Listen to what Jim Bakker, the former head of the PTL network and a man who formerly championed the health and wealth gospel, wrote in his book, I Was Wrong, after being released from prison for defrauding scores of financial contributors:

During my time [in prison] I observed something that, it seemed to me, had gotten nearly every inmate into trouble The underlying reason why some of the bankers, Wall Street businessmen, doctors, and others, are in prison is because of something they did to get more money. I realized that of the 60% of inmates who were in prison because of drug-related crimes, most of them are there not because of an addiction to drugs; they are there because of an addiction to the drug of money. It was their insatiable desire for more money that led them to selling drugs in the first place, not a desire to ruin someone else's life, or get them hooked.

About the time of my parole hearing, I completed a study of all the words of Jesus in the New Testament Even the prodigal son, one of my favorite stories told by Jesus, took on new meaning as I read it for the first time with the overview of Scripture in mind. I quickly noticed that the story began with the younger brother saying to the father, "Give me! Give me my part of the inheritance" (Luke 15:12). . . . I began to realize that the fastest way to the pigpen begins with "Give me" . . . and the fastest route to the "big pen," the federal penitentiary, often begins with the same phrase: "Give me!"³

The Lord invites us to pray ***Give me neither poverty nor riches but give me only my daily bread***" (Proverbs 30:8b).

Think about what Paul wrote to Timothy in 1 Timothy 6:6-10:

But godliness with contentment is great gain. For we brought nothing into the world, and we can take nothing out of it. But if we have food and clothing, we will be content with that. People who want to get rich fall into temptation and a trap and into many foolish and harmful desires that plunge men into ruin and destruction. For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil. Some people, eager for money, have wandered from the faith and pierced themselves with many griefs.

4. It prevents worry (Matthew 6:34).

The Lord's Prayer teaches us to *trust the Lord for today*. **Matthew 6:34 - *Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own.*** Ask and trust for today. **Matt. 6:25-34** deals specifically with worry as it relates to our daily needs. It starts off: ***"Therefore I tell you , do not worry about your life, what you will eat or drink; or about your body, what you will wear."***

³ Jim Bakker with Ken Abraham, I Was Wrong (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1997), 531-533, 541.

5. It prevents self - centeredness (Matthew 6:11).

It is interesting to note that the Lord extended the prayer from the Proverbs: “*give me only my daily bread*” (Proverbs 30:8), to – *give us this day our daily bread* (Matthew 6:11). The prayer is not focused on the Lord’s daily provision for me . . . it is not my daily bread; it is our daily bread. The Lord’s Prayer is a corporate prayer that prevents our focus from being on self. We must pray that the Lord would provide all his children with daily bread... “Lord, as you meet my needs, also meet their needs.”

Years ago a poet wrote:

*Bow thy head and pray
That while thy brother starves today
Thou mayest not eat thy bread in ease.
Pray that no health or wealth or peace
May lull thy soul while the world lies
Suffering, and claims thy sacrifice.*

Use this phrase of the Lord’s prayer to pause and seek God’s counsel if there be one that he desires to meet the need of through you.

APPLICATION:

Take time to pray this morning . . . as you thank God for your daily bread today . . . is there an action step he would have you take. Don’t harden your heart . . . do as he asks.

George Mueller wrote this beautiful poem:

*I believe God answers prayer,
Answers always, everywhere
I may cast my anxious care,
Burdens I could never bear,
On the God who heareth prayer.
Never need my soul despair
Since He bids me boldly dare
To the secret place repair,
There to prove He answers prayer.⁴*

⁴ George Mueller, quoted in Donald Whitney, Spiritual Disciples for the Christian Life (Colorado Springs, CO: NavPress, 1991), 77.