

Sermon for A Year with the Catechism The Lord's Prayer: The Fourth Petition

Date: January 23, 2021

Location: St. John's Lutheran Church, Austin, MN

Old Testament: Malachi 3:7-12

Epistle Reading: Philippians 4:11b-13

Gospel Reading: Luke 11:5-13

Sermon Text: Matthew 6:9-11

Sermon Title: The Lord's Prayer: The Fourth Petition

Introit: Psalm 145:15-19; Antiphon: Psalm 145:20

Hymns:

LSB 894 – For the Fruits of His Creation

LSB 766 – Our Father, Who From Heaven Above
(v1,5,9)

LSB 774 – Feed Thy Children God Most Holy

LSB 617 – O Lord, We Praise Thee

LSB 851 – Lord of Glory, You Have Bought Us

Liturgy:

Divine Service Prayer and Preaching, p. 260

Songs:

A Shield About Me

Grace Like Rain - Todd Agnew

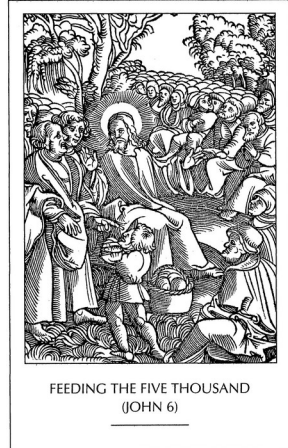
He Knows My Name -

Francesca Battistelli

Word Of God Speak - Mercy Me

Liturgy:

Creative Worship



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Text: Matthew 6:9-11

“This is how you should pray:

Our Father in heaven,
let your name be kept holy.
Let your kingdom come.
Let your will be done on earth
as it is done in heaven.
Give us our daily bread today.

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Grace to you, and peace, in Jesus' holy name. Amen.

The fourth petition of the Lord's Prayer is:

Give us this day our daily bread.

What does this mean?

God certainly gives daily bread to everyone without our prayers, even to all evil people, but we pray in this petition that God would lead us to realize this and to receive our daily bread with thanksgiving.

What is meant by daily bread?

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.

In the first three petitions of the Lord's Prayer, our Lord Jesus teaches us there should be no limit to what we ask when we pray to 'Our Father in heaven.'

- We should ask God that His Name would be kept as holy and sacred here on earth as it is in heaven. Can you imagine what that would really be like?
- We should ask God that His Kingdom would come here on earth as it does in heaven. Can you imagine what that would really be like?
- We should ask God that His will be done here on earth as it is in heaven. Can you imagine what that would really be like?

In the first three petitions of the Lord's Prayer Jesus says we should ask for heaven on earth. That's a lot, and it may strike you as being a bit presumptuous to ask God for anything so grand as heaven on earth. It's like when someone takes you out to a really nice restaurant and says 'order what you want.' You just don't feel right ordering the most expensive thing on the menu.

However, when it comes to 'Our Father in heaven,' He says just the opposite is true. This is Jesus Christ, the Son of God, the One who pays our bill, and He's telling us to ask for heaven on earth. To ask for anything less would in fact be rude.

Martin Luther, in his Large Catechism, creates a little story to make his point. He writes:

Suppose that the richest and mightiest emperor on earth were to order a poor beggar to ask for whatever his heart might desire, and was prepared to give him great imperial gifts. Then suppose the fool of a beggar would ask for no more than a ladle of beggar's soup.

For having treated his imperial majesty's command with such mockery and contempt, he would rightly be regarded as a rogue and a scoundrel and as one who was not worthy, ever again, to come into the emperor's presence.

It similarly exposes God to great shame and disgrace if we, to whom He offers and assures so many inexpressible riches, despise them or do not confidently expect to receive them, but instead are scarcely able to bring ourselves to ask for a piece of bread.¹

This morning we have turned our attention to the 4th Petition of the Lord's Prayer, in which Jesus tells us we should pray like this: "Our Father who art heaven... give us this day our daily bread."² Doesn't it seem as though Luther's little story is turned against him? Here our Lord is telling us we should indeed ask our Father for the lowest and most basic earthly need, a simple 'piece of bread?' Maybe we don't fully appreciate the incredible heights and depths that the Lord's Prayer covers.

Jesus directs us to pray for the 'great spiritual necessities' of faith that sustain and strengthen us for eternal life in Heaven. He also directs us to pray for the 'basic physical necessities' of life that sustain and strengthen us for daily life here on Earth. God is just as interested in providing for our body as He is our soul.

What this means is we may have to rethink our ideas of what true religion really is. It's very tempting to think about religion in broad and sweeping terms that may have little, if any, connection to the dirty little details of daily life like: food, shelter and the economy. We want to think religion is about much more lofty matters; spiritual matters and things of eternity. These are the things all religions point to. The truth is the devil would like nothing more than to convince you religion deals only with 'spiritual things.' He knows all too well just how controlled we are by our appetites and physical needs. He doesn't mind if your religious. He just doesn't want you to actually be Christian.

In this petition, Jesus tells us God our Father is in the little details of life such as "what you will eat, drink or wear."³ We should recognize our loving heavenly Father's gracious hand even in the giving of the most minor things of simple daily life.

When you think about it our spiritual and physical needs are not so separate and distinct from one another as we often tend to make them.

1 Martin Luther's Large Catechism – The Fourth Petition of the Lord's Prayer.

2 Matthew 6:9,11

3 Matthew 6:25

- Just think about Adam and Eve and the fact that their great fall from grace happened over food.⁴
- Esau sold his birthright to his brother Jacob just because he was hungry.⁵
- When Jesus realizes that it was late in the day, and the crowd which had come out into the wilderness to hear Him preach was hungry, He doesn't say, "well at least I've filled their soul and that's what matters." Not at all! He knows the Word of Life is hard to swallow on an empty stomach so He feeds them with bread and fish.⁶
- Saint James says:
 - “Suppose a believer, whether a man or a woman, needs clothes or food and one of you tells that person, ‘God be with you! Stay warm, and make sure you eat enough.’ If you don't provide for that person's physical needs what good does it do?”⁷”

It is as though the human soul, and the human belly, are wired together on the same circuit. In fact, in his Small Catechism, Luther explains God employs the same Divine grace in the giving of daily bread for our body, as He does in the giving of the Bread of Life for our soul.

- The Kingdom of God certainly comes by itself *without our prayers*; by grace alone.
- The will of God is done even *without our prayers*; by grace alone.
- God certainly gives daily bread to everyone *without our prayers* even to all evil people. Even this is by grace alone.

So how thankful we should be that the one true holy living God is a gracious God? Think about it. What if God gave us our daily bread only when we prayed for it? We would all be either be a whole thinner or we would be a whole lot more diligent about praying than we probably all really are currently.

Thanks be to God He is gracious and merciful.

- He sent His Son, Jesus Christ into the world for our salvation *even without our prayers*.
- Jesus bore our sins and suffered death, even death on a cross, *even without our prayers*.

4 Genesis 3:6
 5 Genesis 25:33-34
 6 Matthew 14:13-21
 7 James 2:15-16

- “He who did not spare His own Son but handed Him over to death for all of us, *even without our prayers*; how will He not also give us everything else along with Him, *even without our prayers*.⁸”

So as Jesus teaches us how we should pray we learn something we already knew, but very easily forget, and which I think has a lot to do with why we do not pray as often as we should. Everything, from the big and important things, to the small and insignificant things, the spiritual things and the material things, the eternal things and the temporal things, all come to us from the hand of God and in no other way.

It’s easy for us to see the hand of God in the powerful miracles Jesus performs and certainly in His resurrection from the dead, but how easily we can lose sight of the fact the Sun does not rise, the rain does not fall, the seed does not germinate, the crops do not grow, and the food is not harvested, apart from the hand of God.

The writer of Psalm 104 says:

You cause the grass to grow for the livestock
and plants for man to cultivate,
that he may bring forth food from the earth.⁹

Luther actually does us a great service to us by helping us see the hand of God in all of the little details that are involved in taking care of our daily physical needs. When he asks in the Small Catechism, ‘What is meant by daily bread?’ Luther includes the entire economic system needed to produce and deliver our daily bread. He writes:

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.

All of these are the ingredients of a good economy which is the means through which God delivers our daily bread to us. As we are that ‘devout husband or wife, or devout child, or devout worker, or devout and faithful ruler,’ we are the very hand of God through whom God supports the daily physical needs of our neighbor, like James taught.¹⁰

If we are the instrument through which others receive their daily bread, then we also understand our daily bread comes to us through the devout service of others who act as servants of God, even if they don’t know it. The entire economic system of our country is included in the petition, “give us our daily bread.” Even if they don’t know it. Even if they don’t care. Even if they don’t want it to be true.

8 Romans 8:32 (Paraphrased)

9 Psalm 104:14

10 James 2:15-16

A story I once heard makes that very clear.

An elderly widow lived in her home. She was a dear and faithful Christian woman, who all her life prayed each night by kneeling at an opening window and looking up to Heaven. Each night she would pray for the people around her and for her daily needs.

Her next door neighbor was a devout angry atheist who all Summer long had to listen to her prayers and it perturbed him a great deal.

On one particular night the very poor woman was praying. She shared with God she had no money, and there was no food left in the house. She didn't know how she would survive. The man thought, "I'll show her how silly her God is." So he got up in the middle of the night, went to the store and bought bags and bags of groceries, then secretly placed them on her porch.

In the morning the woman woke up, and soon discovered all of the food on her porch. "It's a miracle!!" she exclaimed. She invited all her friends and they ate a banquet. They celebrated God's glorious bounty and gifts.

That night the woman knelt at her window and with exuberant prayer she gave thank for God gracious grace. "Oh thank you Lord for the miracle of the food. You are powerful and You hear the prayers of Your faithful servants...

It was this moment for which the atheist neighbor was waiting. He shouted out his window, "you stupid old woman! Your God didn't give you that food I did. I snuck out last night and I put it on your porch. Your God didn't do anything!!"

Without skipping a beat the woman continued to pray. "God of all gods, the Most Holy One, You are powerful indeed. Not only did you fill my house with food enough to share but you made the devil pay for it!"

When you really think about it, we should be just as thankful to God for the daily bread that sustains our body, as we are for the Bread of Life that sustains our soul. We

should receive our daily food and drink with the same gratefulness to God as we receive the food and drink of the Lord's Supper.

- This means every meal we eat provides the opportunity to pray and give thanks to God.
- It means every morning we get up and put on clothes and shoes, provides the opportunity to pray and give thanks to God.
- As we leave the house in which we live we should pray with thanksgiving to God for giving us a roof over our heads and a place for our family to live safely.
- As we go to work each day and when we receive a paycheck for the work we do we should stop and pray with thanksgiving to God because all of this comes from His hand.

This is what the writer of Psalm 145 had in mind when he prayed:

The eyes of all look to you,
and you give them their food in due season.
You open your hand;
you satisfy the desire of every living thing.¹¹

There is one more point to this petition we need to consider. Our Lord teaches us to pray, not for 'bread in general' but for "daily" bread specifically. We are to look to the hand of God to supply us with all we need for today, and trust the Lord will provide for us again, out of the same love and care tomorrow.

This of course touches on the whole business of anxiety and worry as well as gluttony and greed. Immediately after teaching the Lord's Prayer, Jesus goes on to say:

So don't ever worry about tomorrow. After all, tomorrow
will worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its
own.¹²

Isn't it true though? Very few of us can bring ourselves to trust enough in God's care for our lives that we never worry about tomorrow. The typical remedy for our anxiety we usually hear is either, 'don't worry,' or 'take this pill,' but it might be better to think about our worry and anxiety as a strange gift from God, through which He invites us to pray for faithfulness. When we feel anxious about tomorrow, or the next week, or next year, we might think about it as a built in reminder that we should pray as our Lord has taught us: "Our Father in heaven... Give us this day our daily bread" and help me to trust in You to supply all I need.

¹¹ Psalm 145:15-16

¹² Matthew 6:34

The same petition also acts as an appeal to God for His help in keeping our natural tendency toward greed and gluttony under control. When Jesus says we are to pray for ‘daily bread,’ He frames the petition in the plural and not the singular. We are to pray He would give “us our daily bread.” He doesn’t tell us to say, “Give me my daily bread.”

Even if I have all of the food and drink, clothing and shoes, house and home, land and animals that I need to sustain this physical body another day, I am to pray for those, and with those, who do not.

Carefully woven into this petition is the appeal to God that He would make me more generous and willing to share what He has given to me with those who lack the daily physical necessities of life in this world.

He teaches us:

“Pray like this... ‘Our Father who art in heaven... give us this day our daily bread.’”

In Jesus’ name.

Amen.

**Proclaim God's Word,
Encourage one another in faith,
Witness to God's love and
Serve all people**

