

Give us today our daily bread

Matthew 6:11 and Luke 11:3

Thanksgiving Day, November 24, 2016

Theme: We pray for our daily bread

- I. Asking our dear Father who gives all things
- II. Thanking our Father for his daily blessings

INJ We tend to flop back and forth between optimism and pessimism. On the bright side: The weather has been good. I am surrounded by family and friends. The food is fabulous. Then, frustration: Another thing broke, and I can't repair it. Family get-togethers are stressful. What is happening with my health? I hate that it is dark by 5:00.

Whether you are feeling positive or negative today, we have gathered here to thank God for his blessings. Let's do it. I want you to think of three things – right now – you are thankful for. Three gifts from God. — Do you have three? What if those were the only three blessings you had from God? Nothing else! Would you still thank him?

What I am getting at is this: do we thank God for the things he gives, or do we thank God for his giving love? Are we interested in the gifts, or in the one who gives them? It is an interesting exercise. Eliminate the things you are thankful for first. Would you still thank God if you didn't have a cell phone? No cable or dish. No video games or social media. Those are mostly peripheral things. Let's go deeper. Could you find reason to thank God if you lost your job? If a family member died? If you were diagnosed with cancer? When our world is rocked by huge disturbances, can we give God thanks? For what do we give thanks to God? What is most important?

If we flip the situation around it might look this way: What physical blessing would you ask of God if you could only ask for one? We will take up that idea as we consider the words Jesus taught his disciples to pray. In the Lord's Prayer the fourth petition says: "Give us this day our daily bread." We pray for our daily bread asking our dear Father who gives us all things, and thanking our dear Father for his daily blessings.

When we pray to God we acknowledge a precious relationship. Our God is not just some vague force of good or evil in the universe. He is not an absent concept, uninvolved with our life. Our God has revealed himself to us as our Father. We are his children, and he has demonstrated his love for us in Christ Jesus. Our Father bids us to pray to him boldly and confidently. He will hear and answer.

As children, we have to admit that we are unworthy of his attention. We have been selfish. We have whined and complained about our life. We rebel against our Father, doing the opposite of what he has commanded. Despite the abundance of blessings that he pours into our hands, we take them for granted. We do not give thanks. We want more and different. The things that make us happy today, we despise tomorrow. Who could love children such as us?

Our dear Father in heaven has loved us. Look at how he has shown it! He sent his only Son to suffer and die in our place. He loved us so much that he did not spare anything to bring us back to himself. The blood of Christ paid the debt we owed for our sin. His perfect life supplied the obedience demanded from us. In Christ we are forgiven! God has reconciled us to himself. He has freed us from guilt and declared us not guilty of sin. This is how our Father has loved us: Not with feelings, but with action. Not with good intentions, but with results. Since Jesus has risen from the dead we can be sure we have peace with God. We need not fear our Father or doubt him. He has met all our needs in Christ.

When we pray to our Father in heaven, we pray in Christ. Trusting his forgiveness. Confident of his mercy. Our dear Father has given us the most precious gift of all, and it will not be taken from us. Jesus called it the one thing needful. God's Word tells us our sins are forgiven. Heaven is our home. The inspired Scriptures teach us and comfort us and keep us in the faith. All this is ours! Whether we wallow in wealth or are submerged in misery – it does not change the gospel! Our Father sent his Son to redeem us. By the power of the Holy Spirit we are his dear children.

The message of Christ makes us rich beyond measure! No other blessing can compare. Yet our God gives us so much more than just spiritual blessings. He also wants us to ask him for the physical things we need. He gives us those blessings, too. That is the point of this petition of the Lord's Prayer. What physical blessings are the most important? Which would you ask for if you only had one request?

Since we approach our Father in faith, we come boldly and confidently. We acknowledge that all things are his. He made it all, and he sustains it by his mighty power. He owns the sunrise and he owns the mountains, the plains, the seas and the skies. He causes things to grow and produce. He makes the elements interplay and combine to construct raw materials. He gives talent and skill to produce and prepare, to distribute and sell. It is all his.

Our bold prayer is that he entrust some of what is his to us. That

he allow us to use it for his glory. That the skills and talents he has provided us, we use to help others and meet their needs. The sheer abundance of God's physical gifts is overwhelming! Everything comes from him. Even the air we breathe and the water we drink is from his hand. Before we ask for anything at all – might we appreciate the abundance of what he has already provided! He has not given these physical blessings to just a few, to just his believers, or to just those who meet some standard of obedience. He gives to all. Even to the wicked. Generously. Consistently. Every day. Our dear Father gives all things!

As we consider the distribution of God's gifts, we must stand in awe of his generosity. Thankful hearts should overflow every day with praise to the one who gives us so much. But they don't, do they? We are not content. We want more. We want what they have. How come God doesn't give me enough? Why doesn't he give me that? When we pray to our Father, is it to complain? Do we pray to convince God to give more?

The Lord's Prayer has seven petitions. These are things that God has promised and that we can be absolutely sure he will give. In six petitions we ask for spiritual blessings: God's name is holy as his gospel is proclaimed and we live according to it. His kingdom comes as the gospel enters hearts and as the Spirit works by the word. His will is done. Our sins are forgiven. He delivers us from temptation and every evil. God does all that for us! He also gives for our body and life. Rather than mention hundreds of things, Jesus boiled it down to one thing: "Give us each day our daily bread." Give it to us today, just what we need.

What is the one physical blessing you would pray for, if all you had was one request? Jesus teaches us to pray for our daily bread. Whatever it is that I need, dear Father, supply it from your bountiful goodness. Since I already have Christ, I am not without hope. I don't need to tell you any details, and I don't want to know them. Whatever you give, Father, that is what will make me satisfied and thankful.

Not what we usually think to pray for, is it? I want a new car. I want a better job. I want the weather to cooperate. I want to stop hurting so much. I want the government to work better. I want to stop fighting with my spouse. I want to be secure in my retirement. Are all those part of our daily bread? They are the things we need for our body and life, aren't they? We can be confident our Father, who knows all our needs, will meet them. We thank him for all he gives.

Rather than complain about what we don't have, let us thank our Father for the gracious gifts he has provided. Today we have just what we

need, don't we? God has given us family and friends. We have peace and order in our community. There is food to eat, and much to spare. We gather with fellow Christians to hear God's word and praise his name. We have clothes to wear. If that is all we had, we would be rich! Yet there are still cars and trucks, phones, games, Black Friday deals. Just today, our heavenly Father has given us more daily bread than we can measure!

What about tomorrow? Most of us have stocked enough away that we could make it through tomorrow. There are always turkey leftovers, right? Yet we have also laid away for our future health care and our retirement, stocked up for the winter, purchased things on sale for next season. Do we need God to give us daily bread tomorrow?

If we think we can make it through tomorrow on our own, we are mistaken. Every day our Father gives us daily bread. Weather. Gravity. Growth. Laughter. Rest. If he didn't give them, we would not survive. He gives daily bread today and he will do it tomorrow, and the day after, and every day until he comes in glory. Do you think he will fail? Jesus once urged us not to worry, for tomorrow will worry about itself. God, who provides for the birds and flowers, and who counts the hairs on your head, and who has given his Son to save – he will keep his promise! Your daily bread comes from his hand every day.

So let us treasure right now. Right now we can repent of our greed and selfishness. Repent of our lack of trust in our Father to give his good gifts every day. Repent of our failure to thank. Repent of our failure to receive everything as a good gift from God. Repent of seeing our life as mostly physical while forgetting the more important and absolutely certain gospel message. Repent of our being whiny and self-absorbed children.

Treasuring right now means also trusting that Jesus has forgiven us. His blood paid the debt for our sin. He set us free by his death and resurrection. Jesus has come to us in baptism to make us his dear children. He comes in the gospel so that we remain in the faith. He assures us of his faithfulness in the Lord's Supper. Our guilt is gone! We have access to the Father. Right now we have treasures beyond measure.

This day we have gathered here to thank God our Father for all his gifts, physical and spiritual. We ask him never to stop giving them to us. "Give us today our daily bread." Each day. Whatever it is, much or little. Whether it makes us joyful or gives us pain. Our Father gives, and it is for our good. Let us boldly rejoice that our heavenly Father has met our every need in Christ. Thank you, Father, for your great and saving love. Thank you, Father, for our daily bread. SDG Amen.