

MINISTRY BY MAIL
Lutheran Conference of Confessional Fellowship
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Twentieth Sunday after Trinity, October 5, 2008

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HYMNS: 28, 458:5, 434, 38, 47.

LESSONS: Job 23: 1-12, 2 Cor. 9: 1-15, Luke 12: 22 – 34.

SERMON TEXT: (Mt. 6:11 KJV) *"Give us this day our daily bread."*

Sermon by Pastor Robert Mehlretter

In the name of Jesus Christ, Dear Fellow Redeemed,

Notice how the different evangelists and different translations translate this petition:

(Luke 11:3 NIV) *"Give us each day our daily bread."*

(Luke 11:3 KJV) *"Give us day by day our daily bread."*

(Matthew 6:11 NIV) *"Give us today our daily bread."*

(Matthew 6:11 KJV) *"Give us this day our daily bread."*

What's most important in your life? What would you answer if I asked "What's the most important thing in your life?" Would the answers be the same?

For many people, what is most important would be a "thing", some kind of possession. For a Christian, there are many other options and choices for what is most important.

The petition we are looking at today is the one out of seven that deals with earthly things, possessions. All the other petitions ask God for spiritual blessings. We are asking of our heavenly Father

GIVE US THIS DAY OUR DAILY BREAD

- 1. God provides all we need.**
- 2. Lord, lead us to appreciate and to receive with thanksgiving our daily bread!**

Notice that this petition is not the first one Jesus gives us nor is it the last one. The placing of this petition is significant. There are more important matters than daily bread – than earthly food and possessions – and Jesus teaches us to mention them first. Do we follow his order of priorities? Or are our minds at times so full of our material needs, and problems about the affairs of this life that they occupy the bulk of our prayers and leave little time for spiritual concerns? While Jesus does not mention daily bread first, he does teach us to mention it. He wants us to do so in the confidence that our Father in heaven will surely supply our needs. On more than one occasion Jesus spoke of us being the most important creature in all creation. This gives us confidence that he will care for us. If our Father feeds the ravens and clothes the lilies, as Jesus tells us in our Gospel lesson, he will surely feed and clothe his children. This is the assurance which we are to remember when we are all too quick to worry.

Give us this day our daily bread. *What does this mean? God surely gives daily bread without our asking, even to all the wicked, but we pray in this petition that he would lead us to realize this and to receive our daily bread with thanksgiving.* Did you notice that Jesus just mentions something as simple as "bread"? But don't we need more than just "bread" to sustain our lives? Of course. But Jesus reminds us in this simply-worded petition of asking God for "enough for today".

God also teaches us that we should ask for “enough” in 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”** Did you hear that he asks for neither poverty nor riches, but he asks for just enough, and he gives good reasons?

Remember that prayer is great and precious. God teaches us in the Lord’s Prayer to make our request for all the things we need for our body and life brief. We must remember to make a proper distinction between babbling and praying for something. And couldn’t it be considered babbling if we simply keep listing all the material “things” we want God to give us?

We need to know and be assured that all our shelter and protection rest in prayer alone. In the large catechism, Luther reminds us that we are far too feeble to cope with the devil and all his power and allies that set themselves against us, and they might easily crush us under their feet. So we must remember and take up those weapons with which Christians must be armed in order to stand against the devil. For what do you think has previously in the history of mankind and in our own lives accomplished such great things, has stopped the counsels, purposes, murder, and riot of our enemies, through which the devil tried to crush us, together with the Gospel? It is that the prayer of a few godly men intervened. For whenever a godly Christian prays: Dear Father, let Thy will be done, God speaks from on high and says: Yes, dear child, it shall be so, in spite of the devil and all the world.

In this petition we consider what some have called the “bread basket”, the necessities of our body and of the temporal life. It is a brief and simple petition, but it has a very wide scope. For when you mention and pray for daily bread, you pray for everything that is necessary in order to have and enjoy daily bread and, on the other hand, against everything which interferes with it. We are not just praying for bread, but for the entire field and the entire land, which bears and brings to us daily bread and every sort of sustenance. For if God did not cause crops and gardens to grow, and bless and preserve them in the field, we could never take bread or any other food from the oven or have any to set upon the table.

Luther summarizes it briefly, in saying that this petition includes everything that belongs to our entire life in the world. Listen: *What, then, is meant by daily bread? Daily bread includes everything that we need for our bodily welfare, such as food and drink, clothing and shoes, house and home, land and cattle, money and goods, a godly spouse, godly children, godly workers, godly and faithful leaders, good government, good weather, peace and order, health, a good name, good friends, faithful neighbors, and the like.*

Now for our life on earth, it is not only necessary that our body have food and covering and other necessities, but also that we spend our days in peace and quiet among the people with whom we live and do business and conversation and all sorts of doings. In short, we ask for whatever pertains to our lives in our homes, and to people and events in our neighborhood, and to all the roles of government. For where life in the home is disturbed so that we do not prosper, the necessities of life also are hindered, so that ultimately life cannot be maintained.

And that is also the reason we have the greatest need to pray for temporal authority and good government. Especially in this year when we in our nation have the blessing of electing our leaders for the next 2 or 4 or 6 years we have need to pray for government. If we have no peace in our land and in our neighborhoods, we have no earthly peace in our lives. It is most of all through godly and faithful leaders and good government that God preserves to us our daily bread and all the comforts of this life. For though we have received from God all good things in abundance, we would not be able to retain any of them or use them in security and happiness, if He did not give us a permanent and peaceful government. For where there are dissension, strife, and war, there the daily bread is hindered, and famine and starvation result. A study of geography and history show us this.

Therefore all those serving in government are also worthy of all honor; that we give to them for their office what we ought and can, as to those through whom we enjoy in peace and quietness what we have. Otherwise we would not keep a bit of all God has generously provided. In addition, we also pray for them that through them God may bestow on us even greater blessings and good.

Especially do we pray in this petition that we be led to appreciate and to receive with thanksgiving our daily bread and all that pertains to this life. We want all men to realize where their food and everything that relates to this life comes from.

This petition could become a very long prayer, and with many words list all the things that are included in Jesus' words "daily bread". Because in those simple words we pray God to give us food and drink, clothing, house, and home, and health of body. We ask also that He cause the grain and fruits of the field to grow and mature well. We pray furthermore that He help us at home towards good housekeeping, that He give and preserve to us a godly wife, children, and servants. We pray that He cause our work, trade, or whatever we are engaged in to prosper and succeed. We pray that he favor us with faithful neighbors and good friends, "and the like". So the list could go on and on! We are also praying that He give to our leaders and to all in authority, especially to the rulers of our country and to all who work for us through government, wisdom, strength, and success that they may govern well and vanquish all enemies. We pray for all our fellow subjects in our nation – Luther says "the common people" – that they have obedience, peace, and harmony in their lives with one another. We pray that He would preserve us from all sorts of calamity to body and livelihood, such as lightning, hail, fire, flood, poison, pestilence, cattle-plague, war and bloodshed, famine, destructive beasts, wicked men, etc. Jesus wants to impress upon us that all these things come from God, and it is appropriate to pray for all them to show that we appreciate all God does for our earthly life.

So in his large catechism, Luther asks that this be a very brief explanation, but still show how far this petition extends through all conditions on earth. And we are reminded that this petition is also directed against our chief enemy, the devil. For all his thought and desire is to deprive us of all that we have from God, or to hinder it. The devil wants us to become so disgusted and discontented with what God has so graciously given us that we curse God and thus join the devil in hell for all eternity!

In short, Satan is sorry that any one has even a morsel of bread from God and eats it in peace; and if it were in his power, and our prayer and our heavenly Father did not prevent him, we would have nothing at all, especially those who have the Word of God and would like to be Christians.

So we see in this petition how God wishes to show us how He cares for us in all our needs, and faithfully provides also for our temporal support. And although He abundantly grants and preserves these things even to the wicked, yet He wishes that we pray for them, in order that we may recognize that we receive them from His hand, and may feel His goodness toward us in all these earthly things, too. For when He withdraws His hand, nothing can prosper nor be maintained in the end. How much difficulty there is even right now in our nation because of troublesome economic conditions!

But the Lord DOES provide for us, and for that we are grateful, thankful and appreciative. We don't celebrate "thanksgiving" only on one day in November, but God's children celebrate every day as a day of thanksgiving. .

So, what's most important in your life? "What's the most important thing in your life?" Would the answers be the same? Surely it is not the things of this world, for God provides them, even to all the wicked, but we pray in this petition that he would lead us to realize this and to receive our daily bread with thanksgiving. Lord, teach us always to be thankful every day! Amen.