

**Matt. 6:11** τὸν ἄρτον ἡμῶν τὸν ἐπιούσιον δὸς ἡμῖν σήμερον

**Our daily bread** (Matthew 6:11a)

*Introduction*

In the original Greek, the order of the phrase: “*Give us today our daily bread*” is reversed. It could be translated as *Our daily bread, give us today*. Therefore, we will first meditate on the phrase *Our daily bread*.

*Bread means food*

In the Bible the word bread often means food or nourishment. For example, in Genesis 41:54-55 we read: “**Then the seven years of plenty which were in the land of Egypt ended, and the seven years of famine began to come, as Joseph had said. The famine was in all lands, but in all the land of Egypt there was bread.**”

In countries where famine is acute and people are starving this prayer is often heart-wrenching. On the grave of a child that died of hunger, there was placed an empty bowl that God may fill it in heaven. How can we in our land of plenty, just ignore the plight of the desperate and do nothing? If they are praying for daily bread and we have the means to help, let us not be dismissive. James reminds us that if “**a brother or sister is naked and destitute of daily food, and one of you says to them, ‘Depart in peace, be warmed and filled,’ but you do not give them the things which are needed for the body, what does it profit? Thus also faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead**” (James 2:15-17). And the words of Jesus are, “**Assuredly, I say to you, inasmuch as you did not do it to one of the least of these, you did not do it to Me**” (Matthew 25:45). Each of us can do something in some way to alleviate hunger in our neighbourhood, our city, our country, or our world.

*Bread is a gift of God*

Let us not forget, “**Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and comes down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shadow of turning**” (James 1:17). It is God’s blessing that we live in a land of plenty. It is his blessing that we have the opportunity, the health, and the ability to work and earn our daily bread. Let us also be wise with the resources that God has given us, so that we will continue to have our daily bread, and have the means to share with others. Let us not squander the gifts that God has given us. After Jesus fed the multitude, and “**when they were filled, He said to His disciples, ‘Gather up the fragments that remain, so that nothing is lost’**” (John 6: 12). We can learn from this.

*Our Bread*

Jesus teaches us to pray for our daily bread. The word *our* is collective. We are also concerned about our neighbour, about others. I do not just pray just for my daily bread. It is *our* daily bread I pray for. Yours and mine. The Bible teaches that “**if anyone does not provide for his own, and especially for those of his household, he has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever**” (1 Timothy 5:8).

*We care about our well-being*

Although Jesus teaches us not to worry about our daily bread, we need to do our part. We are asking God to provide for us. When Jesus teaches us not to worry about the things of this world, it does not mean that he intends us to be negligent. We should not live to work, but we need to work to live. Jesus said, **“Therefore I say to you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink; nor about your body, what you will put on. Is not life more than food and the body more than clothing? Look at the birds of the air, for they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they?”** (Matthew 6:25-26). What Jesus is talking about here is excessive worry. He wants us to get our priorities straight and put the spiritual things first. The striving after material things can become so excessive that it takes the place of God, therefore bordering on idolatry. Jesus tells us to learn a lesson from the birds of the air. God provides for the birds. But the birds still have to look for food and feed themselves. They don’t just sit on a branch with their mouths open doing nothing. God has provided the suitable environment on earth for food to grow. He has provided the means of nourishment, but the birds still have to do something. Likewise, we are to be prudent, so that we have enough to eat, and that what we eat is healthy. But we should not worry about it. We ask God for our daily bread, and we do our part to obtain it. Even in the desert, where God provided the children of Israel with Manna, but they still needed to gather it and prepare it for eating themselves.

### *Seek ye first the Kingdom of God*

It is noteworthy that praying for daily bread is not at the beginning of the Lord’s Prayer, but more in the middle. First things first. Jesus says: **“But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you”** (Matthew 6:33). This principle is reiterated in this prayer. First, the Will of God, then the other concerns are added. However, the daily bread is not forgotten. Because that too is the will of God. If we put God’s kingdom first, God will see that the other will also be taken care of. Even in the harshness of the desert, where the children of Israel wandered, God took care of them. In Deut. 29:5 we read, **“And I have led you forty years in the wilderness. Your clothes have not worn out on you, and your sandals have not worn out on your feet.”** When Jesus sent his disciples out to preach he told them, **“Take nothing for the journey, neither staffs nor bag nor bread nor money; and do not have two tunics apiece”** (Luke 9:3). Yet God provided for them. For when Jesus asked them later, **“‘When I sent you without money bag, knapsack, and sandals, did you lack anything?’ So they said, ‘Nothing’”** (Luke 22:35). However, he taught them not to be fussy, **“Whatever city you enter, and they receive you, eat such things as are set before you”** (Luke 10:8).

### *Spiritual Bread*

When we ask God for our daily bread, we think first of all of the physical bread. Bread in the Lord’s prayer is used as a figure of speech where the part is used to refer to the whole. In literature this is called a synecdoche. [sin-ek-to-kee]. Bread is a collective term that means food, nourishment, and in general the necessities of life, which we need to survive. We can come to God for these. All of our concerns can be brought to him in prayer.

However, praying for our daily bread can also include the spiritual. We know that the metaphor of bread is one that Jesus often uses in the spiritual sense. In Matthew 4:4 we

read: **“Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God”** (Matthew 4:4). In praying: Our Father in heaven give us bread, the Jews must have thought of the bread that God gave their ancestors from heaven, namely Manna. Jesus however says that that was not the true bread from heaven, but that He, Himself, is the true bread from heaven. They said to Jesus: **“Our fathers ate the manna in the desert; as it is written, ‘He gave them bread from heaven to eat.’”** Then Jesus said to them, **“Most assuredly, I say to you, Moses did not give you the bread from heaven, but My Father gives you the true bread from heaven. For the bread of God is He who comes down from heaven and gives life to the world.”** Then they said to Him, **“Lord, give us this bread always.”** And Jesus said to them, **“I am the bread of life. He who comes to Me shall never hunger, and he who believes in Me shall never thirst”** (John 6:31-35). In continuing with the metaphor of the bread from heaven, Jesus explains in John 6:47-58 that his flesh and blood are the means to eternal life.

Naturally speaking, without food we cannot have physical life. Spiritually speaking, without Christ, we cannot have eternal life. Both of these statements can be restated as *Without bread no life*. Jesus sacrificed his flesh and blood to atone our sins upon the cross. Without this sacrifice of Christ there is no atonement, and thus no eternal life. Without this spiritual bread we are spiritually dead, the same way lack of natural food leads to natural death. How can we attain this spiritual life? If we believe that Jesus died for our sins and that God has given us this bread, we can confess our sins to him in prayer, and claim 1 John 1:9. God forgives us and we are empowered by Jesus to follow him. We are born again into His family and attain spiritual life.

### *The Lord's Supper*

Jesus instituted the Lord's Supper. Matthew describes it this way. **“And as they were eating, Jesus took bread, blessed and broke it, and gave it to the disciples and said, ‘Take, eat; this is My body.’ Then He took the cup, and gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, ‘Drink from it, all of you. For this is My blood of the new covenant, which is shed for many for the remission of sins’”** (Matthew 26:26-28). We know that baptism symbolizes what has taken place in our lives. We have died to sin and are resurrected with Christ to a new life. Similarly, the Lord's Supper is a symbol of what has taken place both in our lives and at Calvary. Besides this the bread also symbolizes that though we are many, we are all united into one body, the body of Christ. And just as we are partakers of the bread, we also are partakers of the atonement that Jesus offers us.

### *Bread as Doctrine*

Doctrine or teaching is also referred to as bread. For example Jesus warned his disciples about the teaching of the Pharisees. **“Then Jesus said to them, ‘Take heed and beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and the Sadducees.’ And they reasoned among themselves, saying, ‘It is because we have taken no bread.’ But Jesus, being aware of it, said to them, ‘O you of little faith, why do you reason among yourselves because you have brought no bread? How is it you do not understand that I did not speak to you concerning bread?—but to beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and Sadducees.’ Then they understood that He did not tell them to beware of the leaven of bread, but of the doctrine of the Pharisees and Sadducees.”** (Matthew 6:6-8, 11-12).

The Word of God is represented metaphorically as bread as well. In John 1 we read that the Word became flesh, and it was revealed among us as Christ. And indeed Revelations pictures Christ thus: **“He was clothed with a robe dipped in blood, and His name is called The**

**Word of God” (Rev. 19:13).** So, metaphorically letting bread refer to Christ and the Word of God is no contradiction. Ezekiel is pictured as eating the scroll or the Word that comes from God (Ezekiel 3:1-4). Just as we need natural food to live naturally, we need the Word of God to live spiritually. It is our spiritual food. When we hear it or read it our souls are nourished through it.

Hearing it alone is not sufficient, we need to put it into practice. Jesus said: **“My food is to do the will of Him who sent Me, and to finish His work” (John 4:4).** So now we have come back to the previous sentence in the Lord’s prayer. **“Thy will be done.”** That is the bread or food that Jesus was most concerned about. It all ties together.

### **Questions**

1. Why should we pray: “Give us our daily bread?”
2. What is the significance of the word “our?”
3. What can we do to alleviate hunger in the world?
4. Is concern and worry the same thing?
5. In this prayer, do you think Jesus meant only literal bread? Why?
6. What is meant by spiritual bread?
7. What does the Lord’s Supper symbolize?
8. What is the leaven of the Pharisees?
9. Metaphorically, how can the Word of God be likened unto bread?
10. How does “Our daily bread” tie together with “Thy will be done?”