

Sermon for February 25, 2018 - 4th Petition of the Lord's Prayer

Luke 11:3 (EHV)

Theme: **“Give us today our daily bread” - every word is a confession!**

- 1) Give – confesses our dependence on God.
- 2) Us / Our – confesses our concern for others.
- 3) Today / Each Day – confesses our trust in the LORD.
- 4) Daily Bread – confesses our contentment in God's providence

Give us each day our daily bread.

The fourth petition of the LORD's prayer is such a simple request that we might rattle it off without much thought. Each word, however, contains a profound profession of faith in the LORD's mercy and might.

Since this is the case, let us take some time to meditate on the fourth Petition of the Lord's Prayer, under the theme: **“Give us today our daily bread” - every word is a confession!** 1) Give – confesses our dependence on God. 2) Us / Our – confesses our concern for others. 3) Today / Each Day – confesses our trust in the LORD. 4) Daily Bread – confesses our contentment in God's providence.

Part One: Give – confesses our dependence on God.

Give us each day our daily bread. Have you ever stopped to think about why you ask the LORD to “give” you your daily bread? The unbelieving world scoffs at the very idea that you even ask God. “I don't ask any god for my food,” the atheist could say, “and look at how well fed I am.” Our society tells us that it's up to us to provide for ourselves: that the stuff we get is stuff we have earned – and that we shouldn't rely on God to give it to us. But is this true?

No, it's not. Without God's blessing we would have nothing. Humanity is filled with examples of people who work very hard, and yet barely scrape together an existence. Humanity is also filled with examples of the opposite – proving that we are not in control of our sustenance. Everything we have and are is a gift of God's grace.

On top of this, no person – not even the most faithful Christian – deserves God's providence or protection. Our sins have separated us from Him. And yet the LORD, in his mercy *causes his sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous.*ⁱ As Christians we realize this and, in this petition, ask the LORD to mercifully provide for our welfare for Christ's sake. He died on the cross; not only to save our souls from hell, but that we,

with our bodies and souls, might live as his dearly love children here on earth and forever in heaven – all to the glory of his name.

To sum it up, then, when we ask God to **give** us our daily bread, we are confessing that we – in no way – can earn, create or sustain our existence on our own. We need God’s grace – trusting that He who is both all merciful and almighty is willing and able to provide everything we need for our existence for Christ’s sake, despite our sinfulness. In praying this petition, we also ask the LORD to help us realize this so that we might thank him – not just every once and a while, but every moment of everyday as we live to his glory. All these thoughts and many more are contained in the word “**give**” – for, in using this word, we Christians confess our utter dependence on God.

Part Two: Us / Our – confesses our concern for others

The next thing I want you to notice about this petition of the LORD’s prayer is that Jesus did not teach us to pray: Give **me** each day **my** daily bread, but *Give **us** each day **our** daily bread.* Why do you think this is? I believe it’s to confess that we, as Christians, don’t just care for ourselves but for others as well.

On the eve of his crucifixion, Jesus told his disciples: *"A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another."*ⁱⁱⁱ And how will this love for each other show itself? Not by selfishly praying that the Lord provides everything good for “me” alone, but that he provides for all of us – putting the needs of others on equal par, if not even ahead, of our own.

So, you see the use of “us” and “our” in this petition of the LORD’s prayer is a confession of care and concern for others. Sadly, we often forget this, don’t we? We fail to remember that the material blessings God has graciously given us are not meant for us alone, but to share with others who are in need. The Bible says: *Suppose a brother or sister is without clothes and daily food. If one of you says to him, "Go, I wish you well; keep warm and well fed," but does nothing about his physical needs, what good is it? In the same way, faith by itself, if it is not accompanied by action, is dead.*ⁱⁱⁱ

This truth should lead us to pray: O LORD, forgive the selfish attitudes of our hearts. Forgive us for being more concerned about obtaining luxuries for ourselves instead of necessities for others. Forgive our sin and help us be more like you.

And do you know what? The LORD hears our prayer and forgives us for Christ’s sake. More than that he sends the Holy Spirit into our hearts through the preaching of His Gospel, who awakens a new attitude in us – one that doesn’t ask the LORD to simply give me the things that I want, but to give us – every member of the human race, regardless of whether he be friend or foe – the basic necessities of life. And the Holy Spirit doesn’t just move us to pray, but to act as well – knowing that the LORD is answering our prayer as we, for Christ’s sake, share our blessings with those in need.

Part Three: Today / Each Day – confesses our trust in the LORD.

Now, before I introduce the next thing we confess in this petition of the LORD's prayer, I want to briefly address the two versions of the LORD's prayer. No, not the two versions in the hymnal, the two versions in the Bible! Jesus taught the LORD's prayer on two separate occasions and, even though he kept the thoughts of each petition the same, he sometimes used different words to express those thoughts. The fourth petition is an example of this. Matthew records Jesus saying: "Give us **today** our daily bread,"^{iv} whereas he says in the prayer recorded by Luke, "Give us **each day** our daily bread."

What's the difference? In the prayer recorded by Matthew, attention is drawn to the present moment – that God only give us what is needed now, today – in keeping with what Jesus said: *do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own.*^v

Luke's version, on the other hand, asks God to continually give us – each and every day – what is needed to sustain our lives on this earth. Please understand that the prayer recorded in Luke is in no way contradicting the one recorded in Matthew, rather it is expanding the thought: give us what we need for the moment today and each day after.

Such a request confesses our trust in the Lord to sustain us, no matter how things look. It reminds us of what the LORD did during Israel's 40 years of wandering in the desert, when he fed them with Manna, commanding them to only collect what they needed for the day. Doing this confessed their faith that the LORD would continue to provide for their needs throughout their journey to the promised land. Our request that the Lord give us each day our daily bread does the same.

So often we think it's up to us to plan for the future – to make sure that we live in security. Now, while planning and saving for the future is often a wise thing to do, we need to always remember that the LORD is in charge. Things can change in an instant. For this reason, the Bible encourages: ¹³ *Now listen, you who say, "Today or tomorrow we will go to this or that city, spend a year there, carry on business and make money." Why, you do not even know what will happen tomorrow. What is your life? You are a mist that appears for a little while and then vanishes. Instead, you ought to say, "If it is the Lord's will, we will live and do this or that."*^{vi}

Yes, every moment of our fleeting lives is dependent on the LORD and his blessings. Asking God to just give us what we need for each day of our lives reminds us of this fact. Not only this, but it also confesses our trust in him to continue providing for our needs. We don't need to worry about the future. Our gracious God has all things in hand for Christ sake. He will keep his promises to deliver his faithful followers from every evil we face on this earth, and bring us safely home to heaven.

Part Four: Daily Bread – confesses our contentment in God’s providence

*Give us each day our **daily bread**.* Do you want to know something fascinating about the phrase “daily bread”? The word translated as “daily” is actually a very rare word in Greek – only used twice in all known ancient literature – once in Matthew 6:11 and here in Luke 11:3. In other words this is totally word unique to the LORD’s prayer!

The literal meaning of the word seems to be “for existence.” In other words, we are asking the LORD to give us the bread we need for our existence – everything we need to keep us alive.

Daily bread, therefore includes a lot more than we might imagine at first glance. Food, clean water, shelter, clothing, friends, family, love, good weather, peace, order . . . all these and many things more included in our prayer. But what I found interesting in my study of this petition is how much Luther, in his large catechism, emphasizes this petition being a prayer for good government. He writes:

“It is not only necessary for our life that our body have food and clothes and other necessaries. It is also necessary that we spend our days in peace and quiet among the people with whom we live and have dealings in daily business and conversation and all sorts of doings. In short, this petition applies both to the household and also to the neighborly or civil relationship and government. Where these two things are hindered so that they do not prosper as they should, the necessaries of life also are hindered. Ultimately, life cannot be maintained. There is, indeed, the greatest need to pray for earthly authority and government. By them, most of all, God preserves for us our daily bread and all the comforts of this life. Though we have received from God all good things in abundance, we are not able to keep 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 already taken away or is at least hindered.”

So you can see that this petition is far more than a request for food on our table. It is a prayer for the LORD’s continued protection and providence in all things pertaining to our life on this earth. This petition invites us to think about the many blessings God has given us day after day, acknowledge them with gratitude, and find our contentment in what his Fatherly heart has provided for us. In asking God for our necessary bread, we reflect the prayer of Agur, recorded in the Bible: ⁷ *“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.”*^{vii}

In summary, brothers and sisters in Christ, note that there is far more going on in the fourth petition of the LORD’s prayer than meets the eye. And don’t think that this humble sermon has exhausted everything contained in this petition because I am sure that if we started enumerating all the things we are asking God for in this petition, I hardly think we would run out of things to say.

Let this, then, be sufficient for today: When we pray “give us today our daily bread” we confess: 1) our total dependence on God, 2) our Christlike concern for others, 3) our trust in the LORD to provide and 4) our contentment in everything the LORD has given us for Jesus’ sake. Amen.

ⁱ Matthew 5:45 NIV84

ⁱⁱ John. 13:34-35 NIV84

ⁱⁱⁱ James. 2:15-17 NIV84

^{iv} Matthew 6:11 EHV

^v Matthew 6:34 NIV84

^{vi} James. 4:13-15 NIV84

^{vii} Proverbs 30:7-9 NIV84