

# Today I Pray, 3: Give us this day...

Reconnect – March 14, 2010

**Text:** Matthew 6:9-11; Romans 8:26-27

**Key Thought:** It's not easy to rely on God instead of ourselves for what we need – but it's essential to trusting our lives to Him.

[Jesus said,] "This, then, is how you should pray: 'Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be Thy name. Thy Kingdom come, Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread.'"

## Intro: Hungry?

**Q: What's it like to be hungry? (Describe it) What's the longest you've ever gone without food?**

- Our culture runs on food – it's big business – and with money (or credit) no-one needs to be without food –in fact, it surrounds us – fast food, slow food, food from other cultures, fancy food, down home cooking, finger food
- And think about all the places there are to get food – convenience stores, department stores, grocery stores, dollar stores, restaurants, snack bars, vending machines, chip trucks, drive thrus
- Given all of this, it seems hard to imagine that people would struggle for food – I mean, how much food do we throw away, personally and collectively?
- We don't struggle with having food – we struggle with having too much of it, or the wrong kinds of it
- We see pictures on TV or in magazines of hungry people – but it's hard to identify with them, unless you're doing a 30 hour famine for WorldVision or something
- You probably don't lie awake at night and think of ways to get more food
- So to pray "Give us this day our daily bread" might not be the first request that comes to mind when it comes to asking God for something
- But it's the first one that Jesus gives us in the prayer He teaches us

## Read Text: Matthew 6:9-11

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## Our First Request:

- That takes us back, doesn't it? I mean way back – back to being a baby
- A baby's first need – ever – is that they are hungry and they want to be fed – everything else is secondary – food feeds, it soothes and comforts – it's all about the food – complete dependency on the parent
- As we grow, we get more sophisticated – we don't want ANY kind of food – we want our favourites, what we like
- We stop asking for food and start asking for stuff – clothes, video games, sports gear, what have you
- **(III. – greasy chicken quarters – "I'm eating out")**
- And then we get jobs, start to make our own money, and the ball is in our own court – now we are the ones who determine both what we want and how we get it

## Getting what we want:

**Q: How do we get stuff? How do we get what we want? What are the different possible ways?**

**[Steve to put these up on the screen with Powerpoint] - ie. Lie, cheat, steal, win, get lucky, receive as a gift, borrow, ask for, gamble, earn, buy, barter, find... (others?)**

- Seems like we find all KINDS of ways to get what we want or need
- Take a look at the list on the screen – which of these are what we do, ourselves, and which of these involve us relying on someone or something else? **[use colours on list]**
- I don't know about you, but my favourites, other than getting presents, aren't on the "relying on someone else" side
- You learn pretty early on in life that nothing's really free – that if someone gives you something, that a lot of times there's a string attached – there's an agenda, or they're trying to sell you something, or there's something you don't know about
- A lot of times we learned that the hard way – like when I thought my uncle was doing me a solid by trading me a rusty bicycle for my broken down car – and then he sold me back the car half a year later!
- We get burned, and then we get suspicious – our trust is gone – and so any time someone offers to do something for us, it has to be on our terms, with us in the driver's seat
- Buy me lunch? I've got the next one. Give me a gift? I'll give you one back at the proper time. Have me over? My turn next time to have YOU over. "Quid pro quo, Clarisse... quid pro quo..."
- It's all reciprocating – and that keeps us from being vulnerable, from dependency, from being reliant on anyone or anything

## Reliant on God?

- Which is great, until it comes to our relationship with God
- Because, we can't easily change who we are or how we deal with people – we come to God with the same ideas, with the same terms, the same "rules of engagement"
- If He gives us something, we wonder what's in it for Him? Or what's He going to ask of us now?
- The classic "Uh-oh – life's going really good right now – too good – what is God going to want of me NOW?"
- God has a hidden agenda and He's just waiting to spring it on us
- Or we keep God out at the margins – we see Him as benevolent but distant – not really concerned about our day to day life – like a friend in another city, or a family member in our hometown
- If He hears we're having a hard time, He's interested and might try to help, but we're on our own for the day to day stuff
- Or maybe, just maybe, we see God as NOT so benevolent
- Maybe He's more of a Soup Nazi – where you might get what you want, but you have to obey His rules to do it – ask properly, the right words, the right actions, the proper sacrifices must be made, including other things that you enjoy or people that you like, in order to get what you need
- And if you get out of line, if you mess up – "NO SOUP FOR YOU!" – you're banned, and you have to try to suck up to get back in His good books
- "You're pushing your luck, little man!"

## The missing link: trust

- In all these cases, these scenarios, what's missing is... trust
- We tend not to trust people quickly, because we find that we get burned – so we learn after we get burned, to take longer to trust – to keep people at arm's length longer
- And it carries over to God
- We want to trust God – we hear that's the way to do it – but when it comes to most of our lives, that we might have any kind of control over, we quickly take that control and rely on ourselves
- God is pushed to the margins – to control the mysteries of space and time, to run the universe – while we become the god of our everyday lives
- But to trust someone means to make yourself vulnerable to them – to open up to them, to tell our secrets, to receive their gifts with gratitude, to trust that they don't have a hidden agenda, to link our lives to theirs
- We do it with our friends, we do it with the people that we love, we do it with our families – or hopefully we do!
- Trust is based on exposing a need and letting someone else meet that need in our lives – of bringing someone else on board
- And that's why Jesus takes us so far back in this prayer: Jesus takes us back in this prayer to when we were children – first with "Father", then with "your will be done" and now with "give us this day our daily bread" – why?
- To evoke a relationship – to take us back to first principles, before our hipness, before our sense of entitlement, before our self-reliance – back to a position of trust
- The song the band did first this morning – we played it a few weeks ago – "You Run Away" was written about a 20 year relationship between members of the same band – it's a commentary on what ultimately is a lack of trust

## Daily bread?

- What if there was another way of seeing who God is to us? Of what He does in our lives?
- When Jesus uses that phrase "daily bread", to His audience, raised on the stories of what God had done in the lives of their ancestors, there's only one thing that comes into your mind
- Way back in the book of Exodus, 1500 years before, God's people had been in slavery in Egypt – and they had been brutally oppressed, including attempted genocide
- They cried out to God for His help, and He sent Moses – one of their own, who had first tried to set his people free on his own, without God's help, and then spent years after running away from God
- Through a series of miracles and direct interventions from God, Moses and the entire nation of Israel wind up in the wilderness, outside of Egypt, wandering towards the Promised Land for 40 years
- And during that time, the Bible says that God fed them – every morning, except on the Sabbath, they would get up, go outside, and gather little flakes of something like bread that had fallen from the sky
- It was their staple – like rice, or potatoes – it was bread, and they ate it every day, as they wandered
- They called it "manna" – which sounded like the Hebrew for "What is it?"
- And they ate it for 40 years – they didn't always like it, but they ate it – as God cared for them in the wilderness until they finally reached the Promised Land

## **We wander still**

- In many ways, we are still wandering – still in need of God’s care and provision and protection in our lives, as the prayer is going to continue
- This prayer reminder that everything we have comes from God – those we love, our own skills and abilities, our wits, our strength, our very life – even our jobs, the ability to work, to feed ourselves – it’s all from God – we are sustained by His hand – reliant on Him, even if we don’t think about it or want to acknowledge it

### **Key Thought: It’s not easy to rely on God instead of ourselves for what we need – but it’s essential to trusting our lives to Him.**

...we don’t even know what we should pray for, nor how we should pray. But the Holy Spirit prays for us with groanings that cannot be expressed in words. And the Father who knows all things knows what the Spirit is saying, for the Spirit pleads for us believers in harmony with God’s own will. **(Romans 8:26-27, NLT)**

### **Conclusion: “Paying It Forward”**

- As we rely on God, we are drawn into His life – and we see He’s doing and want to be part of it
- He gives us what we need – and then we have the freedom to be able to help others with what He’s given us, because we trust that He will give us more where that came from Him
- And our world has so many needs – and we want God to care for our world – and He says to us “You give them something to eat”
- NT Wright quote: “We offer ourselves, in this prayer, as representatives of this world... turning into words the unspoken prayer from thousands of hungry folk in our own country and millions around the world, turning it into words that plead with our Heavenly Father to feed the hungry, to care for the desperate. And when we have prayed in that fashion, the test of whether we were sincere will of course be whether we are prepared to stand physically alongside those for whom we have claimed to speak. This is, after all, a dangerous and subversive prayer to pray; but it’s the one Jesus taught us.”  
The Lord And His Prayer, p.46
- National Post article

### **Response: Your Love Is Strong (band)**