

Enough!

**Catechism Q/A 125
Matthew 6:25-34**

PREPARED BY
KEN GEHRELS
PASTOR
CALVIN CHRISTIAN REFORMED CHURCH OF OTTAWA
ONTARIO, CANADA

Last weekend Stuart MacLean, in his wonderful CBC Radio program, *The Vinyl Café*, was reminiscing about when he was taping a show in Goderich, Ontario. Goderich is home to the largest salt mine in the world. He wanted to go and see it, but when he called they said, "No one except miners gets in, he was told. Not even the Queen was allowed down when she came to Goderich." "Yes," said MacLean, "But she's the queen of England. I'm the host of CBC's *Vinyl Café*."

"Good point" said the manager of the mine.

And the next day, he was taken down to the mine.

Standing there, thousands of feet under the ground, he held a large chunk of salt and was reminded of what a basis element of life salt is.

It was used once as currency.

We all need it to live.

And in some cultures of the world it is still the custom to greet a valued guest with a sign of hospitality and welcome by giving them salt.

Salt....

....along with something else.

Anyone know what that something else is?

It is bread.

Giving bread and salt are recognized as a symbol of warm welcome.

Why these two?

Because they are essential to life - the very stuff of existence.

Salt... and bread.

As we continue our study of the Lord's Prayer, we pause to meditate on that very concrete, practical phrase -

Give us this day our daily bread.

Give us...

...this day...

...our daily bread...

Consider those three elements to this petition.

And, even though we pray them last, I want to begin with these words -

...our daily bread...

Our Daily Bread...

Please, friends, don't be too quick to spiritualize this request.

Bernard of Clairvaux, a spiritual leader in the early 12th century, advised those who entered his monastery to leave their bodies outside. He meant they had to let go of physical desires and concerns. He translated the Lord's Prayer to read:

Give us this day our supernatural bread

Bernard missed out on an important truth.

God **DOES** care about our physical life!

As Adrian Dielemann pointed out - don't sell Bernard short. He loved Jesus deeply. While he would rather skip a meal than a church service, many of us have flipped it around, and would rather skip church for a good meal. Perhaps, in that way, we can learn much from this brother in Christ.

Give us this day our daily bread.

When you pray "bread" - think "*the basic essentials of life.*"
Like as in "*bread and salt.*"

Martin Luther wrote in 1529;

What does daily bread mean? Everything that nourishes our body and meets its needs, such as food, drink, clothing, shoes, house, yard, fields, cattle, money, possessions, a devout spouse, devout children, devout employees, devout and faithful rulers, good government, peace, health, discipline, honor, good friends, faithful neighbors and other things like these..."

Lord - give us each day what we need for the day.

There is nothing too mundane to bring to God.
He watches over the birds in the air.
He grows the flowers in the field.
And he cares for you and me.

Without hesitation we can bring these requests to the Lord.
The very ordinary, and very physical stuff of life.

And, as we pray this prayer our spirits are shaped. We are moved.

We are moved –

From Fear To Confidence...

There is no need too large or small,
And none of us is too insignificant
to bring our burdens to the Father.

Hear these reassuring words of Jesus:

"Which of you, if his son asks for bread, will give him a stone? Or if he asks for a fish, will give him a snake? If you, then, though you are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give good gifts to those who ask him!
(Mt 7:9-11)

When we pray, "*Give us this day our daily bread*" and when we actually take the time to stop and consider how God so wonderfully answers those prayers, our attitude begins to shift.

We slowly but surely move from grumbling, and move towards gratitude...

- instead of grumbling about our taxes, we learn to say "thank you" for the fact that we have a job and an income.
- instead of grumbling about all the work we have to do around the home, we begin to say thank you for the fact that we have a home to live in.
- instead of getting cranky about the noise and rumble in our car, we give thanks for the ability to hear.

- instead of sighing when we see the piles of laundry, we give thanks for clothes we have to wear.
- instead of groaning when the alarm goes off, we give thanks that we're alive.

Yes, we turn to God and pray....

Give us...

We pray, recognizing that it is not about `accumulating the stuff for life **by ourselves**.
We receive it, rather, as a gift from the hand of God.

Ray Stedman, in reflecting on these words wrote:

"What happens to me when I neglect this area of prayer?"

If you are honest and look at your life over an extended period of time, you will see that, inevitably, a slow and subtle change occurs in the heart of a Christian who does not pray about material things, who does not take time to thank God for his daily supply of food, shelter and clothing.

There is an inch by inch, slow but sure, slide in our relationship with God.

First, we begin to take the supplying of our daily needs for granted. They become common, ordinary, and hardly even noticed any more. That's the first sign of a crack.

Then the next inch in the slippery slope - we begin to delude ourselves into thinking that we actually can provide these physical necessities ourselves.

And a sort of pride swells us.

And a kind of blindness settles upon us, a blindness which darkens our spiritual insight, as a fog over the landscape of faith.

Remember the account of Nebuchadnezzar?

We're told the story in Daniel 4.

The proud king of Babylon walks on the roof of his palace.

He said, "Is not this great Babylon, which I have made? My wisdom has built this, my ability has brought it to pass,"

"I DID IT!" said Nebuchadnezzar.

"Oh?" said God.

Do you remember what happens next?

The once proud king is reduced to living as a wild man in the field.

Don't write that off as an odd one-time judgement on a particular king.

When people become proud, self-sufficient and seek to line their own nests,

when they look at their stuff

be it the bread in their pantry

or cash in the bank

or car in the driveway

or the driveway itself, for that matter

when they look at their stuff and say, "I did it!"

something changes in their attitude towards that stuff - and they protect it and cling to it and clutch it like some sort of animal.

They growl.

They protect their turf.

They steal.
They kill to get more.

Praying this prayer for daily bread to the One from whom all blessings flow is an important anti-dote to such a terrible descent occurring to us.

It keeps us humble.
It keeps us dependent.
And it keeps us grateful.

The Bible tells us:

"Every good and perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of heavenly lights, who does not change like shifting shadows..." James 1:17

Friends, it is VERY easy for us to forget this.

The prayer keeps our focus on the giver.

It gets us past the advertiser's lie.

No L'Oreal - it's not that *You're worth it*.
It's that God granted you a divine gift of mercy.

And - praying "*Give us this day our daily bread*" keeps us from clutching too tightly to what we are given.

Because, after all, we DON'T pray "give *me* this day *my* daily bread."
...do we?...

Instead, we pray -

"Give **US** this day **OUR** daily bread..."

King David, along with his subjects understood correctly that everything they had was a gift from God. And so, when the call came for donations to build the temple, there was a deluge of response. More, much more, than enough.

David got it right -

"But who am I, and who are my people, that we should be able to give as generously as this? Everything comes from you, and we have given you only what comes from your hand" (1 Chron 29:14)

The Bible tells us:

"*Each of you should look NOT ONLY to your own interests but also to the interests of others.*" Phil 2:5

"*Give us this day our daily bread.*"

On one level this prayer should stick in the throat of every well-fed Western Christian who prays it.

Western society consumes far more than its fair share of the world's resources.

No where else in the world can you find grocery stores stocked like ours.

None are as big as ours.

No one else drives cars as big as ours.

Or lives in homes larger than ours.

Somewhere along the way we need to pray this prayer with an awareness that much of the hunger problem in the world is not a problem of production capability.

It is a problem of distribution.

Think globally.
Act locally.

Next week we'll gather together at St.Paul's Presbyterian Church for the annual Reformation Rally. The offering will be for the work of the Ottawa Innercity Ministries who feed many hungry and homeless right here in the city.

And some of them are praying, "*Give us this day our daily bread.*"

Are we God's answer to their prayer?

On November 4 we, with the rest of the Christian Reformed denomination, will observe World Hunger Sunday and take an offering for world develop and relief projects.

In Kenya a brother and sister in Christ are praying, "*Give us this day our daily bread.*"

Are we God's answer to their prayer?

Our Father in Heaven...

...our daily bread...

...give us...

We pray for our needs.
We pray to the One to whom it all belongs.

And

We pray **daily**.

*Our Father in Heaven..... give us this day our **daily** bread.*

A daily prayer for the day's needs.

Which is how the Lord works.

Day by day dependence - The Lord generally does not dispense "club packs." Simply each day enough for the day.

So it was with the manna given to Israel in the desert (Ex 16)

So with the widow of Zaraphath (1 Ki 17)

Elijah hiding in the desert - a raven brought food for that day, not for a whole week (1 Ki 17)

Each day enough for the day.

He knows our needs (Matt 6:8), and will provide day by day (Mt 6:33).

And we,

day by day,

even as we ask

can also say, "Thank you!"

And share - day by day.

Friends, we need a fresh touch of God in our lives everyday.

God invites us to approach Him for it.

We often get stressed out with anxiety because we try to face the problems of tomorrow today.
“Don’t worry about tomorrow” says the Lord.

Come to me and pray:

*Give us **THIS DAY** what we need.*

It’s one of the big things they teach in 12 step recovery groups - “*day at a time.*”

They got that straight from Jesus –

*Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about its own things.
Sufficient for the day is its own trouble.”* (Matt 6:31-34 NKJV).

Our Father in Heaven..... give us this day our daily bread.

It’s not a prayer asking for a great stock pile of riches, is it?

Indeed, as we pray this prayer our spirits are shaped. We are moved.

We are moved –

From Greed to Contentment

Proverbs 30:8 says, “*Remove falsehood and lies far from me;*

Give me neither poverty nor riches —

Feed me with the food allotted to me.”

Jesus says that we are to pray for our daily bread – NOT for our daily dessert.

It is a prayer for daily **need** not for daily **greed**.

In Luke’s account, Jesus gives this warning one chapter after teaching on prayer:

“Watch Out! Be on your guard against all kinds of greed: a man’s life does not consist in the abundance of his possessions...” Lk 12:15

Life is becoming ever more busy.

People are under more and more stress.

I wonder about that sometimes.

I wonder if it’s not because we need to work harder to have the appropriate basics in life,

but rather because we keep raising the bar for what we consider to be appropriate. We keep wanting more - new and improved more.

We get suckered into thinking that we **NEED** new and improved.

And that kind of thinking begins to **consume** us.

I wonder if that is what is meant when people tell us, “We are a consumer society.”

Could it be?

“*Our Father in heaven....*

....give us

this day

our

daily bread...

Amen.