

Give Us this Day Our Daily Bread

Up to now, in our look at the Lord's Prayer, we have seen the need for prayer, that it is a connection with a power that is greater than ourselves. In its most basic definition, prayer is being willing to tell God what is on our hearts; it is having a conversation with God. Even though we believe that God already knows what is on our hearts and for what we need to pray, it is good that we are able to vocalize those thoughts and concerns which we have.

Thus far, we have recognized that this prayer is a community prayer, not just with each other, but also with Jesus when He told us to pray "Our Father." In this introduction to this short, concise prayer, we acknowledge both the transcendence of God being in heaven and the intimacy of God by calling God our 'daddy.' In the petitions about God's kingdom coming to earth and God's will being done here on earth, we noted a tension built into this prayer. This tension acknowledges what God has done for us already, but also recognizes that humanity has not always done the right thing. In this we yearn for God to help make things better and right, according to God's will and plan.

If we look at the organization of the petitions of the Lord's Prayer, we see that they reflect the organization of the 10 Commandments. If you'll recall, the first 3 commandments have to do with our relationship with God, acknowledging that God is the source of all that we have. The last 7 commandments address how we relate to one another. While the commandments and the Lord's Prayer petitions may not exactly line up, we do see that these first petitions acknowledge God as the source of all life and all that we have. After it is acknowledging this fact, does Jesus turn the prayer to our needs.

Let us now to turn to the first specific petition in this prayer, "Give us this day our daily bread." In brief, this petition is asking for our security. Martin Luther included everything which we need to live as part of our daily bread. In the Small Catechism, Luther writes that daily bread includes "food and clothing, home and property, work and income, a devoted family, an orderly community, good government, favorable weather, peace and health, a good name, and true friends and neighbors." In short, it all those things that provide for our security in our everyday lives.

Security is something which humanity has been trying to achieve since the beginning of time. Over time, the concept of security has often changed from the basic survival of staying alive against forces that try to kill humans to having the security of staying safe in one's home and having the basic needs for life. We look for assurances that these basic needs will not only be met for us, but also guaranteed that we will have them when we need them. Not only do we look for security for ourselves, but we look to have a secure future for our children and grandchildren. A part of this security is to give them a better future than what we had. This security may include making sure that we leave an inheritance to our children; give them the things which we did not have growing up; making sure that they have a good education. It may also be making sure that our neighborhoods and schools provide safe environments for our children to learn and grow.

There is nothing wrong in looking for security. However, most times, we look to others to provide that security. Whether it is through local, state or national governments, the school boards, or even to businesses, we look to human sources for security. Unfortunately, sometimes, those entities may have a different focus on security than what our focus is. They tend to look out for their own security

and how they define it regardless of what others see as security. Many times, those different understandings of security are in conflict with each other and usually those without the 'power' are the ones to lose out.

What this petition asks is that we turn to *God* for that security. Again, we need to notice that this is a communal prayer - give *us* this day *our* daily bread. It is not a selfish prayer, as though we ask for what we need at the expense of someone else. Rather, we ask as a community of *God's* children that everyone receives what they need. The other thing we need to remember is that the One to whom we are praying is still the same One whom we addressed at the beginning of this prayer - *God*. We may overlook the fact that we are still petitioning *God* and we then have a tendency to look to 'easier' sources for this security.

Perhaps it is our lifestyle that clouds this thought that it is *God* who does the providing. Living more and more of an urban lifestyle for more and more people, we tend to forget that for those basic needs that provide for that 'bread' we still depend upon *God* for the right weather at the right time, good soil and the other things that make for a good harvest that allows us to eat, build homes and everything else that actually depends on agriculture.

Here in America, we have gotten away from depending on *God* and have developed a strong sense of self-determination. We think that if we work hard and rely on as few people as possible, we can make all our dreams come true. But just like relying on *God* giving us gifts to have a good harvest, we should be recognizing that *God* is the source of all our being to be able to do what we do. For example, if one has the ability to do heavy manual labor to earn their living, isn't it still *God* who made the person and gave the person the gift of strength to do that kind of work? And isn't it *God* who gives the scientist the knowledge and skill to

come up with inventions that make life better? In short, any one person cannot do more than what God has given them the gifts to do. One may argue that one could lift weights to become stronger or study harder to gain that knowledge, but it still comes down to the fact that God gifted the person to have the determination to better themselves. So, as we saw in the earlier petitions, we acknowledge that it is God who is the source of everything as we are asking God to grant us those things which provide for the security we desire.

Again, we need to keep in mind that this petition is in the plural. No one is left out from receiving what is needed for daily life. God has provided enough of everything for everyone to be secure. It is through the selfishness of some people who feel that they can control access to what God has given us. We need to have the trust in God that, like when Jesus fed the people with just the 5 loaves and 2 fish, that everyone will be filled and that there will be some left over.

May we continue to turn to God for all that we need, thanking God for all that we are and asking the Holy Spirit for guidance to become all that we can be.