

OUR DAILY BREAD

(Sermon Summary)

Reading: Mathew 6:1-14.

Although we call this 'The Lord's Prayer, it is actually the prayer the Lord taught His disciples to pray. With our Harvest Thanksgiving season upon us, it is appropriate to stop to think about our daily bread as we find it in Matthew 6:11. We can see that we are to pray we would have what is sufficient and necessary for each day and we set ourselves to pray for these things each day of our lives. We are grateful to the Lord for the seasons that come round every year with reassuring predictability. In fact, during the lockdown, we were perhaps better able to appreciate the seasons and what they bring.

1. We are to ask

This part of the Lord's Prayer is a petition. We are asking the Lord for something. We are making a request and that request is to the Lord whose name we hallow. We ask, despite what we read in Matthew 6:8, where we are assured the Lord knows what we need before we even ask Him. We might ask 'Why ask for something when the Lord already knows what we need?'

Here are a few thoughts. The Lord would have us relate to Him and not simply walk ignorantly and carelessly without giving thought to who He is, what He does, how we are dependent upon Him and how we should be grateful to Him. By asking, we are coming into relationship with Him, growing in our awareness of Him, growing in our confidence of His faithfulness and being able to appreciate more His interventions when He answers our prayers in ways that are beyond what we might have expected or hoped.

Not many people in our country work in agriculture. We are more detached from the processes of how things grow. A lot of the Lord's teaching uses illustrations from agriculture as more people then were employed in that trade or were familiar with growing crops, for example. There are the Parable of the Sower, the Parable of the Growing Seed, and the Parable of the Wheat and the Tares as some examples. But, however remote now the world of agriculture is to the majority of us, we are still dependent on the sun and rain for our food supply. We can forget this in the West, unlike in other parts of the world where drought and crop failure are life and death issues. We have money to spare after the necessities of life are attended to and can expect our daily bread from shops and supermarkets almost as a right. Though the panic buying in the pandemic has shown how fragile that confidence is.

We should therefore 'go and educate ourselves' and remember that we are dependent on God for our supplies. The granting of rain and sunshine are things that are in His power to give. So we ask Him for the necessities of life and it is a reminder to us of who we are and who He is. It keeps us humble and in a proper estimate of our place before Him.

2. Our bread

Bread speaks to us of basic essentials. In other parts of the world it might be rice that is their 'bread'. But we can extend this to include other important things in life that help us to maintain our health and enable us to keep working. Here in the UK we might think of the NHS, and the various 'key workers' who make a difference to our quality of life. We might think of our families, including our church family, who make a difference to us in our day-to-day living, encouraging us, advising us, and loving us.

We can also think of the spiritual help and provision that the Lord supplies to us. These are 'basic essentials', having food for the soul that we might think more spiritually about the common things of life and God's common grace. This gives us the right framework to think about life in general, preventing us following many in the world who worship nature. The Bible provides us with weighty and serious thoughts that stop us being greedy and expecting more than our daily bread.

3. The community aspect

We also notice that it is about 'our' not 'my' daily bread. So it is a lesson about not being selfish and about thinking of others. It is teaching us to be charitable towards us others and not looking to beggar my neighbour. We ideally do not want the supply of 'my' daily bread to rob anyone else of 'their' daily bread. We see ourselves connected together.

That is particularly so of us as believers. We are the household of faith as we find it in Galatians 6:10 and see it in action in 1 Corinthians 16:1-3. It is about loving our neighbour as our selves (Romans 13:8-10). We stand with people in other countries that we are supporting in our prayers and in our giving. We remember Joseph Soko and the gift we are aiming to send him. We remember the work of Rajkumar in Chennai and the help that we give to Zoe and her family in the Philippines. As we have been seeing in a previous sermon series, we are 'one blood'. When we pray for 'our' daily bread, we are compelled to remember other people and their circumstances and this is an antidote to selfishness. We look to have loving hearts that think of others more readily than, sadly, we often do.