

“Our Daily Bread ... the third petition”

Rev. Erika Martinez-Flores
Philippians 4.4-7; Matthew 7.7-11
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Westby UMC & Viroqua UMC

As we have already seen, the first two petitions of this prayer are focused on God. It puts God first and it is Him we must prioritize above all things. From this moment the prayer is directed towards our needs. "Give us today our daily bread".

The first meaning, and the most obvious, of this request is that God sustain us physically and, surely, it is a reference to the provision that God made with the manna, which was given every day in the desert. With this request we are acknowledging God as our provider, and we trust Him to meet our daily needs.

Jesus, shortly after teaching his followers to pray, spoke to them about anxiety. He said: "Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink; nor about your body, what you will wear. Is not life more than food, and the body more than the garment? But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you" (Matthew 6:25, 33). Interestingly, in the Our Father, the petition that immediately precedes the petition for daily bread is that the kingdom of God come.

Asking for daily bread does not only refer to the physical provision. It can also refer to asking God to provide our fewer tangible needs. In Matthew 7:7-11 Jesus said, "Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and the door will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives; and he who seeks finds; and to him who knocks, it will be opened to him. What man is there among you who, if his son asks for bread, will give him a stone? Or if he asks for a fish, will he give him a snake? Well, if you, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father who is in heaven give good gifts to those who ask him?" Good parents not only provide their children with what they need for physical life, but also for practical, emotional, and relationship needs. God is the giver of good gifts.

Although, God has already met our greatest spiritual need, that of forgiveness and restoration, through Christ; He doesn't stop there. Jesus calls himself the "Bread of Life" (John 6:35). "In him was life, and the life was the light of men" (John 1:4). Jesus says that he came to bring us abundant life (John 10:10). Not only are we saved for eternity, but now we also experience a restored relationship with God. We seek Him daily, and He renews us day by day (2 Corinthians 4:16). The branches are continually fed by the Vine (John 15:5).

Yes, God sustains us physically and meets the less tangible needs of this life. But more than that, He meets our spiritual needs. He is the bread that satisfies our spiritual hunger. He holds our hearts. When we ask God for our daily bread, we humbly acknowledge him as the only giver of everything we need. We are living day by day, one step at a time. We are exercising simple faith in Him to provide us with just what we need, when we need it - for every aspect of life.

We can be sure that God hears our prayers, so Paul exhorts us not to worry and not to worry, since God knows our needs and he will provide. So we can enjoy the Peace of God that surpasses all understanding and that protects our minds and hearts, preventing problems and worries from overcoming us.

We cannot ignore the fact that this prayer extends beyond our particular needs. This is also a petition that addresses the problems of hunger, poverty and injustice throughout the world. What is instructive about this petition is the awareness that hundreds of millions of people on our planet do not have their daily bread. More than 25,000 children die every day from hunger-related causes.

Our prayer for daily bread thus becomes a prayer for communion with him. Life with Jesus is life in the kingdom, and that implies justice for all, including daily bread. Please note that this petition asks for our daily bread. And it opens up to expressions of gratitude for the bread received, and for the care to live so that everyone can eat.