

LORD, TEACH US TO PRAY  
"THE BREAD WE DAILY NEED"  
Luke 11:1-10

Dr. J. Howard Olds  
March 23, 2003

At a small dinner party in the home of a member, a pastor was invited to ask the blessing for the meal. Turning to the talkative six year old in the house, the pastor suggested she might like to do the blessing instead. The outgoing youngster now suddenly shy replied, "I wouldn't know what to say!" "Just say what you hear your Mommy say," said the pastor assuredly. With that the little girl folded her hands, bowed her head and said, "Lord, why on earth did I invite all these people to dinner?"

Give us this day our daily bread. As we move through the phrases of the Lord's Prayer we find ourselves today face to face with human need. Come with me as we ask, seek, knock on the door of God's mercy until our daily provisions are satisfied.

**GIVE US!**

In the movie, Shenandoah, Jimmy Stewart plays a prosperous Quaker farmer during the Civil War. One night at the supper table, this widower and hard worker lets his feelings show as he asks the blessing.

"Bless this food, Lord. I plowed the land, I planted the seed, I irrigated the fields. I harvested the crops, I canned it, I cooked it and I served it. It took a lot of work and I did it all. But I thank you anyway because I promised my wife on her deathbed I would for the children's sake. Amen."

I suppose most of us feel that way some time or another, do we not? I suggest to you today that we do not pray with clenched fists, we pray with open hands. We pray with the open hand of need.

I need thee, O I need thee, every hour I need thee  
O bless me now my Savior I come to thee.

We pray with the open hand of faith.  
All I have needed thy hand has provided.  
Great is thy faithfulness, Lord unto me.

We pray with the open hand of receptivity.  
But drops of grief could ne'er repay  
The debt of love I owe.  
Here, Lord, I give myself away, tis all that I can do.

Why is it so hard for us to ask for help?

My children say they hate to buy me Christmas presents. “We never know what to buy you,” they say. “If he wants anything he goes out and buys it for himself, so he has no need for anything that we can get for him.”

If it were a matter of things, they would do well to keep their money for more important needs. If *giving* is a matter of loving, *receiving* is a matter of accepting the love of another. Do we not shut down the channels of love by being too stubborn to receive?

If we cannot receive the love we need in small things, how will we ever absorb the grace we need to find our way home to God? My observation is that grace is a wonderful theological idea and a tough thing for Americans to embrace. Are you willing today to declare your dependence on God? Are you willing today to be needy in the presence of the Lord?

**Give US**—not me, not my, not I, but we and ours and us. When the Prodigal separated himself from his family, he came to his father and said, “Give me my share of the estate.” Such greedy self-centeredness got him in the pig pen.

Fallen TV evangelist, Jim Baker, said, “I came to realize such greedy self-centeredness gets a lot of people in the pen, including myself. I believed the prosperity gospel. I told people when you want a new car claim it and be sure to specify the options and colors you want. I was wrong.”

We do not pray in the Lord’s prayer ‘give me this day what I want.’ We pray, “give us this day our daily bread.”

We are created for community.

Hunger kills somebody in the world every 3.6 seconds.

10.5% of all U. S. households are food insecure.

800 million people in the world are malnourished.

It would take 13 billion dollars a year to end hunger. The U.S. and Europe spend 18 billion dollars a year on pet food.

There is a knock on our door in the midnight hour. Like the neighbor in the scriptures we are prone to say, “Don’t bother me. The door is locked, the children are asleep, the animals are settled. I can’t get up and give you anything without troubling the whole place. Go home till another day.”

All the while the answer to somebody’s prayer is in our cupboard or in our checkbook. When are we going to learn to trade bombs for bread, to trade greed

for grace, to trade pride for prayer, to trade competition for community? Give us this day our daily bread. Give us bread.

## **BREAD**

Americans have a love affair with food. Statistics tell us Americans eat 75 acres of pizza, 53 million hotdogs, 167 million eggs, 3 million gallons of ice cream, and 3,000 tons of candy a day.

An overweight businessman went on a diet. Among the first things he decided to eliminate were the doughnuts he regularly brought to the office. On the third day the executive carried in a sack of doughnuts. “What happened?” inquired his assistant. “Well,” said the business man, “I said to the Lord on the way to work, if you don’t want me to eat doughnuts don’t let there be a parking place in front of the bakery. On the third trip around the block I found a parking place right in front. That’s when I decided it was the Lord’s will for me to have doughnuts today.”

In our abundant supermarkets and fine dining establishments we have a choice of bread—will it be white, wheat, rye, rolls, biscuits, or buns. Bread—most of us have more to worry about than bread. We take that for granted, day after day.

My fellow Kentuckian, Wendell Berry, says we industrial eaters have lost touch with the reverence of eating. And then he said this. “In the first place, we consume food that has been processed, dyed, breaded, sauced, gravied, ground, pulped, strained, blended, petrified, and sanitized beyond resemblance to any part of creation that ever lived.”

“In the second place, we want it fast and cheap, without concern for quality or consideration of the people who produce it, or interest in the conditions in which the animals may have existed. In essence, we have separated eating from the earth, and in so doing have lost the spiritual dynamics of the food we consume.”

It is extremely hard for us to realize the truth of that old saying:

Back of the loaf is the snowy flour  
And back of the flour the mill  
And back of the mill is the field of wheat  
The rain and the Father’s will.

Eating is a profound enactment of our connection with the world. In this pleasure we experience and celebrate our dependence and our gratitude. For we are living from mystery, from creatures we did not make and powers we cannot comprehend.

Out at Camp Dogwood, Thomas Henderson, a member of our church is trying to help people make this connection again. He wants to take inner city kids and members of Brentwood and let them dig in the dirt together and raise something out of the ground and sell their products on our parking lots. It may help us

understand the nature of food.

Bread has a spiritual dynamic. It always has had spiritual dimensions. Were the neighbors starving for physical food in this story or spiritual nourishment when they arrived late? Nobody really knows. Hospitality was a spiritual virtue in Jesus day. To break bread together formed a spiritual bond between people. Were they hungry for food or hungry for fellowship? Maybe both.

We stuff our bodies and starve our souls. In a *Garfield* cartoon, Garfield falls asleep face down in his bowl of food. "This is it," exclaims Garfield, "I have reached the pinnacle of laziness and gluttony. There is no place to go after you reach the top." We are not cats. Bread that hits the spot tonight leaves us anxious for more tomorrow. Jesus says to the hungry crowd, after feeding the five thousand, 'Get a life. A *Long John Silver's* on every corner with free fish every Friday may fill your stomach, but it will never satisfy your soul.'

Cardiologist, Dean Ornish, puts it this way: "Our eat more, weigh less nation is suffering from an epidemic of spiritual heart disease. People turn to food, alcohol, and other destructive habits out of loneliness and despair." Bread for the body and food for the soul. Ask for it, seek for it, knock for it until the door opens to it. Give us bread. **DAY BY DAY**. Give us this day our daily bread.

When the children of Israel were delivered from the slavery of Egypt they thought they had it made. Their songs of freedom, however, soon turned to murmurs of complaint. Water and food were scarce in the desert. Some thought they had it better back in Egypt. Out there in the desert the Lord provided. At twilight quail landed. At dawn manna descended. This white-like wafer with a honey-like taste kept them from starving for 40 years. But this bread from the Lord had one condition. It was daily bread. That Old Testament story repeats itself throughout the scriptures. They could not store up for tomorrow what was meant to be consumed today.

The word here is *perios*. It is the only place in the New Testament that it is used. Give us this day our daily bread, our immediate need, nourishment for the moment.

Are you willing to live day by day? That's tough for me. Lord, would you take care of the next thirty years. I want to know how it's going to be when I'm ninety, if I get to live that long. But that's not the prayer. Give us this day our daily bread. O what peace we often forfeit, oh what needless pain we bear, all because we try to squeeze tomorrow into the needs of today.

Jesus said in the Sermon on the Mount, after talking about the birds of the air and the lilies of the field, "Don't worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own."

I don't know about tomorrow,

I just live from day to day.  
I don't borrow from its sunshine,  
For its skies may turn to gray.  
I don't worry o'er the future,  
For I know what Jesus said  
And today I'll walk beside him,  
For he knows what is ahead.  
Many things about tomorrow,  
I don't seem to understand  
But I know who holds tomorrow  
And I know he holds my hand.

**GIVE US THIS DAY OUR DAILY BREAD!**

Do you dare to pray that prayer? Give us today the bread we need.











