

Reading: Matthew 14:13-21

Theme: The Bare Necessities of Life.

What an amazing pattern for prayer the Lord Jesus has given us. He shows us our priorities are to be God centred – His Name, Kingdom and Will - we look upwards. Now with the 2nd set of 3 petitions seems like we have had a very definite fall down to earth as we begin by praying for bread every day! Yet these 3 petitions concerning ourselves deal with God's provision, pardon and protection and all our needs are summed up, our whole life is found here in these 3 petitions. We see the Lord's Prayer is so amazing as Jesus in such a few words covers life's needs of us all in every respect - the whole person is included by these petitions - physical, emotional, mental and spiritual.

We know we are physical beings, but often we forget we have a spiritual side. Yet the great God of heaven does not and in these petitions the Lord Jesus instructs us to pray for our physical needs as well as our spiritual. He teaches us to bring our life in detail and completeness to God in prayer. Remember that here we have just the great headings for prayer. Our Lord gives us these headings, but we are to fill in the details, making sure as we do so that all our petitions belong under one of these great headings in the Lord's Prayer.

This 4th petition comes most suddenly, almost a surprise and it looks, on 1st glance to be out of place! One moment we have great priorities for us - to hallow God's Name, for His kingdom to come. His will to be done and all of them on earth as in heaven. Then dramatically, startlingly we ask "*Give us today our daily bread.*" We could try to be super spiritual and assume forgiveness of sins or deliverance from evil would be next, but not so according to Jesus! Immediately after the exalted petition about God's glory, the Lord Jesus teaches us to pray for our bodies and its needs. It

may seem a let-down to pray for our sustenance after such lofty petitions. Is it really a let-down? I feel that it is not at all, but it is a genuine and right progression. If we truly pray the 1st 3 petitions and commit ourselves to seeking God and His glory and to live our lives for Him, then the next natural logical thing to pray for is to ask God for food, for provision to enable us to be able to live in this way. Doctor Johnson's reply to the criticism that he cared much for his stomach was that those who ignored the needs of their stomach were soon in no condition to care about anything else!

If we are to honour and glorify God, we need food, clothing, shelter etc. to keep body and soul together. This is what this petition asks for. The term "bread" does not just mean bread, or even just food, but it is a term to cover all things necessary for life - food, shelter, clothes, health, work etc. Our Lord is aware we need such things for life. Here He instructs that we are to rightly pray for things to sustain life. We need to be alive to seek pardon, to seek His divine protection, to live to glorify Him and His great name (c.f. 6:33).

Understand that even our daily needs are to be related to glorifying His great Name. We are not to ask for daily needs to fulfil selfish and sinful ends, as sadly many do today - more money, health and strength, so they can enjoy themselves with no thought of God and use their bodies to sin, to blaspheme... What a sad and wrong use of God's daily provision. Realise as Christians we can rightly ask for material blessings of health, strength, abilities etc. We are not as the Greeks and others who said/say that all matter is evil. Yes, we are aware that we can ask for wrong reasons and for wrong things as our hearts can be ensnared so easily by such. Yet we are to have a right view of life as a Christian and not have a cold asceticism. God has given us all things richly to enjoy and we are

to see His goodness in the rich variety of things that He has provided for us, but not to be captivated and ensnared by them.

Our bodies, our needs, a right fulfilment of those needs are all part of God's gift and provision for us. We are to accept our bodies as part of God's creation and act as good stewards of them, gratefully, rightly enjoying all God's gracious provision and blessing on us. As we do so, we honour our Maker as we seek to glorify Him in all we do, as we correctly use His goodness to us.

God's glory does not detract from man's life, but fulfils it, completes it. God's glory and His pleasure is to be the sun around which our whole lives must revolve. Not to do so, is to fail in the purpose for which we were designed and created. Sadly, many people are self-centred, are the be all and end all of their existence. They are self-made people, who live for and worship their maker!

Even as we rightly enjoy life's good things, we are to realise we are not just physical beings that need "daily bread", but we are also spiritual beings and need the Bread of Life. We can have LIFE and have LIFE in abundance. To gain this we must trust the Lord Jesus as our own personal Saviour. This is real life, to know our sins are forgiven, be willing to forgive others and to live holy lives for God's glory - these 3 petitions teach us of this life. I guess I better start looking at this 4th petition and quickly note 5 things it teaches us:

1. Moderation.

We are to ask for daily bread and not luxuries! It is a prayer for the necessities, the bare necessities of life! It literally reads "*Our daily bread give us this day*". We are to ask for what is necessary for our existence today – not for 10 weeks ahead, or 10 years ahead, but for this very day, one day at a time. It covers all that is

necessary for life - all our outward provision for our daily sustenance and for the inward grace we need. It does not prevent us planning for the future in a God honouring way e.g. pensions, but the focus is on what we need that day and not what we dream of for our future life.

We are not to be asking for an excess or selfishly asking for a superabundance, but to be moderate and ask only for what is necessary, to ask only for a sufficient amount of the good things of this life as God sees and knows are necessary and best for us. He may graciously give us much more than the necessities, in some cases He might richly bless as He knows we can handle a full glass of blessings and use those gifts aright in His service. Yet as we pray this petition “*Give us today our daily bread*” we submit to what God sees as necessary and best for us – His will be done.

It is not to be self-centred prayer alone, but “**Give us**” - we pray for others around us, other believers the whole world over. We are to echo the words found in Proverbs 30:8-9 “*give me neither poverty nor riches, but give me only my daily bread. Otherwise, I may have too much and disown you and say, ‘Who is the LORD?’ Or I may become poor and steal, and so dishonour the name of my God.*” Overabundance and poverty both have dangers and so we are to pray for daily bread. We are to pray for necessities, not luxuries, but absolute necessities. Luxuries and superabundance are not promised, so we pray for sufficient daily bread. This petition also teaches us of our:

2. Dependence.

As we pray this, we acknowledge our lives are dependent upon God’s provision and pleasure. Experts say that from the beginning of this century the majority of the world’s population are now

living in cities, removed from nature. Sadly, some children believe that food and milk come from the supermarket! In a school in Barton, one of the teachers was explaining to her class, how you get potatoes and make them into chips and a number of the children laughed and said that you got them from the freezer compartment!

In praying this petition, we acknowledge that God is the giver of all good things around us, that they are sent from heaven above. It is a reminder to us from whom we receive everything and to whom we must give thanks and pray. We may have good jobs, plenty of food, but if God did not bless us and nourish us with the food we eat, we would soon be unable to work or eat. We recognise science is coming more and more into farming, but if God was not faithful and dependent, if the laws He designed and establish were not fixed and dependable, then science would disappear and fail to work. If the seasons were not regular or it rained too much or did not rain enough, crops would fail. Proud mankind ignores this and think we are self-sufficient. Everything we have has been given us by God and we do well to remember it, especially as we sit down to a meal - giving thanks, saying grace is just a small right part of acknowledging God's goodness and our thankful dependence on Him.

It is humbling that we all are totally dependent on God. We could have food, money and possessions in abundance, but if God chose that our food did not nourish us, we could be starving and poverty struck even with a feast and fortune around us. We are all dependent on God for a hand to mouth existence - from God's hand to our mouth! We should not take any of His provision for our lives for granted, nor take the Giver of these good things for granted. It is a daily new provision. Yesterday's strength,

provisions, graces and experiences are not sufficient - it is “*Give us this day...*”

As Christians we are to put God’s glory, name, kingdom and will before our bodily needs. The Lord Jesus did this - John 4:32-34 “*But he said to them, "I have food to eat that you know nothing about." Then his disciples said to each other, "Could someone have brought him food?" "My food," said Jesus, "is to do the will of him who sent me and to finish his work."*” (Samaritan woman at the well). As we pray the priorities in this prayer, committing our daily needs to Him, we commit our futures and its needs into His care and hands. This should cause us to have contentment as we know our past has been dealt with, our future is in His hand and He watches over us and cares for us this day i.e. in the present. We are to live a contented lifestyle, but do we? If not, I wonder if we are really trusting Him as we should. We are to remind ourselves that we dare not face life and its battles without His help in things physical or spiritual. This petition also teaches us of:

3. Stewardship.

We are blessed in this land with plenty. As such we are not to stop praying this petition, but pray it aware of the implications of the cooperative aspect of this petition “*Give us*”. If we have plenty and our brothers and sisters lack necessities, we are to pray mindful of them. We with plenty are to be stewards and not hoarders. Christians are meant to be the greatest blessing the world has ever known - by preaching the gospel, then by caring for and loving all.

There is a place for Christianity in action - to care for, provide for, to fight for rights, to work to improve the lot of others. That is why we should pray for rulers, for governments, for those in authority over us. Martin Luther wished that rulers put loaves rather than

lions on their coats of arms - to remind themselves that their people's lives must come 1st and he argued that it was under this petition in the Lord's Prayer that prayer for those in authority properly comes. We have been saved to do good, to be zealous of good works, we are to be stewards of all God has given us. Yet in this there is also:

4. Warning.

This is **the only petition for this life's necessities!** We are not to pray exclusively for life's needs, and certainly not to use them on sinful and selfish ends, but we pray only as they help us in our spiritual lives, as they help us on our journey to heaven. As we pray for God's glory, honour, kingdom and will, for our sins forgiveness, deliverance from evil, we can pray specifically and have no qualms about it and pray for others to be saved. Yet when we pray for temporal things our prayers must be limited to the condition that we have these only as God sees fit, as prayer is not a celestial slot machine.

The position of this petition in the Lord's prayer reminds us of our priorities in life - that we could have all this world offers and be in a beggarly state for we could be starving and lack the Bread of Life and so starve in eternity. We need both physical bread and the Bread of Life – we need the Lord Jesus as our Saviour. Do we have Him as our Saviour at this moment? Finally, this petition is also a cause of:

5. Wonder.

This is an extra ordinary, a wonderful petition. We asked wonderful things in the 1st 3 petitions from this awesome, majestic, holy, eternal God, who is the Creator and Sustainer of the whole universe and so great that the nations are as small insignificant dust on the balances, but the wonder is that we are

given the unbelievable privilege to ask with confidence that He would consider the needs of little you and me! Even down to such details as our daily bread.

This is the teaching of our Lord Jesus everywhere. He tells us that not even a sparrow can fall to the ground without our Father knowing; that we are of greater value than sparrows and that even the hairs of our head are all numbered. If only we could grasp this amazing fact, that the Almighty Lord of the universe is interested in every part of us, indeed He is concerned about the most minute details of our little lives, for they are known to Him even as He is on His eternal throne. We are not insignificant to God and this is what we learn from this amazing petition that He encourages, wants us to pray.

We go from God's will being done on earth as it is in heaven to "*Give us this day our daily bread*", but that is the way of God our Father and it is part and parcel of the miracle of redemption, of the whole meaning of the incarnation of the Lord Jesus which tells us that He takes hold of us on earth and links us to the almighty God of all glory. We are to see the wonder, the love, the glory of God in caring so much for us as to be concerned for our every need and allowing us to pray about such. What a wonderful, immense petition we have here. We do well to praise Him for His great love and faithfulness and it should encourage us to cast all our cares on Him - for He really does care for us!