

Daily Bread

Week 3 Pray Like This

By Pastor Mandy

Give us this day our daily bread. As a child, this was the part of the Lord's Prayer that I really connected with. You know, I could say the Lord's Prayer. Our father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread.

Now that is what made sense to me as a child, because even as a child I understood that food was important. My mom would say, you know, eat your fruit and vegetables so you can grow big and strong. I understood the feeling of hunger, like when my stomach growled. I knew that if I ate food that would make it stop, it satisfied my hunger. The food tasted good. It felt good.

In Matthew chapter six Jesus says, this is how you should pray. And he includes this line, and of course, this is known as the Lord's Prayer. And it's set across denominations and churches and Christians all over the world say this prayer that Jesus taught us to pray.

As we read Matthew chapter six, we get to this verse where it says, give us this day our daily bread. It seemed obvious as a child, and it seems obvious now that God cares about our physical needs. Jesus wasn't just concerned with our spiritual salvation. It's not just about going to heaven when we die, but it's also about our bodies and our minds and our spirits right here and now. I mean, Jesus in his ministry, he healed broken bodies, he fed hungry bellies, and he preached to the broken hearted.

Throughout this, throughout his ministry. And this holistic approach is deeply rooted in tradition. It's definitely deeply rooted in the Methodist tradition. Caring for people's basic needs has always been important in the Methodist tradition, and ensuring medical care has always been important. It started out with, the Methodist would send this medical book to churches and communities so they could care for one another, and then they started building hospitals because that was important.

Not only caring for the body through food and medical care, but caring about our minds, through education. Methodist fought for a right for education to for everyone. They built schools. Then, of course, nurturing the soul is the message of good news. And the Methodist started out by field preaching, right? They didn't build churches and wait for people to come.

They started by going to the fields. They went to the coal mines. They preached the good news. Our faith is and always has been about whole salvation. It's bread for the body, bread for the soul. Now there are times where people will interpret this, this part of Scripture as bread for the body, and at other times they will be preaching or teaching about bread for the soul, saying it's not about, like bread, like sour dough or banana bread.

It's about spiritual bread. And I would say probably both of these interpretations are right. I think Jesus's words probably mean both of these things. Spiritual nourishment is a beautiful and essential practice. It's a daily need, just as much as physical bread that we eat.

This prayer, give us today our daily bread, has layers. Is it bread for the body? Is it bread for the soul? But there's even more to this simple, seemingly simple line. It's about trusting God for today. It's about the gift of living in the present with the assumption that God will provide for us what we need for this day. It's like taking it day, one day at a time.

Now, the key word here is daily. Give us today what we need for today. Now Jesus follows this prayer in the same chapter we can read where? Where Jesus says, do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble on its own, so here Jesus is pretty clear. He's like, don't worry about tomorrow. Let's worry about today. Ask God for what you need for today. It's this reminder that God gives us enough for each day. It's kind of like God provided manna in the wilderness, and Jesus probably was thinking about this when he said these words to us that the Israelites, they were instructed to gather only enough manna for that day.

And when they tried to gather a little bit extra for the next day, by the next morning, it would not only gather what you need for today, that daily bread, that manna, was a lesson in trust. It was God's way of saying; I will provide what you need today, and I will do the same tomorrow. God is the provider of all things.

This prayer of this, this one, this one line of Scripture teaches us that whether it's food at our tables or wisdom for making decisions or strength for us to get through hard times, all of it comes from God. Everything that sustains us is a gift from God. Physically and spiritually. Sustain us is all a gift from God. Yet how often do we trust that?

How often do we say and recognize God for sustaining us? How often do we live as though we must gather not only what we need for today, but we gather what we need for tomorrow and the next day, and maybe even the next year. So most of us are fortunate enough not to know what, like a true hunger or true thirst is all about. But in the world of Jesus, it was probably a daily reality for them. Like hunger, hunger and thirst were a rhythm of life for them. Now I had like just a little taste of this when, Tom and I, we recently traveled to Oregon and we hiked part of Mount Saint Helens with our nephew, who's an experienced hiker.

And after, you know, kind of a long little, little ways, we went up the mountain. We came upon this beautiful brook. Like, you can picture it like we're in the mountains, we're hiking along. And here is this the sound you hear? The sound first and the sound of the water, like trickling, rushing over the rocks. And it was so refreshing sounding.

And Tom, he bent down, and he touched the cold water, and then he pretended to take a drink. All right. We wanted to take a drink. Right. Oh, this, this water that God has provided for us. Like, why not? We can't just take a drink. And of course, our nephew was like, please don't do that.

Then he told us what could happen, but God provided this. He's says, yeah, but humans messed it up. So, at that moment, though, I thought about like, how desperate it felt to just take a little drink of that water after a short hike.

But then imagine being in the desert where the sand and the wind, or just like cutting through you in your mouth, probably you're drying out. The heat is pressing down on you and there's no end in sight. It's not like, oh, there's a house a little way away and we can turn on the faucet and get a drink of water.

But many people lived in that kind of world during Jesus's time. The desperation for water was real. The desperation for food was real. Now, last Sunday, in Brian's powerful message, he mentioned the Beatitudes and one of the Beatitudes found in Matthew chapter five verse six says this blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled.

Now hunger and thirst in this context are more about more than just a bagel and a cup of coffee. It's about a deep, soul level craving for God's righteousness. As commentator William Barclay writes, he says, the hunger which this beatitude describes is no genteel hunger which could be satisfied with a mid-morning snack. It is the hunger of the man who is starving for food, and the thirst of the man who will die unless he drinks.

This is the intensity with which Jesus calls us to seek righteousness, to seek God. Now most of us desire God in our life. Most of us desire for goodness in our lives. But do we hunger and thirst for it? Do you? Do we long for it with the kind of desperation that demands sacrifice, or demands us to offer our entire lives to God? Or are we willing to pursue God, pursue righteousness even if it cost us something? And Jesus invites us to long for God's goodness with that same intensity, the kind that seeks not only just a small portion of righteousness, not just a taste of it, but something that will satisfy us now and forever. It's this balance of daily provision with future vision.

How does that fit in this verse? Well, the Greek word for daily, this word does not appear anywhere else in the Bible. The word that's used for daily that we've translated into daily does not appear anywhere else in the Bible except for the parallel story found in in Luke. And it also, this word does not appear anywhere else in Greek writings.

Anywhere like this is a new word that we are trying to translate, and it probably goes beyond daily, because there is a word for daily. And if Jesus met daily, he probably would have used that word, but he didn't. It's a new word. Jesus wanted us to think about this different so day by day. Or is this bread for the future?

This line and this prayer, they are not just about physical needs, and it's not just about the spiritual needs that God provide us, but it's even more than that. It's about Jesus who, who, who, who God provided for us, who is the past and the present and the future. When we asked God to give us this day our daily bread, we aren't just asking for our immediate needs to be met.

We're learning to trust in God's provision for today, and to believe that God is already at work providing for tomorrow. Now, if nothing else, this is a great reminder. This short scripture verse is a great reminder that the Bible is complicated. There is a word in this verse that is nowhere else, and we must interpret what Jesus was talking about.

There's no other context. We must understand the culture and the interpretations and how we came to this meeting to even consider what this verse might be telling us. If you ever think that the Bible clearly says x, Y, or Z, then go back and reread it, go back and study it some more.

Because even the command that the Jesus has for us, you know, the one that we love so much that says love your neighbor. Like, of course, well, Jesus tells us to love our neighbor. You know, we throw that out sometimes to people. Most of us can get behind that we're going to love our neighbor, but we also often forget the rest of the command that we also have to love our enemy.

For the past year, Horizon's leadership has been discerning this balance. How can we meet the needs of today with our general budget, supporting the ministries we do right now, while also boldly looking at the future? How do we provide daily bread for now? But trust God, but trust in God that God has a bigger vision for us now.

At the annual conference in 2023, clergy and laity who attended that conference were challenged with about thinking about what the church of 2050 looks like and how what we can do now to be relevant and alive in 2050.

These plans, our hopes and dreams for what horizons could look like. But the bigger question, of course, is why are we doing this? What is behind all of this? So, this picture here is a picture, of a model that was built in 2002. 22 years ago, before the building was even built. This is a model of what the building was going to look like. We realized that this model is almost older than some of our staff members, almost not quite, but okay.

So anyway, back to the why. A couple of weeks ago, I received an email from a couple who have been attending Horizons for the last couple years. In the email, Karen shared her experience of visiting horizons for the first time. She described it like this.

She said, "I drive up, I park in the parking lot, and I walk into the building." And here is what she sees when she walks into the building. She sees two open arms saying, welcome in her. In her email, she said she called it intentional architecture, built for hospitality, and I don't know if that was the intention, but I see that now.

I saw it this morning when I walked up these two sides of the building that are just like arms, that just are saying, welcome. But then she wrote in her email, when we came inside, we met the people, the church. Same open arms, same welcome. That's what she felt when she came to horizons for the first time. An invitation to experience God's love here and imagine if more people in Lincoln could feel that same welcome.

Wouldn't that be incredible if those people could experience this kind of community that we have here? But here's the reality. The culture has shifted, especially in recent years. We know this. Fewer or fewer people are looking for church in the in the ways that they used to. Many people feel that church isn't for them. Research. In this process, we researched what our community, is looking for and is seeking and thinking about and in our community, people think that the church, that's us, the people are often hypocritical.

People have left the church because the church, that's us, the people have hurt them, or they've left the church because they just feel that the church has become unnecessary in the community horizons, I believe, has been called to bridge that gap, to create a space in this neighborhood where our neighbors can feel invited into a community, into service, and of course, into a relationship with God.

After thoughtful conversations and a lot of meetings and prayer and research, our leadership teams have identified several key product projects that will help us move into the future. Now, these include building updates and repairs on our ageing building and our aging parking lot, so we can continue the ministry that we're doing here, creating spaces that are functional and welcoming and aligned with our mission.

We envision using our land for the community, an inclusive park we envision where kids of different abilities can play side by side, something that's not in South Lincoln right now. We envision a path that's leading from the street right to the front door saying, welcome. What I love about the path is that it is also on, a vision board, a site map that we found from 22 years ago.

These projects are not just about upgrading the facility or getting something new and fancy and shiny. They are about creating missional spaces where our neighbors can experience the love of Jesus. That's what we want and is what we feel like the spirit moving us to do. Is this scary? Yes.

But as long-time horizons member and faithful follower of Jesus, Susan Sapp said in a recent steering team meeting, she said God has provided for horizons what we've needed and God will continue to provide. What does this look like for us now? What can we do today? Well, Jesus taught us to ask for daily bread and trust God's provision daily.

We need to be in daily prayer. We need to express gratitude daily and remind ourselves of the power and hope that God offers to us daily. Gratitude and prayer shifts our focus away from what we want for ourselves and shifts it to what is best for the future of God's church. The church of 2050. Imagine what the world could look like if we all trusted God in this way, if we all lived out this daily rhythm of dependence on God, if we all had this hunger for righteousness,