

Give Us Today Our Daily Bread

SCOTT HOEZEE

The great reformer and theologian Martin Luther once considered what it means to pray: Give us this day our daily bread. As Luther pictured it, when Christians begin their day with this petition, how wonderful it is to know that well before those words get spoken each new day, somewhere across town, a baker had already gotten out of bed and turned on the lights of his bakery at 4:00 a.m. As the baker sets up his dough to rise and proof before baking that day's loaves, he becomes the hands of God's own providence in answering our prayers for daily bread. Today on *Groundwork*, we continue our look at the Lord's Prayer. Stay tuned.

DARRELL DELANEY

Welcome to *Groundwork*, where we dig into scripture to lay the foundation for our lives. I am Darrell Delaney.

SCOTT HOEZEE

And I am Scott Hoezee; and Darrell, this is now our midpoint episode, episode three of six on the most famous prayer in the world, as given to us by Jesus in Matthew 6 and Luke 11. We have looked at the early petitions of calling God Father and hallowing God's name, as well as in the previous program, the petition that God's will be done and the Father's kingdom come on earth as it already is in heaven.

DARRELL DELANEY

And then today we are going to look at the petition: Give us this day our daily bread; and if you have been paying attention, you noticed that we have been acknowledging God and focusing on God, and we want God's agenda, and we have put all that before our needs; and this is the first place that the person who is praying gets to request from the Lord, after all of that.

SCOTT HOEZEE

Right; we begin with the big context of heaven, of our holy Father, of our Father's kingdom, and now we kind of go to a more earthbound matter on bread.

So, let's start, Darrell, just by kind of pulling apart this petition. Now, on the one hand, this looks pretty simple. I mean, in most English translations, this petition is just seven words. The original Greek is just eight words long. So, not a real long line; but tucked into the original Greek of this line is a word that is found nowhere else in the whole Bible except in this line of the Lord's Prayer in both Matthew 6 and Luke 11; and Darrell, you and I have both studied theology long enough to know that when you get a rare word in a Bible passage, scholars jump all over it to figure out what it means.

DARRELL DELANEY

Yes; and that word is *daily*. When we look at this word, *daily*, we just see a regular regimen of certain things when we think about it in English; but when you dig into it in Greek, it is very interesting what scholars have come up with.

SCOTT HOEZEE

Yes; the Greek word is *s?meron**, actually. If we give a really literal, wooden translation of the Greek of Matthew 6:11, it would say something like: Our *necessary* bread give us today; or some might render it as: Our *sufficient* bread give us this day; but near as scholars can tell, and you are never going to get unanimous

agreement on this kind of thing among Bible and Greek scholars, but the word we usually translate as *daily* does mean something more like sufficient or necessary; and it carries with it the sense: Give us this day *sufficient* bread to take us also into tomorrow.

DARRELL DELANEY

So, we are not trying to get the Lord to give us this weeks upon weeks upon weeks...

SCOTT HOEZEE

Right.

DARRELL DELANEY

Or somewhere wear it down in the unforeseeable future; we are actually looking for the allotment that he has for us right now, so that we can enjoy his sufficiency in the moment; is that what you are saying?

SCOTT HOEZEE

Right; not the long-term future. Don't give us a year's worth of food today; but no; give us what we need to suffice from one day to the next. So, there is a slight look to the next day, right? But it is the idea we want to wake up tomorrow morning, so give us enough bread today that we will be healthy and strong on the next day. So, give us enough to suffice one day to the next.

DARRELL DELANEY

And I have been thinking about this, too, because, I mean, you know we live in the already and not yet kingdom.

SCOTT HOEZEE

Yes, right.

DARRELL DELANEY

God's kingdom has come because of Jesus coming here, but it is not in full yet; and so, we see sometimes abundance on one hand, where there are stockpiles of food, and then we see on the other hand, this prayer is actually the prayer of people who have nothing, who go to food pantries. You know, during this time when we had the pandemic, there were many people who lost jobs and lost food, and this prayer became the instrument that they were looking for God to fulfill because they didn't have everything they needed.

SCOTT HOEZEE

Exactly; one day at a time, I think that is the idea here; and that very much is consistent, Darrell, with what Jesus says a little later in Matthew 6. So, the Lord's Prayer in Matthew 6 is part of the Sermon on the Mount...from Matthew 5 to 7...and a little later in this same chapter where the Lord's Prayer comes, we hear these famous words in Matthew 6:31 and following: "So do not worry, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?'" ³²For the pagans run after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them. ³³But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well. ³⁴Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own."

DARRELL DELANEY

And Jesus knows us so well. He knows that we are prone to worry...prone to wander, as the hymn says.

SCOTT HOEZEE

Right.

DARRELL DELANEY

Our hearts are thinking about: Well, what are we going to do? And he hits it right on the head to help us to understand, first of all, our heavenly Father knows we need these things. So, we do not need to continue

asking him, but he is going to take care of us and give us exactly what we need in the day...in the moment.

SCOTT HOEZEE

And it reminds me, too, Darrell, of the people of Israel when they first were in the wilderness after the exodus from Egypt; and of course, we remember that God gave them the manna, but with the exception of the day before the Sabbath, the Israelites were always told: Hey, just gather up enough to get you from today to tomorrow. Don't stockpile it.

DARRELL DELANEY

In Exodus 16 it reads: ^{15b}Moses said to them, "It is the bread the Lord has given you to eat. ¹⁶This is what the Lord has commanded: 'Everyone is to gather as much as they need. Take an omer for each person you have in your tent.'" ¹⁷The Israelites did as they were told; some gathered much, some little. ¹⁸And when they measured it by the omer, the one who gathered much did not have too much, and the one who gathered little did not have too little. Everyone had gathered just as much as they needed.

SCOTT HOEZEE

So, wrapped into this really short petition: Give us this day our daily bread, here in the Lord's Prayer, Darrell, there is a lot of biblical history, there is a lot of biblical theology. I think when we pray these very simple words, we are kind of saying more than we know most of the time, right?

DARRELL DELANEY

It's true. Sometimes we don't necessarily see when we look at it each moment, that God is doing it, but when we look back, we realize that, like the scripture says, that I have never seen the righteous forsaken nor his seed begging bread; and God has continued to be faithful in the things that we have needed; but this prayer is designed to establish a trust between the heavenly Father, who is interested in helping provide what we need, and our relationship to him.

SCOTT HOEZEE

And I think eventually in this program we will wonder about how to understand this petition, in case we are among those whose lives are so blessed that maybe we have never known a hungry day. Is it meaningful to pray for sufficient bread from one day to the next when, as a matter of fact, our pantry and fridge and freezer are stocked well enough for weeks and months on end? As you noted earlier, Darrell, that is not true of everybody in the world. Even in North America, some people are living, literally, day by day. They depend on food trucks, they depend on food banks and the generosity of others to contribute money and goods to that; but a lot of people, in this part of the world, anyway, as a matter of fact, have plenty; and so, how does this petition become meaningful for us if that is the situation we are in?

We are going to get to that before this program is finished. But first, and coming up in just a moment, we will ponder some of the spiritual and theological lessons of this line: Give us this day our daily bread. So, stay tuned.

Segment 2

DARRELL DELANEY

You are listening to *Groundwork*, where we are digging into scripture to lay the foundation for our lives. I am Darrell Delaney.

SCOTT HOEZEE

And I am Scott Hoezee; and as we begin this part of the program, Darrell, let's hear from the Reformed confessional document, the *Heidelberg Catechism*. The *Heidelberg Catechism* goes over the Lord's Prayer line by line in the very, very last section of that catechism, and here is what it says in answer to the question: What does it mean to pray: Give us this day our daily bread? Here is what the Catechism says it means: Take care of all our physical needs so that we come to know that you are the only source of everything good, and that neither our work and worry, nor your gifts can do us any good without your blessing; and so, help us to give up our trust in creatures, and trust in you alone.

DARRELL DELANEY

Oh, that is so good, Scott; that is a reminder that it is not about what we can build for ourselves or what we can do for ourselves; and it develops a simple trust between Creator and creation—that is us; we have to trust our God. He blesses our hands, and that is why we have the abundance that we share; and that is why we are called to share what we do get, because he is the one who sustains us.

SCOTT HOEZEE

You mentioned it near the end of the previous part of this program, Darrell. We are being called to simple trust, which is what we see in that catechism line. It is all about keeping our spiritual line of sight clear so that we never doubt who it is who takes care of us day by day. It kind of reminds me of Psalm 55.

DARRELL DELANEY

Yes; it says in Psalm 55: ²²Cast your cares on the Lord and he will sustain you; he will never let the righteous be shaken**.

SCOTT HOEZEE

It also reminds me of Psalm 62: ⁵Yes, my soul, find rest in God; my hope comes from him. ⁶Truly he is my rock and my salvation; he is my fortress; I will not be shaken. ⁷My salvation and my honor depend on God; he is my mighty rock, my refuge. ⁸Trust in him at all times, you people; pour out your hearts to him, for God is our refuge.

DARRELL DELANEY

It is something that we prayed a lot where I come from. We remember he is the provider; we remember that he is the *sustainer* of life. So, food could be a source, and the bread that we are praying for in this prayer could be a source...no; it could be a *resource*; and God is the *Source* with a capital S. He is the reason why we have what we have, and to build a trusting relationship with him is going to be healthy for our walk with him.

SCOTT HOEZEE

That is right. When you source something, you have to have a resourcer, as you just said, and God is that person, as those two psalms that we just read say: Put *all* your trust in him, you people. Trust in him at *all* times, you people, Psalm 62 just said.

So, in other words, I remember my teacher Neal Plantinga often said this: You know, when we think of archery or something, we think of a bullseye...we think of the target...you want to hit the target, right? What is the proper target for gratitude in the Christian life? God alone, we know, right?

Some years ago, my wife and I were in those forests just north of San Francisco where the majestic, giant California redwood trees are; and you know, not a few people walk through those soaring giants and compare it to being like in a cathedral; and indeed, afterwards we were in a coffeeshop connected to the national park there, and a woman at another table said to her companion...we overheard her...she said: This might seem strange, but while I was walking in the forest, I just felt like singing. And, I didn't do it, but what I wanted to say is, to whom would you sing? Do you know to whom you would want to sing songs of praise about those trees? Maybe she knew that the answer was the Creator God; but, you know, it is odd sometimes when people seem grateful, but they don't know to whom, right? I mean, as Neal Plantinga says: Being grateful in general is like being married in general. No; you have to be married *to* somebody; and so, if you are grateful...if you are thankful...you have to be thankful *to* somebody.

DARRELL DELANEY

Because thanks comes in relationship with someone, Scott. So, if my wife did something for me, and I thank everybody in the room, it doesn't make much sense to her, because she is the source of why I am thankful; and so, if God is the one who offers bread, it makes sense to thank the one who gave you the bread, because that is the relationship that the Father has with his children, and he wants us to actually remember who gets the glory, who gets the honor, and who gets the praise for the things he has done.

SCOTT HOEZEE

It reminds me of the Apostle James...James 1: ¹⁶Don't be deceived, my dear brothers and sisters. ¹⁷Every good and perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of the heavenly lights, who does not change like shifting shadows. ¹⁸He chose to give us birth through the word of truth, that we might be a kind of firstfruits of all he created.

So, every good and perfect gift comes from above. Don't forget that, James says.

DARRELL DELANEY

Yes; and speaking of people who have forgotten that. There are people in the book of Acts that Paul went to go witness to in Athens who had a whole bunch of different idols and different gods that they wanted to thank, and he noticed that. He wrote about it in Acts 17. It says: ²³“For as I walked around and looked carefully at your objects of worship, I even found an altar with this inscription: TO AN UNKNOWN GOD. So, you are ignorant of the very thing you worship—and this is what I am going to proclaim to you. ²⁴The God who made the world and everything in it is the Lord of heaven and earth and does not live in temples built by human hands. ²⁵And he is not served by human hands, as if he needed anything. Rather, he himself gives everyone life and breath and everything else.”

So, Paul is helping them understand: Hey, I know there are a lot of general things going on around here, but let me show you where the target is. It is the real God.

SCOTT HOEZEE

Exactly; you know, I like the... So, he finds this altar to an unknown god. I like to think that, you know, the altar had a giant question mark on it or something, because the people in Athens had some sense...you know, we are trying to cover our spiritual bases here. We've got lots of false gods, but we are not sure we got to the God who has given us everything, so we will just, you know, put this altar to somebody. It is like I would imagine they used to pray: Thanks for everything, whoever you are. That is not a very good way to pray; and as you just said, Darrell, what Paul wants to tell them is what we would want to tell them: Don't say thanks for everything, whoever you are. This God has a name. We know who that God is. It is the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. That is the one who gives you every good thing. So, that is the target. That is what you aim for. Aim your prayers at that God, because he is the one who gives you everything.

DARRELL DELANEY

And Jesus tells us in this prayer to address that God as our Father, and he is a good father and a good parent who knows how to take care of his children; and Jesus alludes to this in Matthew 7 when he talks about this. He says: ⁷“Which of you, if your son asks for bread, will give him a stone? ¹⁰Or if he asks for a fish, will give him a snake? ¹¹If you, then, though you are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give good gifts to those who ask him!”

So, our heavenly Father knows how to give good gifts, and bread is just basic on that list of good provisions...

SCOTT HOEZEE

Right.

DARRELL DELANEY

And he wants to give that to us.

SCOTT HOEZEE

Simple trust in the Father, that is what we are seeking when we ask for daily bread as part of the Lord's Prayer; and knowing to whom to direct our thanksgiving for such a daily gift follows right on that, absolutely; but as we conclude the program, Darrell, let's consider some of the challenges we face in nurturing that kind of daily trust and gratitude. So, stay tuned.

Segment 3

DARRELL DELANEY

I am Darrell Delaney, with Scott Hoezee, and you are listening to *Groundwork*.

SCOTT HOEZEE

And we are talking about, in this third program of six on the Lord's Prayer, give us this day our daily bread; and we just said, Darrell, that nurturing a daily dependence on, and a trust in God, as well as expressing due gratitude when our daily needs are met, that is all caught up in this relatively simple looking request in the Lord's Prayer about daily bread; but we did hint earlier in the program, Darrell, that for at least some of us...not all of us in the world, certainly...not even all of us these days in North America...but for *some* of us, the abundance of provisions we have most of the time presents a challenge spiritually in terms of being able to see and feel all this gratitude appropriately.

DARRELL DELANEY

So, you know when the Israelites were being brought to the Promised Land, they were warned about these things; and they were coming into a place where they weren't going to need God initially for every single need, because they were going to become people who farm, people who planted, people who grew their own crops and actually took care of their own animals and cattle and things of that nature. So, Moses is going to warn them before they get to that place.

In Deuteronomy 8, he says this:

¹⁰When you have eaten and are satisfied, praise the Lord your God for the good land he has given you. ¹¹Be careful that you do not forget the Lord your God, failing to observe his commands, his laws and his decrees that I am giving you this day. ¹²Otherwise, when you eat and are satisfied, when you build fine houses and settle down, ¹³and when your herds and flocks grow large and your silver and gold increase and all you have is multiplied, ¹⁴then your heart will become proud and you will forget the Lord your God who brought you out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery.

SCOTT HOEZEE

¹⁵He led you through the vast and dreadful wilderness, that thirsty and waterless land, with it venomous snakes and scorpions. He brought you water out of hard rock. ¹⁶He gave you manna to eat in the wilderness, something your ancestors had never known, to humble and test you so that in the end it might go well with you. ¹⁷You may say to yourself, "My power and the strength of my hands have produced this wealth for me." ¹⁸But remember the Lord your God, for it is he who gives you the ability to produce wealth, and so confirms his covenant, which he swore to your ancestors, as it is today.

Bottom line of the whole book of Deuteronomy, Darrell, as the people prepared to pivot from wilderness life to Promised Land life, is with great blessing comes great peril.

DARRELL DELANEY

Yes.

SCOTT HOEZEE

Sure, when Israel had to subsist on and exist in a place of death, pretty easy to remember: Hey, our lives are held by a slender thread that God alone holds; but once you get into a good and rich land, that is going to be a whole lot harder to remember every day.

DARRELL DELANEY

Remember is the word that comes to mind when you think of Deuteronomy, because God wants them to remember who he is; God wants them to remember what he has done; and when you get into a place where, oh, the pressure is off and the crisis is off and the emergency is off, please remember who God is and who is giving you the ability to do these things. And unfortunately, sometimes in our lives, we can get to this place where we start looking around at the things we earn, or looking at our paychecks or looking at the things that we have, and say: Oh, look at what we have done! Oh, I must be special because I am able to, you know...it

is like meritocracy...a false meritocracy: I have earned this!

SCOTT HOEZEE

Exactly.

DARRELL DELANEY

So, here is the thing: God is the one who gives you the ability to do that, and that is what Deuteronomy says, and if we don't remember that, we can become very arrogant in our walk with God.

SCOTT HOEZEE

Yes; so, comparing the wilderness to the Promised Land. You know, water gushing from a lifeless rock by a miracle of God, that is one thing; but water you scoop out of your own well; or today we would say: Yes, you just go to the kitchen and you turn on the faucet. That is quite different, right? God daily depositing the original Wonder Bread of manna on the otherwise lifeless desert floor, that was one thing; but bread you bake for yourself...or again, you know, you go to the A&P, you buy a loaf of Aunt Millie's bread...well, that is rather different, right? Miracle water, miracle bread from God...easy to make the God connection. Water from a faucet, bread from a supermarket...a little harder to make the God connection.

DARRELL DELANEY

Yes; and so, we have to actually ask God to keep our hearts sensitive, and actually thank him for these things. My family, we do prayers with each other before everyone goes to school in the morning, and we continue to thank God for the things we often take for granted: the food on our table, the clothes on our back, the roofs on our heads, the heat, and the family members who we have, so that we can just constantly remind ourselves: Those are gifts...

SCOTT HOEZEE

Right.

DARRELL DELANEY

Those are special; and not everybody has those things; and there are people who actually are asking God to help them because they don't see that right now. So, if we are in a place of abundance, then we are called to be grateful and thankful.

SCOTT HOEZEE

And to share with those in need, as you pointed out earlier in the program, too. So, what can we do? If we have these challenges to nurturing daily trust and gratitude, what can we do? Two ideas, I think, as we close out this program, Darrell. The first one is to slow down, you know. We live in a fast-food culture in more ways than one. Not only can you get your food fast, at McDonald's or Wendy's or Taco Bell, you eat it fast. In fact, we have this habit in our culture to eat while we do something else, right? We eat while we watch TV; we eat while we are at the movies; we eat while we are driving. So, we don't slow down enough to say thanks before we take the first bite, and we don't reflect on the gift of food while we are eating it, because we are doing something else. So, slow down; slow down. Take more time with our food, but take more time to pause long enough to say: Thank you, God. You know, we call it saying grace, right? I don't know where that came from, saying grace, but it is that. Food is a grace. It is a gift.

DARRELL DELANEY

And my grandmother, she used to be the last one to leave the table every time, because she grew up on a farm and she understood the importance of savoring the flavor; and so, she taught us that we don't need to rush through and wolf things down, but we need to actually savor the flavor; and everything that God has given us, we need to learn how to slow down and savor.

SCOTT HOEZEE

So, slow down. That is the first suggestion of how to nurture this daily trust and gratitude. Second idea, maybe we can exercise some care in this idea once in a while by purposely doing without for a bit. Traditionally, of course, this is the spiritual discipline of fasting. You know, Darrell, we don't need to fast for days on end; you certainly don't have to do it for weeks on end for fasting to be an effective way to recenter us on the God who alone provides for us.

DARRELL DELANEY

And fasting is a physical act for a spiritual reason. So, when we fast, we tell our flesh, we tell our bodies, we tell our appetites: You are not in control. You are not on the throne. Christ is on the throne; and he is the one who is going to show us how to live this life of gratitude; and so, it is one thing to stop eating, but it is another thing to stop eating because you realize: I want to trust God more; I want to focus on my spiritual needs first and foremost; and it is another way to thank God in our prayers.

SCOTT HOEZEE

I remember Richard Foster, who wrote a very well-known book in the 1980s on spiritual discipline... *Celebration of Discipline*. He wrote that when you fast, take the time you would use eating your peanut butter and jelly sandwich, and since you are not eating that, use the same amount of time to pray to God and recenter yourself on God; because, as we have said, Darrell, the idea is to remember that the reason Jesus taught us to pray: Give us this day our daily bread, was itself a way to keep us centered on the Father in heaven, who alone sustains our lives every single moment; and so, I think any way we can find to keep this a prominent feature of our lives is going to make us more grateful as proper praise and thanksgiving get beamed over to God over and over again.

DARRELL DELANEY

Well, thanks for listening and digging deeply into scripture with *Groundwork*. We are your hosts, Darrell Delaney with Scott Hoezee. We hope you will join us again next time as we study the fourth petition of the Lord's Prayer and discuss debts, trespasses, and forgiveness.

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SCOTT HOEZEE

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**Note: As host Scott Hoezee indicated, the Greek word σήμερον is present in Matthew 9:11, however, in word for word translation, most interlinear Bibles translate it as "today." The Greek word ἐπιούσιον is also present in Matthew 9:11 and is often translated "daily." It is likely the presence of both words in the same verse that has led to the contention of what is meant by the use of "daily" in the passage and why some scholars explain it as "sufficient bread" or "necessary bread."*

***Correction: In the audio of this episode, host Darrell Delaney misspeaks and says "forsaken," when he meant to say "shaken."*

<https://groundworkonline.com/episodes/give-us-today-our-daily-bread>

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