

# Series: Hallowed be your name

Week Commencing 31 October 2022

*Notes for next week's sermon on "Give us today our daily bread"*

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So far in this prayer, the focus – as taught by none other than God's Son - has been on God: his role as our spiritual Father, the glory of his name, the desire that his kingdom be perfected and that all things and people be brought into line with his will. How refreshing, when so often our prayers are random cries for help or even complaints! Now, however, Jesus invites us to bring our personal requests to God, starting with this one for our day to day needs. There are just two things I would like to mention before looking at some helpful passages from around the Bible: first, these requests are in the context of a relationship in which we desire and seek God's glory as our first priority; second, "give us TODAY our DAILY bread," implies that in a healthy prayer life, communication is frequent and does not take for granted God's normal provision of ordinary needs. Only bread is specified, but being the staple of life that it was for that culture, and still is for many today, it is a shorthand way of describing all of our day to day necessities.

## **DAY 1: Read Exodus 16:4-18**

Just a few chapters on from the first Passover and the miraculous crossing of the Red Sea, so much has changed! After trusting God to liberate them from Egypt, the Israelites are already slipped into doubting his willingness and/or ability to provide for their daily necessities, and so they grumble against the Lord and the leaders he has placed over them, namely Moses and his brother, Aaron. In response to the grumbling, God promises to provide them with bread from heaven, which I'm sure he would have done even if they had asked nicely! There is a catch, though. The bread will be given daily, and each Israelite should collect enough for that day's needs, not trying to hoard it for another day. Taking God at his word like this would be an expression that they trusted him to provide tomorrow just as he had done today. God would even allow for the Sabbath day rest by providing twice as much bread the day before the Sabbath.

Verse 7 is also interesting: "in the morning you will see the glory of the Lord." How is that glory manifested? Not by his majestic appearing in the pillar of cloud (v10) as it was manifested in the evening, but by the provision of the manna, the bread from heaven, in accordance with his promise.

Do we trust God to meet our daily needs? Do we grumble? Do we see his provision for us, in accordance with his promise to provide, as an aspect of his glory?

## **DAY 2: Read Matthew 6:24-34**

One of the dangers with money is that we can crave it as a means of security and assurance. What is wrong with this is that it therefore takes the place in our hearts that ought to be occupied by God. His provision for us is an integral part of the creator/creature relationship and even more so the Father/child relationship. The other problem is that it just doesn't work. When we put our trust in money to provide our security and assurance, what happens is that instead of money serving us, we end up serving money! We live for the stuff and can't get enough of it. As Jesus makes plain, "no one can serve two masters.... You cannot serve both God and money."

What is the antidote to this dangerous poison? Don't worry! Don't worry about your food and drink, about how to afford clothes, because you have a father in heaven. If he caters so wonderfully to the needs of birds and flowers, how will he not look after you, his cherished sons and daughters? Instead of worrying about having enough money to afford our daily necessities, put your energy primarily into serving God, seeking his kingdom, and he will take care of all those other things.

## **DAY 3: Read Luke 11:5-13**

This passage follows directly from Luke's recording of the Lord's Prayer as taught to the disciples by Jesus. Here he goes on to teach his disciples the value of being bold and persistent in prayer. In ancient times there was no 24-hour convenience store on the corner to allow a late arrival to go shopping, nor telecommunications to allow them to warn a friend that they would be arriving soon. It was not impossible that friends might lob in on you unexpectedly at night, and the hospitality laws of the culture meant it

would be a disaster if you were not able to look after their needs. Hence Jesus' parable about going to a friend's place at midnight because an unexpected visit has landed you in just such a pickle.

Unpacking the parable, Jesus is encouraging his friends to be bold in approaching God in prayer. If the somewhat surly, sleep-deprived friend would give in and bring you some bread to share with your impromptu guest because of your audacity, **how much more** would your good, kind and generous Father in heaven open the pantry to help you in your time of need? Similar to this example of the fish/snake and egg/scorpion in v 11. If you, who are evil (compared with the holy God!) know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give the best gift to those who ask him? The best gift? The Holy Spirit who gives us life and the assurance that we are God's children.

So then, according to v9-10 in between, ask, seek, knock, because you have a generous Father in heaven who delights in listening to his children and meeting their needs.

#### **DAY 4: Read 2 Corinthians 9:6-15**

I don't know about you, but all this talk of our every need being met makes me ask, "what about when Christians' needs are not met? What about those who starve to death?" I don't claim to have all the answers to that, but I believe one we ought to engage with is in today's reading.

In previous weeks in this series we have talked about how praying the different elements **with sincerity** entails a willingness to be part of the answer. For example, to pray 'hallowed be your name' and mean it, you would want to be living in such a way as to bring honour to God. In the case of this request that God give us our daily bread, there are two things that need to be said. The first is that thankfulness is assumed and the second is that we can be the answer to others' prayers.

The prayer that Jesus taught his followers nowhere specifically mentions saying thank you! Various formulae we might use to help us structure our prayers generally do include thanks. (For example: Thank you/ Sorry/ Please; or you may have learned to pray with the ACTS of prayer = Adoration, Confession, Thanksgiving, Supplication.) Jesus does not specify that we ought to thank God, however in the wider context of Scripture, it is an assumed element of prayer, and how can we hallow God's name without expressing our gratitude for his gracious treatment of us? The surrounding context of this prayer make it clear that God is not one to be bossed around like a genii, rather, in asking for our daily bread, we also give thanks for his provision today and tomorrow.

In thinking about those whose needs are **not** met, how does that work, and what might it have to do with us? The fact is, most of us are blessed fairly abundantly with regard to our material needs. (I am not denying that some are probably doing it very tough.) If we are well off, ought not being in God's family make us think about how we might use our plenty to meet the needs of those in poverty? Think about our brothers and sisters in developing nations who might be reaching for the last crust of bread and wondering how to divide it amongst six hungry mouths, all the while praying, "Father, give us today our daily bread." Paul, as he wrote to the Corinthians, encouraged them to be generous. And look at some of his reasons for urging them so: God is able to bless you abundantly, so that in all things at all times, having all that you need, you will abound in every good work (v8); You will be enriched in every way so that you can be generous on every occasion, and through us your generosity will result in thanksgiving to God. This service that you perform is not only supplying the needs of the Lord's people but is also overflowing in many expressions of thanks to God. <sup>13</sup> Because of the service by which you have proved yourselves, others will praise God for the obedience that accompanies your confession of the gospel of Christ, and for your generosity in sharing with them and with everyone else. <sup>14</sup> And in their prayers for you their hearts will go out to you, because of the surpassing grace God has given you.

As we are placed by God to meet the needs of our brothers and sisters, he blesses both the ones we help - *and* us! All praise to him!