

The wine at the wedding is running out. Now, as far as legitimate emergencies go, it's not like this is topping the charts. Yes, in Jesus' day it was a bit more of a social *faux pas* than it would be for us today, there was something of a social contract between the guests who had traveled so far on foot to be there and the wedding party to provide for those guests. But it's not like the groom's father was having a heart attack, either. But serious or not, Jesus' mother draws his attention to the problem. **"They have no more wine,"** she tells him. She does not tell him what to do or how to do it. And what Jesus does is plainly nothing but a miracle. It has never been repeated. Clear water was turned into wine at the word of Christ. In this miracle Jesus reveals, he manifests his glory. The word in the Greek language here is the one from which we get the word "epiphany." Think about that for a minute. Putting aside all the miraculous signs around his birth, this was the first time that Jesus himself demonstrated his power, revealed his glory. And he did it to provide more wine for a Jewish wedding in a small village.

Do we notice how our God Jesus, God in the flesh, occupies himself with the most mundane hardships and heartaches of the people he meets? Stuff that had nothing to do with his master plan of saving souls for eternity? He sees the sorrow of a grieving mother following her son's body down the hill from Nain to the cemetery and he intervenes. He deals with the predicament of a paralytic who thinks life has passed him by. He dares to place an uncovered hand on the flesh of a leper who just wants to see his family again. He sees that the disciples are tired and says: **"Come aside and rest awhile."** He notes that it's already past dinnertime and refuses to send the multitudes away hungry. He brings life back to the cold face of Jairus' dead daughter, and while everyone around gapes in wonder, he reminds them to give her something to eat.

As we've been studying the Lord's Prayer for about a month now, you're all well aware that daily bread is not the first thing Jesus teaches us to pray for. Not even the second or third. First, by faith in Christ, we are invited to claim God as our Father, then to hallow his name, his honor, his truth in what we teach and how we live. We ask that his kingdom come, that is that the Holy Spirit would daily have Christ rule in our hearts and then in the hearts of others through the gospel. We ask that his good and gracious will alone be done, a law- and gospel-will that is higher and holier and happier and just plain better than our own.

These have to come first. If we do not care for and cultivate a life with our Father then we are cheating ourselves in this life. We lose out on his true comfort in the desert of this world. We give up true peace on a hard journey home. If God is only the fire extinguisher that we only reach for when the kitchen is ablaze or a panic button we suddenly need when the phone rings in the dead of the night with bad news, if that is all the Father is for us, we are only cheating ourselves. Here Jesus teaches us what really matters.

Once we learn these priorities, then, and only then, does the light turn and shine on our daily bread, which we understand from our Bibles to be everything that we need for physical welfare. Here we have a prayer that spans the whole of our life, covers our entire eternity and yet, Jesus shows us a Father who stoops down to us as his children and says: "You can talk to me about the other stuff too. What matters to you matters to me." Jesus knows what truly matters for us in the end. But he also knows that maybe 90% of our lives are made up of trivial and physical things: the hole in the muffler, the overdrawn checkbook, the contact lens that goes down the drain, the cavity in the back molar, and a grocery bill that rivals the national debt. We are Christians, and God is our priority and our life, but let's be honest, these "little" things – the performance review at work or the unexpected flu bug that puts us another week behind – these things occupy our days and hours a lot more than the lofty themes of God's name, God's kingdom and God's will, even though we understand that those are infinitely more important? Really, who thinks of the Apostles' Creed when the tire goes flat in a snow-storm or the pipes are freezing? Yet, the eternal truths of the Apostles' Creed will mean everything, and these other aggravating details and detours will mean nothing, when we lay down our head for the last time. We recognize the eternal significance of these truths, but that doesn't mean the rest doesn't matter at all.

God the Son, who took on the confines of humanity, understands us well enough to teach us to pray: **"Give us this day our daily bread."** No matter how smart or capable we imagine ourselves to be, not one of us can rise above the earthly limitations of daily bread.

We are finite creatures. Whether we're boss of the company or bag boy at the check-out, President of the United States or homeless and destitute, we must all eat, sleep, stay warm and, as they say, put our pants on one leg at a time. There may be finer things that we enjoy, but they don't negate these basic needs. Listening to Bach or Beethoven may come close to being a religious experience for some of us, but it all sounds quite different if we are shivering with cold or

racked with pain. A tour of Disney World is far less interesting if you haven't eaten in days or have feet covered with blisters. A book of poetry may inspire us, but what if our eyes hurt too much to read? And given a choice between a fine painting and a warm sweater on a cold day, it's not hard to figure out what most of us would choose. We have daily, physical needs. And they cannot be ignored just because there is also something "better" out there.

So our Father wants us, invites us, even commands us to talk to him about daily bread, all that we need for our bodily welfare. Luther gave a laundry list of stuff we need on the journey and even his list is not all-inclusive... "food and drink, clothing and shoes, house and home, land and cattle, money and goods, a godly spouse, godly children, godly workers, godly and faithful leaders, good government, good weather, peace and order, health, a good name, good friends, faithful neighbors, and the like."

"Make your requests known to God," says the Bible. When a blind man came to Jesus, Jesus pressed the man with what seems like a rather unnecessary question: **"What do you want me to do for you?"** Wasn't it rather obvious? But the man answered: **"Lord, I want to see."** Just say it. Articulate it. Spell it out. Not because your Father doesn't know what things you have need of...but because God wants to hear it, and he is real, he does hear you. Prayer is not a psychological exercise. God is a real God. He is a real Father. Real relationships are built on communication – God talks to us in the Scriptures – you and I talk to God in prayer, and we do so confident that he will do just the right thing at just the right time in just the right way. "So talk to me," says your Father, "about your struggles with work and your health, about defending your reputation, about your frustrating search for a job, about repairing your marriage. Whatever it is that troubles you, talk to me."

"Daily bread." One day at a time, teaching us to trust *God* for each day, not our clever retirement plans which can all go south on us with one hiccup of the stock market. One day at a time to teach us to look to our Father, to teach us that we cannot divorce body and soul, the physical and the spiritual. Our lives are not so easily divided, nor compartmentalized, we need to be cared for in both. Just ask Esau who sold his spiritual birthright for a bowl of stew, or the guy in Christ's parable who turned down the King's invitation for five yoke of newly-purchased oxen, or Judas Iscariot who gave up Jesus for thirty silly pieces of silver. The stuff in our life – the daily bread, the house, the car, the job, the family and the friendships – these things all can point us to our Father so that we receive our daily bread with thanksgiving. Or if we forget where they come from and we fail to trust that God will always provide, then they become our obsession that robs us of our eternal birthright and blessing.

Yes, Jesus healed the leper. But far more importantly, he came to cleanse us from the festering corruption of our sins. Yes, Jesus gave sight to the blind man. But he came to open the eyes of our hearts by faith to see things we just couldn't see before. Yes, Jesus fed the multitudes with good things, but the Bread of Life came to satisfy a deeper hunger in us all. What good is it if we are healthy, wealthy, wise and well-fed, but spiritually anorexic? What good is it if we go through life well-housed, well-dressed, well-educated, well-known and even well-liked, but go to hell? What good are the gifts if we do not know and honor the Giver?

C.S. Lewis once observed: "It would seem our Lord finds our desires not too strong, but too weak. We are half-hearted creatures, fooling around with drink and sex and ambition when **infinite** joy is offered us, like an ignorant child who wants to go on making mud pies in a slum because he cannot imagine what is meant by the offer of a holiday at sea."

Christ Jesus does not teach us to despise daily bread. In fact, he marvelously comes to us hiding behind the mask of physical things – the words of this Book which reveal to us his doing and dying and rising, the gospel-waters of baptism by which he washes away sin, the bread and wine which are his very body and blood. We may think it beneath God to deal with us in such physical ways, but apparently Jesus does not. Beneath these lowly things he hides much higher things.

So as we pray this petition we are in essence asking, "Dear Father, teach me to ask you for daily bread, and to trust that you will send it. Let me see in my full plate, my closet of clothing, my warm house, my family and friends– let me see these all as tokens of your love and your goodness. But teach me also to see that man does not live by bread alone, to see that these are shadows of better gifts that last. Help me to see in every physical gift a pledge from your Son who said: **'He who comes to ME will never go hungry, and he who believes in ME will never be thirsty.'** Help me to put my complete trust in you, both for eternity and for each day.

Amen.