



Text: Matthew 6:11¹

Series: Talking With Our Father

Title: Part 4 – Talking with Our Father about Our Needs

Date: March 22, 2009

Place: First Baptist Church, Olds, AB

This morning we're learning lessons from Jesus about how to pray for "daily bread":

"Give us this day our daily bread" Matthew 6:11

"Give" – a word we use a lot in prayer and one that needs to be used a lot. God is the source of our lives and all that we need to keep alive. The very fact that Jesus teaches us to use it in prayer tells us that we should never be ashamed or embarrassed to call on our Father to give us what we need. When Martin Luther, the Protestant reformer, lay dying, his last recorded words were: **"We are all beggars.** That is true." We live in a world that belongs to our Father in heaven. Everything we need belongs to Him. Our food, our health, our very lives are his gift to us. "Give us" defines our relationship with our Father in heaven and with the world which he created and governs. And when we understand our heavenly Father's love for us and his desire to bless us, "give us" becomes a declaration of God's grace. Everything we need comes to us as a free grace-gift from God. All that he asks is that we ask.

This morning in our series on "Talking With Our Father," we come to the fourth prayer contained within what has come to be called "The Lord's Prayer."

For past two weeks we've been thinking about the first half of the prayer which is dominated by the word, "your."

"Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name. Your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven." Matthew 6:9-10

The three themes of the first half of the prayer direct us to "Talk With Our Father" about himself.

We are taught by Jesus...

To worship our Father by "hallowing" His name in prayer

¹ Unless otherwise indicated, all Scripture quotations are from The Holy Bible, English Standard Version, copyright © 2001 by Crossway Bibles, a division of Good News Publishers. Used by permission, All rights reserved.



I've called this focus '**Adoration**': to exalt and bring glory to God. To "hallow" the name of God is to understand and praise God for who he is and what he has done.

We need to remember that authentic prayer begins with a relationship. Jesus taught us to pray: "Our Father in heaven...": Are you a member of God's family? Have you become a child of the Father through faith in His Son, Jesus Christ?

"to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God" John 1:12

Jesus also taught us ...

To pray for the expansion of Our Father's kingdom-work in the world

"Your kingdom come" is a prayer that calls us to focus on "**Mission**" here at home and around the world. It's a prayer for the spread of the kingdom of God through the preaching of the Gospel of the kingdom and also a prayer of anticipation, looking forward to the return of Jesus, the King.

There's a sub-theme in our prayer for God's kingdom and it's the prayer for "**Submission**." "Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven" is **to prayer that God's purposes will be accomplished in our world AND in our lives**: That "Your will be done and done in me."

When our prayers are fully grounded in the central commitment that our lives are focused on God and His glory, then our prayers will flow in step with His will and purpose. So when we turn to bringing our needs to God, what we determine to be our needs will already have been shaped by our understanding of God and his plans.

After directing attention to the Father's glory and purpose, Jesus invites us to bring to Him our needs. "Give us this day our daily bread" is an invitation what is often called, "**Petition**." Petition in our day seems most often to be used in a political sense, we sign a petition protesting some action by our government or asking our government to take some action. We are making our desires known to those in authority so that they can do what we believe to be the right thing – at least, that's what we hope will happen.

In a sense, that is what we are doing when we pray, "Give us today our daily bread." We are **making our needs known to the King of the universe and asking him to take action on our behalf**. We are making known to him what we need, and in His case, we can be confident that he will do the right thing.

As we form our petitions, adoration, mission and submission are still present. A few weeks ago I got an email regarding a prayer request from one of the people



in the church. The request was on behalf of a friend of theirs with cancer. The person who was requesting support in his prayer for this friend mentioned something that caught my attention. He outlined how he had been praying for his friend and he mentioned that he had “given God reasons” for answering his prayer for his friends healing. **“Giving God reasons”** – that caught my attention.

“Giving God reasons” for answering our petitions is a way in which **we bring adoration and mission into our petitions** and it’s completely Biblical to do so.

The Old Testament prophet Daniel was in exile from his native land of Palestine, together with the people of Israel. For generations they had been disobedient to God and so God disciplined them by allowing foreign conquerors to defeat them in battle and to take them as captives from their land into exile in a foreign country.

Daniel became gripped by the plight of his people in exile and so he began to pray, asking God to forgive Israel and return them to their land. I won’t read all of Daniel’s petition but this is how he begins and ends his prayer. Notice the word “your.” Remember, the first half of the Lord’s Prayer is defined by this word. Notice how Daniel brings adoration and mission to bear in his petition to the Lord:

**“O Lord, the great and awesome God, who keeps covenant and steadfast love with those who love him and keep his commandments...
O Lord, according to all your righteous acts, let your anger and your wrath turn away from your city Jerusalem, your holy hill, because for our sins, and for the iniquities of our fathers, Jerusalem and your people have become a byword among all who are around us. Now therefore, O our God, listen to the prayer of your servant and to his pleas for mercy, and for your own sake, O Lord, make your face to shine upon your sanctuary, which is desolate. O my God, incline your ear and hear. Open your eyes and see our desolations, and the city that is called by your name. For we do not present our pleas before you because of our righteousness, but because of your great mercy. O Lord, hear; O Lord, forgive. O Lord, pay attention and act. Delay not, for your own sake, O my God, because your city and your people are called by your name.” Daniel 9:4, 16-19**

Daniel basis his request for return to the Land of Promise on God’s character as a merciful, covenant-keeping God. That is “adoration.” Daniel grounds his request by hallowing the name of God. He also incorporates “your kingdom come” into his request by asking God to re-establish the people in the land so that other nations will not mock the name of the Lord.

When we root our requests in the person of God and in his purposes in this world, we are “giving God reasons” for answering our prayer. We’re telling him why we think our request fulfills his will.



But we also need to **bring “submission” into our requests**. We tell God what we believe to be the best according to our understanding of his person and his purposes. But we always need to recognize that our understanding is limited and partial. So we tell God that if he wills something different, we know that that is better and that that is what we really want him to do. This is called **“Embracing God’s will.”** It’s what Jesus did in Gethsemane on the night before he went to the cross. In his prayer, he referred to the death he was about to die for our sin as a “cup” of suffering from which he would drink. He prayed...

“Father, if you are willing, remove this cup from me. Nevertheless, not my will, but yours, be done.” Luke 22:42

“Giving God reasons” for answering prayer and “embracing God’s will” in submitting to his wisdom in answering are bookends we need place around all of our requests. We don’t need to verbalize them every time we pray, but they need to be present in our hearts and minds as we form our petitions to the Lord. J.I. Packer wrote that...

“Giving God reasons shows the boldness of humility; embracing God’s will shows the submissiveness of humility. In the former, faith engages with God’s wisdom; in the latter, it bows to his authority.” (*Praying*, p. 159)

As we come to Jesus’ teaching about making petition prayers, let’s keep our grip on what he’s taught us about prayers of adoration, mission and submission.

There five important instructions about **making effective petitions** that I draw from Jesus’ instruction.

First, effective petitions are marked by *dependence*

“Give...” Matthew 6:11

The affluence of our society blinds us to the utter dependence we have on God’s gifts to us.

But sometimes all it takes remind us of how much of life is beyond our control is a quick, unexpected change:

- natural disasters that destroy our source of livelihood
- sudden injury or illness that rob us of the ability to work
- economic changes beyond our control that steal our jobs or our savings

We are fragile cf. hearing CBC radio re people on the streets in Calgary

- tragic story re man – had been a motel owner in BC back when interest rates hit 18 to 20% in the 1980s



- the economy smashed his business – he broke emotionally and lost his family
- now lives on the streets

We really don't have "control" of our lives. The only One who is in control is God whose throne is in heaven and we need what he has to give us. I love the picture painted by the psalmist in Psalm 123...

“To you I lift up my eyes, O you who are enthroned in the heavens! Behold, as the eyes of servants look to the hand of their master, as the eyes of a maidservant to the hand of her mistress, so our eyes look to the Lord our God, till he has mercy upon us.” Psalm 123:1-2

Jesus tells us that...

“your Father knows what you need before you ask him.” Matthew 6:8

Then why do we bother bringing our requests to him? It's like this. Parents usually know what their children need long before they ever ask for it. But when parents give their children things that the children have asked for something special happens in the relationship. The parents have the joy of meeting a real need in the lives of the children – they see the joy their gift brings. And the children receive something more than just a new bike or a video game. They receive the knowledge that their parents care for them. When we bring our requests to “our Father” the father-child relationship is enriched because of the exchange. We bring our dependence; he brings his grace.

Our needs are in His gift.

Second, effective petitions are marked by *simplicity*

“Give us....”

“Give” – not even a please and thank you! Jesus gets right to the point as quickly as possible. You have need for something and you need me to give it to you – just ask! Get to the point!

Do you ever get into conversations some times when you know the person wants to ask you something and they dance around with all sorts of stuff, but don't come right out and ask you? You know they have a question and you feel like just saying, “spit it out – what do you want?!”

You've got Jesus permission to get right to the point in prayer. Jesus told his disciples that a mark of ineffective petition was “wordiness.” He told his disciples...



“do not heap up empty phrases as the Gentiles do, for they think that they will be heard for their many words.” Matthew 6:7

“Adoration” and “Mission” and “Submission” all need to play a regular part in our prayer lives, but there are many times when we simply need to make our requests known to God. I don’t want you to think that every time you need to ask God for something that you’ve got to construct a theologically correct introduction before you can make a request.

Can you imagine yourself beside the road on holidays – flat tire, no gas, blown head gasket, etc. – the kids are screaming, everyone’s hungry and tired – thinking, “God I really need some help, but first I have to spend time in worship, then I have to pray for our missionaries, and then remember to pray for our government to obey your will, O yes, then I’ll ask for a tow truck or police cruiser to stop by!”

Of course you don’t! You cry out, “God give me a tow truck! Help!”

Can you imagine yourself opening the bills, one after another, realizing you don’t have the money to pay them, and then say: “I’ll begin with worship and then pray for mission and for God’s will to be done in the farthest reaches of the earth...”

No! You cry out, “God I need some money to pay these bill. Help!”

Can you imagine yourself standing at the hospital bedside of a sick child or friend, and begin to pray for the missionaries in India?

Of course you wouldn’t – You cry out, “God, please heal this child. We need your help!”

Based on God’s promises to provide what we need and Jesus’ instruction here, we can come to him with as strong a petition as “Give us” and not be ashamed or afraid.

Clara Barton was overseeing the work of the Red Cross in Cuba during the Spanish-American War. One day Colonel Teddy Roosevelt came to her, wanting to buy food for his sick and wounded men but she refused to sell him any. Roosevelt was confused! His men needed help and he was prepared to pay. The supplies were not for sale, Barton affirmed, but she said, “Colonel, just ask for it!” The light came on. The provisions weren’t for sale – all he had to do was ask and Barton provided all he needed.

God wants us to come and ask because he wants to answer our requests.

Jesus made some incredible statements about God’s desire to give us what we need. Just listen to these!



“Whatever you ask in my name, this I will do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If you ask me anything in my name, I will do it.” John 14:13-14

“Therefore I tell you, whatever you ask in prayer, believe that you have received it, and it will be yours.” Mark 11:24

“If you abide in me, and my words abide in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you.” John 15:7

“Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives, and the one who seeks finds, and to the one who knocks it will be opened. Or which one of you, if his son asks him for bread, will give him a stone? Or if he asks for a fish, will give him a serpent? If you then, who are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father who is in heaven give good things to those who ask him!” Matthew 7:7-11

You’ll notice that there are some important conditions on the “whatever’s” and the “anything’s.”:

- ◆ we need to “abide in Christ”
- ◆ his words must “abide” in us
- ◆ we need to ask “in his name”
- ◆ we need to ask with belief, faith and trust

We’ll deal with some of these conditions in a future message. There is a lot to learn about effective prayer BUT don’t forget to notice the “whatever’s” and the “anything’s” and the “good gifts” that the Father wants to give us if we simply ask him.

Carolyn Nystrom is a Christian writer who has written dozens of Bible study guides published by InterVarsity Press. She also has a lot of experience teaching new Christians the disciplines of the Christian life. She tells them not to be over-worried about making their prayers “right.” She reminds her students of what Paul tells us about prayer in Romans 8. Paul tells us that...

“the Spirit helps us in our weakness. For we do not know what to pray for as we ought, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words.” Romans 8:26

Nystrom tells her students...

“Don’t fret; just pray. God fixes our prayers on the way up.’ If he does not answer the prayer we made, he will answer the prayer we should have



made. That is all anyone needs to know.” (Packer & Nystrom, Praying, p. 175)

Third, effective petitions are marked by *community*

“Give us this day our daily bread.”

What we pray for ourselves we need to pray for others. When we present requests for ourselves it’s called “**petition**” – when we present requests for others it’s called “**intercession**.”

We are part of a community called “the body of Christ” and when one is in need, we all can rally to help by interceding for that need.

“But if anyone has the world’s goods and sees his brother in need, yet closes his heart against him, how does God’s love abide in him?” 1 John 3:17

Cf. John Stott – years ago, John Stott returned from Bible teaching ministry in Bangladesh during a time of intense famine.

- came back to Scotland to teach at a Bible conference with other preachers
- ate meals together, fed enormous amounts of food
- Stott ate sparingly – servers kept encouraging him to eat more and more
- Stott, who is a lean man, was asked why he wasn’t eating. His answer: “**I have the hunger of the world on my conscience.**”

The experience of many people I have talked with who have returned from time in a poverty stricken part of the world. The affluence of our society literally overwhelms them.

If someone needs a car – we can all pray.

If someone needs a job –

If someone need healing –

If someone needs encouragement –

And so on....

There is nothing that draws people together as much as praying for one another and interceding for one another’s “daily bread” needs.

I was talking to a friend once who was telling me about a group of men with whom he played floor hockey. Before the game started they would gather and pray – not just the usual jock prayer: “God help us play fair, not get hurt and help the other team to lose with grace.” These men would ask, does anyone have a need? And then they’d share their needs and pray. My friend found these times



of intercession to be a special time of ministry to him and to the men with whom he played floor hockey.

I'm so glad we have a time of intercession in our worship. It gives us an opportunity to lift up each other's needs to the Lord as Howard led us in doing this morning.

I'm glad we have a prayer chain – how many of you are aware of this ministry in the church? Let me see your hands! If you have a need and want prayer support just call the prayer chain numbers in the bulletin, and within minutes a team of intercessors will begin to pray for you and your need.

I'm glad we have the opportunity to pray for one another after our morning services. We've had some times when God's Spirit has been moving in lives and we've given you an opportunity to receive prayer from our prayer ministry team. And they're ready to pray for you today. If you came carrying a heavy burden this morning, we want to lighten your load by shouldering that need with you in prayer for a few moments.

My burden is to see our ministry of praying for one another grow – to bring our “daily bread” needs to the Lord on behalf of one another.

Effective requests are marked by their simplicity and by the community.

Fourth, effective petitions are marked by their *regularity*.

“Give us this day our daily bread.”

When you pray for “daily bread”, God only gives you enough for today.

It's not a lottery prayer – “O God, give me \$1 million so I never have to come to ask again!” God gives what's needed for today, but tomorrow, and the next day, and the next day, you'll be back.

Requesting “daily bread” is what the people of Israel did for 40 years as they traveled in the desert from Egypt to the Promised Land.

In Exodus 16 we find the story of how people were fed in the desert. God sent this bread-like stuff that the people called, “manna” which in the Hebrew language roughly means, “What is it?” Every morning they found it on the ground and gathered enough for the day but they were commanded not to save it for the next day.

God said to the people...



**“Then the Lord said to Moses, ‘Behold, I am about to rain bread from heaven for you, and the people shall go out and gather a day’s portion every day, that I may test them, whether they will walk in my law or not.’”
Exodus 16:4**

In making it a daily provision, God was testing his people to see if they would remain dependent upon Him. If anyone tried to collect enough for two days, the manna would rot and stink – it was intended by God to be “daily bread.” The only day when they could collect two days worth was the day before the Sabbath. On that day they could collect enough for two days so that they wouldn’t have to do the work of collecting on the Sabbath day.

This experience is a pattern for “daily bread” praying – God wants to keep us coming back to ask for what we need.

In one region of Africa, the first converts to Christianity were very diligent about praying. In fact, the believers each had their own special place outside the village where they went to pray in solitude. They reached these prayer rooms by using their own footpaths through the bush. When grass began to grow over these trails, it was evident that the person was not praying very much. They were concerned for each other’s spiritual welfare and so a custom sprang up. Whenever someone noticed an overgrown path, they would say, “Friend, there’s grass on your path!”

Fifth, effective petitions are marked by their *necessity*

“Give us this day our daily bread.”

In his Letter to the Philippians, the Apostle Paul tells us that...

“my God will supply every need of yours according to his riches in glory in Christ Jesus.” Philippians 4:19

Notice: God promises to meet our needs, not our wants, or our likes, or our wishes or our day-dreams – our needs!

John Wesley’s mother, Susanna, had a favorite Bible prayer from the Book of Proverbs. This is what it says...

“Two things I ask of you; deny them not to me before I die: Remove far from me falsehood and lying; give me neither poverty nor riches; feed me with the food that is needful for me, lest I be full and deny you and say, ‘Who is the Lord?’ or lest I be poor and steal and profane the name of my God.” Proverbs 30:7-9

Notice: only “the food that is needful for me.”



- 1) Overabundance makes us spiritually complacent – we're tempted to deny God in our arrogance.
- 2) Poverty makes us desperate – we're tempted to dishonour God by theft.

I used to regularly watch the ABC TV show Extreme Makeover Home Edition. If you're not familiar with the show, the idea is that a team of renovators surprise a needy family with a new house. The renovators show up, the family is whisked away for a week's vacation and when they return, they have a wonderful new home. The key moment in the show is when the family returns in a limousine with blacked out windows. They exit the limo behind a Greyhound bus, unable to see their new home, and then the crowd chants, "Driver, move that bus!" and the home is revealed.

In the last year or so, however, I've become uncomfortable with the show. The families that are helped are still great stories and very deserving of the assistance they get. But what makes it difficult for me to watch is that the houses the team builds are enormous, over-the-top mansions filled with every gadget known to North American industry! I don't want to see another plasma screen TV or another tweaked out kitchen!

This week, however, I saw something on CNN that really moved me. In an effort that was clearly inspired by the TV show, some neighbors built a home for a single mother and her daughter. The daughter was in hospital undergoing cancer surgery and while she and her mom were away, the neighbors tore down their old home and built them a new one. When the crowd chanted, "Driver, move that truck" what was revealed was a house, not a mansion. It was a solid brick, single-story bungalow with a simple carport. It was a beautiful house. It was a "daily bread" house. It was what they needed.

Ray Stedman suggest that "bread" serves as "a symbol of all the necessities of physical life; it stands for all that our physical life demands – shelter, water, food, exercise, clothing – anything that the body requires." (Talking With My Father, p. 66)

Do you need housing? a job? A car?
Do you need help with moving? A new suit for a new job?
Do you need a babysitter so you can go to an important appointment?
Do you need sleep at night? Do you need energy during the day?

What do you need? Ask God for it.

A woman asked the Bible teacher, G. Campbell Morgan, "Do you think we ought to pray about even the little things in life?" Dr. Morgan wisely replied, "Madam, can you think of anything in your life that is BIG to God?"



What do you need from “our Father” today? Let’s ask Him together. I’m going to give you a few moments to bring your petitions to the Father this morning. Let’s pray...

“Father, we come to you today because you are the Lord of all the earth and everything we need comes from your gracious hands. We come as your children, bringing our needs to you, because you ask us to come. Nothing is too hard for you to do and nothing is too small for you to hear. ‘Father, hear us; ... ; Father, pay attention and act’ for the honor and glory of Your name...

- Tell the Father what you need today...

Do you need someone to pray with? As our worship team comes to lead us in our final song this morning, I want to invite our prayer ministry team forward.

- While we sing, come forward and one of our team will pray with you
- **Invitation to Worship Team & Prayer Ministry**
- **Final Song:** What a Friend We Have In Jesus
- **Benediction**