

SERMON

Matthew 6:11

Give us Today our Daily Bread

Nunawading and Waverley, 26-9-21

Dear friends in Christ,

Christ cares for our bodies. If we are overworked or our health crashes we have this prayer: give us today our daily bread. It is a hot-line to God so that once he is aware of one of his children pleading for a bodily need, he has to get on with it. Our Lord Jesus valued our physical existence so highly that he will rescue us from the dead. After all, the Lord became fully human for the very purpose of identifying with our physical selves. Whatever the Lord takes on belongs to him forever and what he enters must be saved. He has entered into our very bodies by the Holy Spirit; therefore, he promises to renew this dwelling. Indeed, each Sunday he renews this dwelling place, our bodies, whenever we receive him in the Lord's Supper.

When you think about it, it is a funny old prayer for people with full bellies. We have more than we need and even have to get rid of the extra kilograms we have put on. Also, a great deal of food is wasted in our society. In view of our plenty, the us in the prayer becomes important. Give us our daily bread makes us think of the people around us, especially those for whom it is a struggle to find adequate nourishment. At this time, one million people in South Sudan are in danger of dying of starvation. This prayer compels us to think of others and what we can do about their deplorable situations. I was reading about the SecondBite charitable organisation started by Simone and Ian Carson here in Australia. Its tag-line is: 'We rescue food to feed hungry Aussies'. It does exactly that, rescuing surplus food from growers and retailers and providing free meals to those in need. What a beautiful thing to do. They have remembered the us in the Lord's Prayer.

The Lord is not saying, "Give us today our daily luxuries" or as someone said, 'give us today our daily cake!' We are praying for what is sufficient for us. The words today and daily indicate this. The Lord rescued the Hebrew slaves in Egypt and let them through the wilderness, feeding them with manna. He told them to collect as much as they needed for each day. Some thought they knew better and collected bucket loads and found that the manna rotted. They did not trust that their heavenly Father would look after them day be day; one day at a time. The Lord Jesus acted exactly like his Father, telling us to not worry about

tomorrow, what we are going to wear or what we are going to eat. Let the day's worries be sufficient for the day, he said. Praying this prayer, give us today, is an act of faith for we do not need to be anxious about tomorrow.

Daily bread literally means what is needed for existence on each day. As Luther said, it includes the job to earn our bread, an orderly community, a robust economic system, education, and good government so that we can obtain a job and keep it. Having shelter, clothing, a family and community are required as well not to mention favourable weather, peace and good health. So, pray for all these things related things.

The gospel is clear in this petition. It has in it the word give; give us today. We live by Father's open hand. He is good to all, to the righteous and to the wicked, to those who are ungrateful and ignore him and to those who are his children and receive everything with thanks. By the way, that is why we say grace before each meal. Luther, in the small catechism said that 'we receive everything by grace' and that we 'sin every day and deserve nothing but punishment.' We pray because our Father's heart is so big that he will give, that he has to go to his pantry and bring everything out for us. In fact, ahead of time, he has organised for our daily requirements. Our Father has blessed the universe and given it creative and generative power. It is a productive world supplying soil, plants, trees, animal, minerals, water and fuel, as well as people to make things from them. We have the good news that Jesus Christ sustains it all and holds everything together.

Therefore, the order of the words is important in the fourth petition. If you read it the way it was written the prayer is: Concerning our daily requirements, give us them today. Our prayers pull the heart-strings of God. We can believe, then, that before our prayer has finished, we have already received what we are asking for. Our prayers are a reminder to the Lord to think about our situation, a situation he has planned for and lined up the things we will need in it. He wants us to nudge him into action so that we don't take things for granted but start seeking him. He is like a grandparent who is holding sweets behind his back and is forcing the children to reach behind and have a friendly fight to get them. It is though we are saying, "I know those good things are there, Father; now hand them over, please." Everything required to put food on the table is included in this prayer from a strong economy to health and to good government. Our Father wants us to believe in him and trust him that he really cares about our physical existence. He has organised things for us and all we need do is ask.

