

PRAYER AS JESUS TAUGHT US – Week 3

Examining the Lord's Prayer

Week #3 Introduction “Our Daily Bread” *Prayer as Jesus Taught Us*

[Jesus said to them,] “After this manner therefore pray, ‘Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread.’” *Matthew 6:9-11*

They asked [Jesus], “What miraculous sign will you do, that we can see and believe you? What will you do? Our ancestors ate manna in the wilderness, just as it is written, He gave them bread from heaven to eat.”...Jesus replied, “I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me will never go hungry, and whoever believes in me will never be thirsty.” *John 6:30-31, 35*

Did You Know?

Although Israel did not have a holiday called “Labor Day,” the Hebrew Scriptures contained strong words (in passages like [Deuteronomy 24:14-15](#), [Isaiah 58:1-3](#) and [Proverbs 22:9](#)) about exploiting workers, or (even more broadly) ignoring the needs of the poor.

Week #3 Day #1 Exodus 12:39-42; Luke 22:14-19

Unleavened bread: a symbol of God's liberation

When Jesus taught his disciples to pray “Give us the bread we need for today” (Matthew 6:11), he connected to memories of God caring for his people. Unleavened Passover bread reminded Hebrews of God rescuing them from Egypt (cf. [Exodus 12:1-18](#)). It defined their spiritual identity: “Only unleavened bread was eaten during the yearly Passover (Ex 12:8), a reminder to Israel that even when settled in Canaan they remained a pilgrim people.” * With the cross just ahead, Jesus expanded the meal's meaning for his disciples. Now the bread and wine would recall his even greater act, dying and rising again to set all people free.

- God acted at Passover, and the annual celebration also shaped his people's identity in the present. Jesus made Passover the Lord's Supper, not just to recall the cross, but also to point forward. Scholar Richard B. Vinson noted that “until it is fulfilled” (verse 16) “is a promise to Luke's readers that the kingdom truly will come.” ** Do you trust that Jesus' promises point to a future you can count on? How can the full meaning of the Lord's Supper fortify your trust and hope?
- None of the gospels quoted Jesus, facing the cross, as saying, “I'll eat this with you again IF we ever get to God's Kingdom.” For him, there was no “maybe.” Even as the darkness closed in, he was sure that in the end, love and goodness would defeat hatred and evil, and God's kingdom would become reality. When life's darkness seems to be closing in on you, how can Jesus' “until” remind you that the darkness never has the last word?

Prayer: Lord Jesus, you delivered your people from slavery in Egypt. You defeated hatred and

death. Keep me anchored to your power to lift my life out of the shadows and into your eternal light and life. Amen.

* Leland Ryken, James C. Wilhoit, Tremper Longman III, general editors, *Dictionary of Biblical Imagery*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, USA, 1998, p.908.

** Richard B. Vinson, study note on Luke 22:16 in *The CEB Study Bible*. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2013, p. 157 NT.

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Week #3 Day #2 Exodus 16:14-19; Deuteronomy 8:2-3 Daily bread in the wilderness

Amazingly, almost as soon as the Israelites saw how barren the forbidding Sinai Peninsula was, they began to long for “the good old days”—their days as slaves in Egypt (cf. [Exodus 16:2-13](#))! God graciously, miraculously answered their fear of starvation by providing food in a dramatic way. Moses commanded that they save a jar of what they called “manna,” making God’s wonderful provision a permanent part of their story (cf. [Exodus 16:31-34](#)).

- Jesus’ prayer (“Give us the bread we need for today”) drew on Israel’s desert experience. A few Israelites apparently tried to “corner the market” on manna by building up a big stash—which didn’t work at all (cf. [Exodus 16:20-21](#)). God didn’t provide a month’s or year’s supply all at once. His people had to trust him daily. When many of us have freezers and cupboards full of food, and investment accounts well-filled with funds, what does it mean for you to pray “Give me the bread I need for today”?
- We still sometimes call a positive happening we didn’t expect “manna from heaven,” an allusion to the way Israelite history said this food just appeared in the desert after God promised it. The name was a Hebrew pun. “Manna” echoed the phrase “*man hu*,” which meant “What is it?” (or even “What is this stuff?”). When has God provided for you in a way that surprised or even puzzled you, but met your need?

Prayer: Lord Jesus, thank you for the ways (sometimes through your caring people) that you have sent “manna” into my life. Help me to have a generous spirit when I have a chance to help someone else who needs it. Amen.

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Week #3 Day #3 Matthew 4:1-4 How Jesus resisted temptation

The gospel writers said Jesus faced a searching spiritual test. It focused on whether Jesus would use his power for his own good or carry out his mission in humility and service. One temptation was for him to turn stones into bread, to meet his current physical want no matter the spiritual cost. In answer, he quoted [Deuteronomy 8:3](#), which referred to Israel’s wilderness manna experience (cf. [Exodus 16:14-21](#)). The clash was crucial, but not close. It ended with Jesus’ crisp command: “Go away, Satan” (Matthew 4:10). With Scripture’s principles shaping his response, Jesus won decisively.

- All the temptations tugged Jesus to do things that would make his life easier by matching popular hopes of what the Messiah would do. Jesus, loyal to God’s way, didn’t “play to the crowd.” He met every temptation with the words of Scripture, even when the devil quoted (or misquoted) the Bible (cf. [Matthew 4:5-7](#)). How many Bible verses or passages have you memorized? As you listen to sermons or read, choose verses or passages to add to that list, so Jesus can bring them to your mind when you’re tempted.
- Unlike Jesus, you likely never have to choose not to turn stones to bread. How are you tempted to use your unique abilities and powers for your own benefit, instead of building God’s kingdom by blessing others? How well do you resist temptation? If you don’t like your answer, know that denial or unhealthy shame can block God’s power to help you resist temptation. Ask a gifted counselor or pastor to help you. Facing inner struggles frankly can defuse them.

Prayer: Jesus, son of God, I face temptations every day. Plant the principles of your word firmly in my heart, that, like you, I might stay on God’s path and resist the lure of going my own way. Amen.

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Week #3 Day #4 John 6:27-35, 41-50 Jesus, the bread of life

The crowd had sought out Jesus the day after they saw him do what seemed impossible. He fed 5000 people with what began as five loaves of bread and two fish. They remembered the manna (John 6:30-33). They thought it would be wonderful to have a king who could create bread on demand. Jesus challenged them to see that he could feed them in more important ways. As he put it in his Sermon on the Mount, “Happy are people who are hungry and thirsty for righteousness, because they will be fed until they are full” (Matthew 5:6).

- Centuries before Jesus, a prophet asked, “Why spend money for what isn’t food, and your earnings for what doesn’t satisfy? Listen carefully to me and eat what is good; enjoy the richest of feasts” (Isaiah 55:2). Jesus called us to look past just physical reality by learning to “hunger and thirst for righteousness.” What are some life attitudes or actions that, over time, you have found “are not food,” that do not satisfy? What choices can you make to whet your spiritual appetite, and lead you to be “hungry and thirsty for righteousness”?
- Jesus’ prayer taught us to trust God daily. We don’t wait for one of life’s sporadic crises to pop up, nor do we think that we are “spiritually stocked up.” In what ways do you (or could you) make it a part of your daily routine to commit yourself and your concerns to God? What specific needs or concerns can you entrust to God’s wise, caring provision this day?

Prayer: Lord Jesus, the simple praise song *Breathe* says, “This is my daily bread....and I, I’m desperate for you.” * Help me to hunger for you as much or more as I hunger for a meal after a long stretch of hard work. Amen.

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Week #3 Day #5 Mark 6:35-37

This situation must have felt scary. It was late in the day, with no food trucks or drive-ins nearby, and a large crowd who had gathered to hear Jesus teach was hungry. Jesus' disciples, using human common sense, said, "Send them away." Mark said Jesus' reply, amazing and even alarming, was "You give them something to eat." But when they gathered what they had (which was clearly not enough), Jesus' power turned their little into lots of food to share with the hungry people.

Imagine facing 5,000 hungry people when, "You give them something to eat"! Jesus gave the disciples the privilege of serving as a channel through which his power could feed the crowd. How is God calling you to be channel through which Jesus' power can work to feed the hearts and lives of others?

- Note the contrast between how Jesus responded to the crowd and how the disciples did. "You give them something to eat" seemed to alarm the disciples. When you see people hurting, are you more inclined to respond like the disciples or like Jesus? What concerns or fears do you have, if any, about what might happen if you more often responded to suffering with active compassion?

Prayer: Loving Jesus, sometimes I get stuck wondering just "how" you produced all that food. Remind me that what mattered most was that you did it—and that your power is still waiting for the chance to work through me. Amen.

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Fed by doing God's will

Week #3 Day #6 John 4:31-35, 39

Today's passage came near the end of the story of Jesus meeting a woman at Jacob's Well in Samaria (cf. [John 4:1-30](#)). He was at ease in Samaria, but his disciples probably weren't. There were centuries of hostility between Jews and Samaritans. Jesus must have amazed them by saying, in that hostile city, "Open your eyes and notice that the fields are already ripe for the harvest" (verse 35). But the fields WERE ripe—many Samaritans accepted Jesus' message. And Jesus told his disciples that doing God's will, reaping a harvest of willing followers, nourished him more profoundly than any physical food could.

- In the prologue to his gospel, John said, "The light came to his own people, and his own people didn't welcome him" (John 1:11). Later, Jesus told the religious leader Nicodemus, "God's Spirit blows wherever it wishes" (John 3:8). When you have welcomed Jesus and the light he brings to your life, how have you seen God work in unexpected ways in you? In the lives of others you know? Where, in your circle(s) of influence, do you see "fields ripe for the harvest" today? What excites and "feeds" you most about the ways in which you serve God and others? What would you like to get involved in that would deepen that joy and excitement? How can you begin to plan to make that happen?

Prayer: Lord Jesus, you said people who hunger and thirst for righteousness are the ones to whom your kingdom belongs. Grow that appetite in me—and then feed and sustain me as I join in your mission in this world. Amen.

Family Activity: How can your family partner with God in helping all people receive their “daily bread” both as physical and spiritual sustenance? Consider collecting canned or boxed food for a food pantry in town. Maybe you could prepare a meal for a soup kitchen or for people who are homeless. You might want to invite a family to your home for dinner. Think ahead of time about how you could share the love and grace of Jesus along with the food. You could pray with someone or tell a person, “Jesus loves you.” You could create a card and include on it a drawn or written blessing. Pray and ask God to help your family share daily bread with others.