

Angela Pound

Lord's Prayer

Notes

Practice (Practicing the Way)

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Give us this day our daily bread.

When I read this phrase of the Lord's Prayer I was reminded of two very different stories or opportunities to do with my life. They have shaped a bit of who I am, how I relate to people, and one way of how I hope to support and help others.

The first thing I thought of was to naturally think of my maternal grandparents, in particular my grandmother. She was all the time making bread, and it was amazing. Growing up, every Sunday we would drive up Gaspereau Mountain to go to Sunday School and church with my mom, meeting my grandparents at church. My grandfather would always have peppermints, usually in his coat pocket that he would share with us during church. Then once church was over we would head just a bit down the road to my grandparents house where we would have lunch together as a family and there usually always was homemade bread to go with lunch that grammy

(sometimes with the help of grampy, especially as they got older), had made, perhaps the day before. She would usually always have white bread, but she also made incredible raisin bread and brown bread, amongst the many other things she cooked with her heart. Bread isn't one of those things that can be cooked in a short period of time if you've ever made it from scratch. She would spend hours in the kitchen between putting the ingredients together, kneading the dough, letting it rest and rise, with the process continuing until it went into the oven, with the warm and fresh smell coming from the oven. Her bread would nourish her family physically but it would do so much more. We would gather around the table as a family to share in her bread, our community, our bond between generations, and it is these important family moments that I remember the most. It created moments of connection and comfort. Her act of baking became a form of care and devotion. Her love for her family was poured into her bread, and I have seen that here at this church as many of you share your love for each other and the community that we form together through the sharing of food, whether on a Sunday after the service, on a Tuesday during coffee club, or in providing meals for others who are having a hard time, or who have a lot on their plate that you are supporting.

The other thing I thought about was the beginning of my

teaching career. I was a part of the opening of the experiential school for youth at-risk in Windsor. We didn't have much space, a few rooms in a building that also had a business, but we made do with what we had, including a couple classrooms, an office, and an opened space where we met together and ate breakfast when the youth would first arrive to the school each morning. I think before this time I took food for granted. I don't ever remember a time when food wasn't available to us as a family. Even when Mom became a single parent there was always food, I'm sure the types of food may have changed, and we didn't go out to restaurants often, but our cupboards were never empty. Here at this school food was important. It's hard to learn on an empty stomach, which is why more and more schools are having breakfast programs, even high schools, which when I went to high school I don't remember much of a breakfast program.

Here I met some youth who ate at school and that was often it. Food was an opportunity for all of us as a school team to bond and share in community together. In the 10 years I worked there, we went from starting with breakfast, to then adding in a lunch program, to towards the end of my time we set up a foods lab to teach them how to cook as part of their high school credits and life skills (this was one of my favourite parts to help out with). We made a connection with the local foodbank where we would go to

the foodbank and help out with organization and they would support us with a variety of food each month for feeding youth, particularly baked goods that they would receive from the local grocery store with their 50% off sticker because they were soon past due. As you can imagine this became a very expensive cost once we went from breakfast to all meals in the day, and on Fridays we would send home food with kids to help them through until we would see them back on Monday morning. The foodbank was a huge support to us along with grants. Community organizations are seeing more and more the impact of food insecurity happening across our communities and how this impacts every other aspect of a person's life.

Give us this day our daily bread, found in Matthew 6:11, part of the Lord's Prayer, represents so much. While what we've been looking at in the Lord's Prayer up to this point are requests that focus on God's glory - his name, his kingdom and his will, this phrase, Give us this day our daily bread, starts to focus on us, it's our first petition. As Kevin Deyoung puts it, "Bread means more than just food. We are praying for the whole physical and spiritual wellbeing of God's people. And not just for their well-being, but their well-being for the sake of the first three petitions. 'O Lord, give us the sustenance and the life that we need that we may honor your name, that we may live for your kingdom, that we may obey your will.'"

Why bread? Why not turkey... fruit? In Hebrew, the word for bread, lechem, can also mean food in general. In the ancient Near East bread was the staff of life, and a family was careful to keep fresh bread on hand. In Luke 11:5-13 it says,

**Luke 11:5–13 NRSV**

And he said to them, “Suppose one of you has a friend, and you go to him at midnight and say to him, ‘Friend, lend me three loaves of bread; for a friend of mine has arrived, and I have nothing to set before him.’ And he answers from within, ‘Do not bother me; the door has already been locked, and my children are with me in bed; I cannot get up and give you anything.’ I tell you, even though he will not get up and give him anything because he is his friend, at least because of his persistence he will get up and give him whatever he needs.

“So I say to you, Ask, and it will be given you; search, and you will find; knock, and the door will be opened for you. For everyone who asks receives, and everyone who searches finds, and for everyone who knocks, the door will be opened. Is there anyone among you who, if your child asks for a fish, will give a snake instead of a fish? Or if the child asks for an egg, will give a scorpion? If you then, who are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will the heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him!”

Bread is one thing that goes quickly in my house, particularly with a teenage boy who can eat two sandwiches as a snack when he gets home from school an hour before supper time and still eat supper, so I often find myself running to the store just to buy bread, and usually 3 loaves at a time! But in the ancient world life wasn't that easy. Each morning family members would put olives, cheese, and perhaps figs into tortilla-like loaves, fold the bread, and put it into their pockets or bags before heading off to work. The bread was both the lunch and the lunchbox. It helped to make it possible for people to earn a living. Bread was highly valued. They didn't slice a loaf but lovingly broke it. If they found even a small piece of bread on the ground, they usually picked it up, dusted it off, and put it where a bird or small animal could find it and enjoy

it. Nothing was to be wasted. Yet, in our modern Western world, tons of food are thrown away daily, enough to feed the hungry populations of entire nations.

Lechem, bread, represents not only all the food but God's sustenance as a whole. When we pray this way we are asking God to provide for all our needs. Even today, bread has special significance in Jewish thinking. Some people believe that bread should never be discarded because doing so shows ingratitude for God's gracious provision. Josa Bivin, when living in Israel, writes "Instead of dumping their bread along with the rest of the garbage into the garbage carts parked along the streets, they [Israelis] save the bread in plastic sacks and hang it from the metal projections on the sides of the carts (used to hoist the carts into the garbage trucks). That way, the bread is potentially available to the poor. An Ugandan pastor when studying at a seminary years ago in America said as he was about to head back to Uganda after his studies that what he would remember most about America was, "All my life I will never forget having this one year when I did not need to worry about food."

There are many foundational stories in Scripture when it comes to bread. Do you know the first time bread is mentioned in Scripture? You may think of some of the famous stories, such as when God provided manna during the Exodus for the Israelites, but the first time bread is

mentioned is in Genesis. After Adam and Eve have eaten fruit from the forbidden tree God says to Adam, “Because you have listened to the voice of your wife, and have eaten of the tree about which I commanded you, ‘You shall not eat of it,’ cursed is the ground because of you; in toil you shall eat of it all the days of your life; thorns and thistles it shall bring forth for you; and you shall eat the plants of the field. By the sweat of your face you shall eat bread until you return to the ground, for out of it you were taken; you are dust, and to dust you shall return.”” Up until this moment, food was provided for them, Adam and Eve didn’t have to work for it at all, now this wasn’t the case once sin entered the world. God told him, “By the sweat of your face you shall eat bread until you return to the ground.” It wasn’t going to be easy anymore. Initially God gave humans all that was needed to support and sustain their life without working for it. Now they were going to need to be part of the process of feeding themselves. While the Earth, which was provided by God, had all the natural resources necessary to meet their basic needs they had to do their part. What Jesus now assures us that if, unlike Adam and Eve, who refused to acknowledge the primacy of God’s will, we do just that, seeking first and foremost to cooperate with our Father’s wishes, our bread will indeed be supplied. Matthew 6:33 “But strive first for the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well.” All these things [bread included]. Or

said another way, “anyone prepared to put God’s wishes first in life is bound to have bread.”

When Jesus says daily bread to a Jewish audience though they probably first recalled the time when manna fell from heaven six days a week to the Israelites when they were wandering in the wilderness. The Israelites were to only gather exactly what they needed for each day, not too much and not too little, if they selfishly gathered more than they needed and left part of it until the morning it bred worms and became foul. On the sixth day was the only time they were told to gather enough for two days to include the Sabbath, which miraculously would not become foul or breed worms.

The end of Exodus 16 reads,

**Exodus 16 NRSV**

The house of Israel called it manna; it was like coriander seed, white, and the taste of it was like wafers made with honey. Moses said, “This is what the LORD has commanded: ‘Let an omer of it be kept throughout your generations, in order that they may see the food with which I fed you in the wilderness, when I brought you out of the land of Egypt.’” And Moses said to Aaron, “Take a jar, and put an omer of manna in it, and place it before the LORD, to be kept throughout your generations.” As the LORD commanded Moses, so Aaron placed it before the covenant, for safekeeping. The Israelites ate manna forty years, until they came to a habitable land; they ate manna, until they came to the border of the land of Canaan.”

Let me read that one part again, “Let an omer of it be kept throughout your generations, in order that they may see the food with which I fed you in the wilderness, when I

brought you out of the land of Egypt.” This was to be placed before the covenant for safe keeping. It was a reminder of God’s provision during this time. They need not worry, God took care of them in the wilderness, as he would continue to do so in the promised land, and as Jesus reminds them in the Lord’s Prayer. God has provided for them in the past and he will continue to provide for them now. God is the same yesterday, today, and forever.

In John 6, Jesus preached a sermon in which he compared himself to manna. As a result he lost his congregation. He called himself the “bread of life,” and the “living bread from heaven.” He told the people that they must “believe on him” and “eat his flesh and drink his blood,” for eternal life. The Jews were offended as they were commanded to not eat animal blood, let alone human blood and so they rejected him. As the Israelites ate the manna and it sustained human life, sinners must receive Christ within their hearts and he will impart eternal life. Manna was only for the Israelites but Jesus came for everyone. Give us this day our daily bread. We are reminded that we need to feed daily on the word of God. Jesus said in, Matthew 4:4 “It is written, ‘One does not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God.’ ” Sound familiar, Moses reminds the Israelites in Deuteronomy 8:3, “He [God] humbled you by letting you hunger, then by feeding you with manna, with which neither you nor your

ancestors were acquainted, in order to make you understand that one does not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of the Lord.” Are you the same person you were before you met Christ? I would hope you would say you are not! As with manna so with Him, we have to come regularly, daily, to derive nourishment afresh from God. As you nourish yourself daily with the very life of Christ, what happens? Do you remain the same sort of person you were before you were given this “daily bread”, the daily “Word of God.” Your character should become more like that of Christ himself. The very life of the risen Lord will reach out through your hands in tenderness to touch the hands of those who suffer, to lift the load of the heavy laden. Praying, “Give us this day our daily bread” reminds us of our dependence upon Him. “God, today I need your help, I need your blessing, I need your provision.” Trust in his goodness and depend on his power. Share what you have, support each other, be the hands and the feet of Christ. Feed your soul and spirit on God’s bread from heaven, for “You are what you eat.”