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Epiphany Lutheran Church, Castle Rock, Colorado
Lenten Midweek Service
Wednesday, April 10th, 2019

Sermon: “Give Us This Day Our Daily Bread”

Text: Matthew 6:11

Focus: God provides for all needs of our physical bodies.

Function: That they would trust God’s generous, fatherly care.

Structure: Text-Application

Locus: “Daily bread includes everything that has to do with the support and needs of the body...” (SC, 4th Petition of Lord’s Prayer).

“Give us this day our daily bread” (Matt. 6:11, ESV).¹

“What does this mean? God certainly gives daily bread to everyone without our prayers, even to all evil people, but we pray in this petition that God would lead us to *realize* this and to receive our daily bread with thanksgiving.

“What is meant by daily bread? Daily bread includes everything that has to do with the support and needs of the *body*, such as food, drink, clothing, shoes, house, home, land, animals, money, goods, a devout husband or wife, devout children, devout workers, devout and faithful rulers, good government, good weather, peace, health, self-control, good reputation, good friends, faithful neighbors, and the like” (SC, Fourth Petition).

Grace, mercy, and peace to you from God our Father and our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Amen. Bread gets a bad rap these days. The surge of gluten intolerance has led many people to think that bread is bad, almost a kind of poison. Numerous diets, including the famous Atkins Diet, tell us that carbs are going to kill you, so foods high in carbohydrates, such as bread, cereal grains, tortillas, and pasta, are to be avoided like the plague. And yet, for thousands of years, bread was the staff of life.

When God provided for the Israelites in the wilderness, he showered them each morning with *manna*, which the Bible calls “the bread of angels” (Ps. 78:25). When Jesus performed his miracle of feeding the five-thousand, he did so with two fish and five loaves of *bread!* When

¹ All Scripture references, unless otherwise indicated, are from The Holy Bible, English Standard Version.

Jesus instituted his Supper, he chose the unleavened Passover bread for his body. Indeed, Jesus calls himself the Bread of Life (John 6:48). So bread can't be all bad if Jesus liked it!

So we pray as the Lord has taught us: "Give us this day our daily bread" (Matt. 6:11). The Greek word (*epiousios*) translated as "daily" is a funny one. It only occurs twice in the New Testament—both times in the Lord's Prayer (cf. Luke 11:3). Outside of the New Testament, it occurs only on *one* papyrus fragment!² The meaning is hard to make out, but many scholars agree that it probably means something along the lines of "for tomorrow." In other words, we pray in this petition that God would give us *tomorrow's* bread today. That is, we trust for God to provide our need even before we recognize our lack. As we say in the Shepherd Psalm: "The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want" (Ps. 23:1). Thus we express trust in God's bounty and blessings.

The fact that we pray for bread immediately after praying for God's name to be hallowed, his kingdom to come, and his will to be done strikes us as an abrupt transition. We go from asking for lofty, spiritual matters to suddenly descend into the stuff of flesh and blood—actual *matter*. Aren't such things as bread too lowly to ask of God? Why are we not instead praying for world peace, or mass conversions, or even the utter end of the world?

From this petition we discover that God cares about every aspect of our life: body and soul. The God who made us knows that we are from the earth. "For he knows our frame; he remembers that we are dust" (Ps. 103:14). We are human beings, not angels, and God knows that we need sustenance for these weak and weary bodies. So he graciously "gives me clothing and shoes, food and drink, house and home, wife and children, land, animals, and all I have. He richly and daily provides me with all that I need to support this body and life..." (SC, First

² *TDNT*, s.v. *epiousios*.

Article of Apostles' Creed). Indeed, Martin Luther tells us, "Daily bread includes everything that has to do with the support and needs of the body"—including the kitchen sink (SC, 4th Petition).

I remember how, in the days before my first term at the seminary, I had no money left to buy textbooks after paying for my tuition and room and board. (*Aside*: The proverbial "starving" college kid, right?). I did not know what else to do, so in my desperation, I prayed for God to help. I was too embarrassed to say anything to my parents or family. Yet a few days later, a card arrived in the mail from my grandparents with a check for \$500 and a note that read, "Thought you could use this for books!" My grandparents were always generous at birthdays and Christmas, but this unexpected gift was the exact amount I needed for books. In this way, God gave me "daily bread," and I began the semester ready to study and learn.

In his fatherly, divine goodness and mercy, our heavenly Father gives us everything we need. "The eyes of all look to you," O Lord, "and you give them their food in due season. You open your hand; you satisfy the desire of every living thing" (Ps. 145:15-16). God loves and cares for all creatures, even the beasts of the field and the birds of the air. According to the Psalmist, "The young lions roar for their prey, seeking their food from God" (Ps. 104:21). God's love and care for creation is so great, that he even blesses wicked and evil people who deny his name and do not want his kingdom to come. "For he makes his sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust" (Matt. 5:45).

But if God provides for all, even wicked people, without their prayer, why should we pray this petition? First of all, it teaches us to recognize the hand that feeds us. We have a tendency as human beings to boast of our wealth and accomplishments. Look at me! Look at what *I* did. Look at *my* house, *my* car, *my* job, *my* kids. Mine, mine, *mine*! But the Lord's

Prayer helps us recognize our creaturely dependence on the Creator and his generous spirit. If God withdrew his hand for a moment, we would all perish. Without daily bread, we'd all be dead. And so we give thanks to God for his fatherly provision and care.

Yet “man does not live by bread alone, but man lives by every word that comes from the mouth of God” (Deut. 8:3). Jesus quoted this verse from Deuteronomy during his desert duel with the devil. For 40 days, Jesus neither ate nor drank. In the greatest understatement of all time, Matthew tells us that Jesus “was hungry” (Matt. 4:2). Then along comes Satan, who tempts Jesus: “If you *are* the Son of God, command these stones to become loaves of bread” (v. 3). To which Jesus answered, “Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God” (v. 4).

Jesus was a human being like us, who felt the hurt of hunger pangs and thirst. Indeed, from the cross he cried out for a drink—“I thirst” (John 19:28). Yet Jesus also knew that his life came only from God. “My food is to do the will of him who sent me...” (John 4:34). During his earthly ministry, Jesus wandered the earth without house and home. “Foxes have holes, and birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay his head” (Matt. 8:20). At times he grew weary and needed rest (Matt. 8:24).

Yet because Jesus endured deprivation and deficiency on our behalf, we can be assured that God will never let us lack for long. We pray today for tomorrow’s bread. We cry out to our Father for food and drink and everything we need. And because he loves you, he will not give you a snake instead of a fish or a stone instead of bread (Matt. 7:9-10). Jesus says, “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!” (Matt. 7:11; cp. Luke 11:13).

So as the beloved children of God, we pray, “Give us this day our daily bread.” In the name of the Father and of the Son and of ✠ the Holy Spirit. Amen.