

March 4 – Life is Just so Daily

Luke 11:5-10

Someone said, “The problem with daily life is that it is just so daily!” What they meant is that much of life is often repeated events. We don’t understand how much we are in a rut until something forces us out of it! This part of the prayer focuses on the routines of life, the daily needs we have and a call for us to put our trust in God.

This phrase reminds us that Jesus thought we should daily pray this prayer. We are not asking for bread for the week but for today. This harkens back to the Israelites’ time in the wilderness. Each day they received manna from God in the desert. They were to harvest what they needed for that day. If they kept any extra, except on the day before the Sabbath, it would become unusable the next day. This was a way for God to challenge them to trust that God would daily provide for their needs. This prayer also asks us to daily put our trust in God.

Bread was an essential for living. So in telling us to ask for our daily bread, Jesus wants us to know that we are to bring our personal requests to God. It is a reminder to be honest and direct with God, to name what we need. There are many things we might want, but this is calling us to get down to the basics. Even so, we realize that sometimes people’s basic needs are not met. We will talk about this a bit more in a moment. When we are saying “give us this day our daily bread,” Jesus is telling us to name specifically what we need this day.

Jesus would have spoken this part of the prayer out of his own experiences. Jesus was homeless for most of his ministry. We don’t often think of this reality. When we realize that Jesus was homeless, we aren’t quite sure what to do with the notion. First, we typically think of homeless people as the men or women who live under the bridge in Seattle or who stand outside QFC here in Sequim asking for change. We don’t think of Jesus in need of God’s daily provision, because we don’t want to admit that our Messiah was likely a hungry, tired peasant-like person who survived because of the caring of others. Each day Jesus had to trust that his needs would be met. There would be moments of great joy when this happened. I am also sure there were times he and the disciples went to sleep with hunger gnawing at their bellies.

To ask for your daily bread was a reminder for Jesus' hearers, as it should be for us, that the small acts of every day were and can be opportunities to turn our minds to God. Daily activities can become reminders to give thanks, to ask for help and to open ourselves to God's presence as we go through our tasks. This is one of the reasons to say grace before a meal. Yes, we should always thank God for the blessing of having food to eat and for those who prepared it. But even more, we are pausing three times a day to intentionally focus on God. What are other routines that could be used as God moments? One of the first things I do every morning is look at my calendar so I get a clear idea about what the day ahead holds for me. As I read the list of activities I say a prayer about each one, asking God to be fully present in that meeting, lunch or whatever. I watch the news each night. When I turn it off, or before I click to another channel I pause briefly and lift what concerns I have learned about to God. And for me, one of my work routines is preparing sermons. Each time as I begin and when I end my sermon time, I focus for a few moments on God. I use the daily routines of my life to turn my mind to God. I believe this was part of the reason that Jesus wants us daily to ask God for our needs. It causes us to focus on God and to trust God.

Again, when we ask about our daily bread, it is also a time that we are acknowledging that we are part of a community. The prayer is not just for our needs. We don't pray "Give me my daily bread." We pray "Give us our." Throughout this prayer the words Jesus used are words of connection. We acknowledge that we are part of one community. We are praying not just for our bread but for all who need daily bread.

Now Jesus was always the practical one. He would never suggest that we say this prayer, do nothing and wait for God to take care of us. We share in the responsibility of providing for ourselves and those we are responsible for. But he would remind us that praying for our needs to be met also means praying that others' needs are met as well. And again, this isn't just saying "God, there are people who are not getting their daily bread do something about it." It is a commitment to asking, "What can I or we as a church do to help make sure all are fed?" Because of this prayer we, as a church, support the food bank, the summer food programs for children, have a monthly community dinner and more. It is why we need to continue to advocate in the halls of

government for policies that make sure that people do not go to bed hungry. Whenever you head into the realm of politics people will start sharing all the stories of how people abuse the system. I get it. Some people are less than honest. Even in the church we have to be aware that some people abuse the loving care of a church and we need to find ways to be helpful without enabling such behavior.

And what is true in our country is even more an imperative in the world. We comfortably sit here in Sequim knowing children are dying of starvation around the world. Now sometimes the ability to help is beyond our control. They are in war zones and food cannot get to them. We don't want to really think about it. We would like to believe that it isn't our concern. "Give us this day our daily bread" doesn't let us off the hook that easily.

The other thing this phrase reminds us about is that God cares about the practical side of life and about us as individuals. That is reassuring to me. At moments I wonder if I am bothering God with my list of things on my heart. I know God wants to hear all of my concerns for others, for God is a God of compassion, and to celebrate the joys in people's lives, including my own. But when I come to some of my particular needs I wonder, at times, "Should I even mention it? Does God think I am selfish?" Then I remember Jesus told us to ask daily for bread; and bread for him meant the staff of life. It was a practical and necessary thing to stay alive. And then I pray, sharing my needs.

It is calling on us to trust God. The Israelites had to trust each day when they collected the manna from God that there would be more the next day. That kind of trust is laying everything on the line. Without the manna they would die. This daily prayer is a call to trust that God knows and cares about our physical needs.

I think it is also a prayer to trust God for our spiritual needs. God, the provider, gives us the resources to stay plugged into the Spirit's movement in our lives. One of the prayers I pray daily to God is, "God keep me open to your Spirit today." I trust God will do it. I also know I need to remind myself to be open. The Spirit of God is at work, but if I am not attuned to it, I will miss what God is trying to do for and through me. I also

realize how easy it is to take for granted that I am doing well in my walk with God, to get complacent. So daily this prayer is a reminder to me that God is the source of my faith and I trust God to use me, fill me and guide me for just today. Tomorrow we will again renew the contract!

This leads me to end with three questions.

Where do we need to let go and trust God concerning the practical aspects of our daily life? All of us have worries. Will my retirement income last? How would I pay extended care costs? How do I deal with loved ones' declining health? Worry cannot solve the crisis or make the issue go away. We have to be prudent and do what we can about the situations, but then we need to let go and trust God. God is with us as we deal with these real and practical issues. God give us this day what we need. Maybe just as importantly, we need to pray, "and let us now worry about tomorrow!"

Where is God challenging me to care for my brother or sister? Where is the "us" challenging us today? Is it to give more to the food bank? Or to volunteer to help with this month's community dinner? Or to give a neighbor a ride or sit with their beloved so they can go run errands? What practical things are God wanting us to do so that others' prayer of "give us" can be met today.

Finally, where do I need to let go and trust God concerning God will provide in my faith life? We all have worries, fears, grief, and loss. We need to be open to God's presence in that situation, knowing and trusting God is with us. God will give us what we need to handle what life gives us.

This week in your prayer focus continue to focus on "our" and its challenges that all might find their needs met. This week pray, "Lord today I give _____ to you, trusting you will meet this need."

Daily life is so daily. It is where we live, where most of our concerns are focused, and Jesus reminds us God is right there with us in that daily stuff. Thanks be to God.