

Matthew 6:25-34 ²⁵ "Therefore I say to you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink; nor about your body, what you will put on. Is not life more than food and the body more than clothing? ²⁶ "Look at the birds of the air, for they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they? ²⁷ "Which of you by worrying can add one cubit to his stature? ²⁸ "So why do you worry about clothing? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow: they neither toil nor spin; ²⁹ "and yet I say to you that even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. ³⁰ "Now if God so clothes the grass of the field, which today is, and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, will He not much more clothe you, O you of little faith? ³¹ "Therefore do not worry, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?' ³² "For after all these things the Gentiles seek. For your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things. ³³ "But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you. ³⁴ "Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about its own things. Sufficient for the day is its own trouble.

Tonight, we place the focus upon the fourth petition of the Lord's Prayer. Out of all of the petitions of the Lord's Prayer, this petition is perhaps the easiest to understand at its face value. We pray in this petition, "Give us this day our daily bread." And by these words, we ask that God would give us all the things we need for the well-being of our bodies and souls. And we know that he does. He more than provides for all of our needs.

While the basic meaning of this petition is quite simple, tonight we allow this petition to teach us three very important lessons. First, it should be noted that this is the only petition out of seven petitions of the Lord's Prayer which places its focus upon earthly, physical blessings. This fact certainly does not mean that such prayers in our own life are wrong or misdirected. Indeed, we are to look to God and call upon Him for all our earthly blessings. But the fact that earthly blessings are not the focus of the Lord's Prayer should teach us something about our own prayer life. How many of your prayers are for the spiritual blessings which God wishes to give to you and how many are for earthly things? All too often our prayers are filled with petitions asking for earthly things at the expense of prayers asking for spiritual blessings. We focus on daily bread much more in our prayer lives than we do on the spiritual well-being of ourselves, our church, and God's kingdom. In our reading for the night, Jesus taught that concern for God's kingdom ought to be at the center of our lives. He told people that time spent worrying about what they would eat and what they would wear was wasted time. Rather they were to place their mind upon the kingdom of God, seek it, and all those other things would come. God knew that they needed them. So also, we are called to place our minds first and foremost on God and His work. We also should know that that

He will more than provide for all our physical needs as we seek after Him and His kingdom. And as we make God's kingdom our first priority, this will naturally be reflected in our prayer life as well. Prayers for earthly blessings will become the side notes to prayers for God's kingdom. And in so doing, our prayers will look more like our Lord's Prayer.

The second lesson we are reminded of by this petition and by praying it that all good gifts do indeed come from our Father. It can become all too easy to think that all good gifts come from our hard work or our employer's bank account or from our fields. But today we realize again that whatever way God uses to get His gifts to us, we are bound to give Him the due thanks for all of them. It is He alone that is our provider and we need always to recognize and confess this truth.

The final lesson we can learn tonight is by focusing on the phrase "*daily bread.*" As Christians we are to be people living in the present. We are in every real sense to take things one day at a time. Why? Because if we truly believe that our Lord might return anytime, then we refuse to be ultra concerned with a future that may not come. No, this does not mean that we can not make reasonable plans for the future, but it does mean that we should not place all our hope in some future hope of wealth and happiness. As Jesus teaches us tonight in our reading, each day has plenty of worries by itself, and we will be best served to only worry and beseech our Lord that He might provide for the needs of this day. And, so we ask for daily bread to get through this day. We confess with Paul that having food and clothing for the day, we will be content.

All three of these lessons which this petition may teach are worthy of our careful thought this evening. We do well to let these truths search our lives and reveal ways in which we might have fallen short of the things we ought to know and do as this petition directs. If we have asked only for physical blessings at the expense of praying for God's kingdom, we repent. If we have not given God alone thanks for all good gifts, we repent. And if we have become too focused on having everything in the future and in so doing have become discontent with a present full of God's gifts, we repent.

We come before God as He bids us to come. We come before Him in humble repentance. We come before Him knowing that He forgives our sins for Christ sake. In this Lenten season, we see again the magnificence of God's care for us as we see Him give his only son for us all. And knowing that He gave so selflessly to secure

our salvation, we are confident, that He will also graciously give us all good things that we need also. It is with this assurance that we pray, "Our Father who art in heaven; hallowed be thy name; thy kingdom come; thy will be done; on earth as it is in heaven; Give us this day our daily bread. Amen."