

The Lord's Prayer - Part 3

Luke 11:1-4

Pastor John Miller

I want to read all four verses of The Lord's Prayer. Luke said, "Now it came to pass, as He..." that is, "Jesus" "...was praying in a certain place, when He ceased, that one of His disciples..." doesn't tell us which one "...said to Him, 'Lord, teach us to pray, as John also taught his disciples.' So He said to them, 'When you pray, say: Our Father in heaven, hallowed be Your name. Your kingdom come. Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us day by day our daily bread. And forgive us our sins, for we also forgive everyone who is indebted to us. And do not lead us into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one.'"

The Bible teaches us that Jesus Christ is the Son of God. It also teaches us that Jesus Christ is the Son of Man. Which is He? Is He the Son of God or is He the Son of Man? He is both. Son of God is a full affirmation of His deity; He is divine. Son of Man, which was Christ's favorite term to use for Himself, is a Messianic title, which conveys His humanity. So He is both divine and human; He's the God-man. The theological term for that is "the hypostatic union." It means that Jesus has two natures, divine and human, in one person. He's one person, Jesus Christ, with two natures, God and man.

Because of Jesus' humanity, Jesus, in verse 1, prayed to His Abba Father. When I opened up the series, I asked the question, "Why should we pray?" The answer was, "Because Jesus prayed." If Jesus prayed, we should pray. If John the Baptist prayed, we should pray. If the disciples wanted to learn how to pray, we should want to learn how to pray and then pray. So Jesus prayed because He is also a human being. So prayer speaks of creature needs; we pray to God because we need God's help.

In verse 1, one of Jesus' disciples said, "Lord, teach us to pray, as John..." that is, "John the Baptist" "...also taught his disciples."

Evidently it was customary for rabbis to teach their followers prayers. But I don't think that Jesus was trying here to teach us a form prayer; that we literally have to repeat the words of this prayer. But if you do that, it's fine, as long as you understand the meaning behind the words and it comes from your heart as you pray.

But I think that Jesus was giving us a pattern of prayer. This is a pattern of true prayer, which gives us the priorities of prayer.

What are the priorities? In verse 2, it first starts with God's Person. "Our Father in heaven, hallowed be Your name." God is our Father in heaven, and His name and nature is to be called holy.

Then in verse 2, it secondly moves to God's program. "Your kingdom come. Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven."

Then in verse 3, it moves, thirdly, to God's provision. "Give us day by day our daily bread," which is what we come to today.

The fourth priority of God's prayer is in verse 4: His pardon. "And forgive us our sins, for we also forgive everyone who is indebted to us."

Fifthly and lastly, in verse 4, is God's protection. "And do not lead us into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one."

So notice it is "Your name...Your kingdom...Your will." This is the priority of prayer: that God would be glorified and magnified, that His kingdom would come and that His will would be done.

Then in verses 3-4, The Lord's Prayer moves to "Give us...forgive us...lead us...deliver us." So it moves from focusing on God's name, God's kingdom and God's will to us and our needs. This order is so very important. So this is a comprehensive prayer.

Now our focus today is verse 3. "Give us day by day our daily bread." Does this mean that we are no longer focusing on God? There is a break from "Your name...Your kingdom...Your will" to "Give us...forgive us...lead us...deliver us." Does that mean the focus is no longer God but us? No; for who provides our bread, who pardons our sins, who protects us from evil? God does. It is our Abba Father in heaven. So we are His children and He is our Father. He is our Abba, our "Papa" or "Daddy," and we are His children, so we are to pray to Him to provide for us, pardon our sins and protect us from evil.

Jesus said, "If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask Him!" (Luke 11:13). Think about that. Jesus, referring to us, said we are "evil." That means we're sinners in rebellion against God.

This is an argument from the lesser to the greater. If we are evil but give good gifts to our children, which we do, how much more will your Abba, your Father in heaven who is good, give good gifts—the Holy Spirit—to us. In the Greek, this verse reads, "the blessings of the Holy Spirit" to those who ask. He said that if a son asks for bread, he wouldn't give him a stone. If a son asks for an egg, he wouldn't give him a scorpion (Luke 11:11-12).

There are seven realities that we must learn to properly pray this petition. This petition is comprehensive and impossible to exhaust. Number one, because of this petition—"Give us day by day our daily bread"—it is okay to pray for physical and temporal needs.

Why do I say that? Because there have been some who sought to spiritualize this petition. Specifically, it was Jerome, one of the early church fathers in the third or fourth century, who spiritualized the text in that he felt it was not spiritual enough to ask God for bread. Rather, he felt we should be thinking lofty thoughts, worshipping God, glorifying His name, bringing His kingdom, submitting to His will. Then all of a sudden, we are down here; we go from heaven down to the kitchen. He thought that just couldn't be.

I disagree with that. I believe that verse 3 is a reference to God providing our mundane—in some cases—temporal, physical needs. I like what Charles Erdman said. He said, “The petition for bread sufficient for our needs implies our right to pray for all the concerns of our physical welfare.”

Jesus is actually legitimizing that I can pray for actual bread. You say, “What kind of bread do we pray for?” But where it says “bread,” I think it refers to thinks bigger than actual bread. “Bread” here is a word that conveys the idea of our physical, material, temporal needs. So we can ask God to meet these needs.

Remember that Jesus fed 5,000 men, women and children with a few loaves of bread and two fish. Jesus had said to Phillip, “Where shall we buy bread, that these may eat?” Then Philip said, “Two hundred denarii worth of bread is not sufficient for them, that every one of them may have a little” (John 6:5,7). The disciples wanted to send the people away to get their own food. But Jesus said, “You give them something to eat” (Matthew 14:16). Andrew said to Jesus, “There is a lad here who has five barley loaves and two small fish, but what are they among so many?” (John 6:9). So Jesus had them sit down in nice, little rows, He prayed and blessed the bread, multiplied the bread and fish and fed them.

When Jesus went to the wedding at Cana, He performed His first miracle of turning water into wine. When I go street witnessing and encounter people who have an alcoholic problem, that's their favorite verse.

This miracle indicates that Jesus cares about our needs; if you're at a wedding, you need to have wine for the guests to bring joy and pleasure to their hearts. It might seem like a mundane thing, but Jesus provided that.

And God sent ravens to feed Elijah. Have you ever had ravens feed you? No. I've had birds steal my food! I've never been on the beach and had a seagull bring me a bag of chips and say, “I hope you enjoy them.” It doesn't happen. They steal your food.

So God supernaturally and naturally provides our food for us. God is concerned about our needs. And when Elijah was weary from his journey, he took a nap. God sent an angel and he made a cake—an angel food cake—that he fed to Elijah. God is concerned about our physical needs.

In Matthew 6:25, Jesus said, “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?” Then in verse 32, He said, “For after all these things, the Gentiles seek. For your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things.” You have a Father in heaven who knows what you need, and He will provide your needs. Jesus said, “Look at the birds of the air” and “the lilies of the field” (Matthew 6:26, 28). God takes care of them. And God will take care of your needs.

Then in Matthew 6:33-34, He said, “But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness,

and all these things shall be added to you. Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about its own things. Sufficient for the day is its own trouble." That's why He said, "Give us day by day our daily bread."

So your loving Father has promised to provide. And it's okay to pray for your rent, for your mortgage, for your car. Some guys that know cars and mechanical things find it hard to pray for a car when it won't start. But those who are more simple minded say, "Lord, just heal this car, this carburetor, in Jesus' name." I've seen God touch cars and heal cars so they could start. "Okay. Thank you, Lord!"

It's okay to pray for food. When you open the refrigerator and it's bear, it's okay to pray, "Lord, you see this need. Provide for us." David said, "I have been young, and now I'm old; yet I have not seen the righteous forsaken, nor his descendants begging bread" (Psalm 37:25). I like this verse.

I remember when I was a young preacher, I couldn't quote that verse with experience. I was young, but now I'm old, and I've never seen the righteous forsaken or His seed begging bread. God provides for His children. So it's okay to pray for physical, material needs.

Number two, we must pray this petition with moderation. This is not a carte blanche petition. It's not a Neiman Marcus catalogue; just open it up and say, "I want that and that and that."

Have you ever given a catalogue of toys to your grandkids and tell them to mark some things for Christmas? Everything in the catalogue is marked! "Wow! Slow down!" That's like how we are. "God, I want this and that and that! By six o'clock Friday." This is not carte blanche or a blank check. This is not, "Give us our daily fillet mignon" or "dessert."

In Philippians 4:19, Paul says, "And my God shall supply all your need according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus." Notice that God provides our "needs" and not our greeds. In 1 Timothy 6, Paul warns that false teachers will come who teach that being godly is a way to get rich.

I turn my TV on and watch Christian programming and find Christian preachers who are telling me that if you have enough faith and just confess with your mouth, you can have whatever you want. You can have a nice watch, a nice car, nice clothes. It's all the health-and-wealth, prosperity preaching. But that's not what the Bible teaches. The Bible teaches God's concern for our physical needs, but He hasn't promised to provide all of our greeds.

In Philippians 4:11-12, Paul said, "I have learned in whatever state I am, to be content; I know how to be abased, and I know how to abound. Everywhere and in all things I have learned both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need."

So be careful of the false teachers who say that godliness is a way to get rich.

My wife won't let me go to Costco with her every time, because even though I only go once a

year, I freak out. "Woe; look at that!" We spend way more money if I'm on the trip to Costco. "I know we didn't need it, but look at how cheap it was!" But God will take care of your needs and not your greeds.

Number three, this prayer is an invitation to come to God with requests that others might consider small. One of the precious realities of our Christian life is that God cares about the simple, ordinary, mundane, day-to-day things of life. God wants us to bring our everyday needs to Him, even if they appear trivial. Don't just pray in times of great need.

Some only pray when there is a disaster. We only pray when the ship is sinking, when the house is on fire, when the plane is crashing out of the sky. God help us to pray even in times of prosperity, as well as in adversity. 1 Peter 5:7 says, "Casting all your cares upon Him, for He cares for you." He cares for you. He has the very hairs on your head all numbered. Not one sparrow falls to the ground without Him taking notice. You are more valuable than many sparrows (Matthew 10:29, 31).

My wife prays sometimes for things that I think are silly. Bless her heart! If I lose my keys, I don't pray, I get.... I know you don't like thinking about your pastor getting like that. "I can't find my keys!"

My wife says, "Have you prayed?"

Angrily is say, "No, I haven't prayed!"

"I always pray when I lose my keys."

"Then you pray!" So she prays and there are the keys.

Just two weeks ago, I couldn't find a sermon in my files. I knew it was there somewhere. For days I couldn't find it. I was in my office looking for it. My wife said, "Well, let's pray." She prayed and the minute she said, "Amen," I saw the file. Unbelievable.

So you pray for things that people think are unimportant, like when you go to the store. "God, help us to get a good deal. Help us to find what we need. Help us to find a parking spot. Lord, help the lines at the checkout to be short." You can pray for those things. We're to be praying without ceasing or living in an attitude of constant prayer (1 Thessalonians 5:17).

Read Psalm 139:2. The psalmist said, "You know my sitting down and my rising up; You understand my thought afar off." So God knows when we're down and when we're up. God knows when we go to bed and when we get up in the morning. He's numbered our days (Psalm 139:16) and He's completely in control. We can take everything to the Lord (Philippian 4:6). So when we come to God with our "little things," we do Him great honor.

Number four, we must come to God daily in prayerful dependence. I believe that this is the heart of this petition. Notice that verse 3 says, "day by day." And in Matthew 6:11, which is the

more common rendition of The Lord's Prayer, it says, "Give us this day our daily bread."

"Day" meaning "daily" only appears here in the Bible. And it doesn't appear in any Greek literature. They found a fragment of papyrus on which was written a shopping list for the day, and it used that word "daily." It's the only place it appears outside of this Bible verse. It was used for going to the store and buying what was needed for that day.

Theologians argue as to whether this means to bring us bread for tomorrow's day or to bring us bread for today's day. Both are true. If you prayed in the morning, it would be for that day's bread; if you prayed in the evening, it would be for tomorrow's bread. So either way, the prayer would be for daily provision.

When the children of Israel were wandering in the wilderness, God provided the manna, the little wafer bread, on the ground. If the people tried to hoard it in their tents in fear that there wouldn't be any the next morning, the manna went bad. So they were only to collect enough manna for that day.

That's so contrary to the philosophy of the world around us. Someone said, "This petition is in sharp contrast to the world's ideas." We want our "monthly" bread, our "yearly" bread. We have our five-year plan, our ten-year plan. "What's the plan? How much money do we need in the bank to retire?"

But God said that it's the "daily" plan. It's "Give me today the bread I need to make it through the day." And the Bible actually promises, in Deuteronomy 33:25, that "As your days, so shall your strength be." No one ever fell under the weight of the day; it's when you take tomorrow's burdens and place them on today, or you're taking yesterday's regrets and placing them on today—if you just live day by day trusting the Lord, whatever the day brings forth, God gives you the strength and ability to be able to get through the day.

It's like the daily manna in the wilderness. It's also like Paul's thorn in the flesh, in 2 Corinthians 12:8-10. Paul prayed three times for the Lord to take it away. But He said, "My grace is sufficient for you, for My strength is made perfect in weakness." So then Paul said, "Most gladly I will rather boast in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me....For when I am weak, then I am strong." When Paul realized His need of dependence on God, then he was strong.

When you think you're independent and have plenty of money in the bank, when you have your plan in place, you've got the house and cars paid off, have a 401K and you don't depend on God because everything's taken care of, that's not what God wants.

Now He's not saying that we shouldn't save for a rainy day and be a good steward over our money. But He's saying that you should live in dependence and trust upon God. Whether you're rich or poor, God wants us to learn to trust in Him. In 1 Timothy 6:17, where Paul warns about false teachers who say that godliness is the way to get rich, he ends the section—one of my favorites in the book of Timothy—by warning the rich not to be "haughty, nor to trust in

uncertain riches but in the living God, who gives us richly all things to enjoy.”

So this petition is a sharp contrast to the world. We need to be literally, utterly, helplessly dependent on God for our daily provision.

Ask yourself, “Am I living in humble, daily dependence on God for my strength, for my provision, for my temporal needs?”

Number five, we learn from this prayer that we must pray with a willingness to work. God provides our daily bread, but we must accept that sometimes we have a part to play. He provides supernaturally natural work. In 2 Thessalonians 3:10, the Bible says, “If anyone will not work, neither shall he eat.” That’s the principle. So we need to be willing to work.

Number six, we must pray this prayer unselfishly with generosity. When I pray, “Give us day by day our daily bread,” I also need to think of others as I pray. He didn’t say “Give me”; He said, “Give us.”

Isn’t it interesting that the prodigal son said to the father, “Give me the portion of goods that falls to me” (Luke 15:12). His first step down away from the Father was his selfishness: “Give me my inheritance.”

There are no personal pronouns in The Lord’s Prayer. It’s “Give us...forgive us...lead us...deliver us.” When we sincerely pray this prayer, we are affirming our solidarity with our brothers and sisters in Christ. I like this. I am one of the members of the body of Christ, so if I am going to pray for God to provide my needs, I need to pray for God to provide your needs. If I need a healing, I pray for your healing. If I need strength, I’m going to pray for you to be strong. If I need food, I’m going to pray that God provides you food. And if God provides for me and meets my needs, then I should also give to you to help meet your needs. We are a family of brothers and sisters in Christ, and God is our Father. So we need to pray for others and be generous and benevolent in giving to others.

We can’t pray, “God, meet my needs but no one else’s” and hoard what we have. We need to be willing to give to others. In 1 John 3:17, it says, “Whoever has this world’s goods, and sees his brother in need, and shuts up his heart from him, how does the love of God abide in him?” So if you pray and say, “Lord, provide and meet our needs”—and God does—then say, “Help meet someone else’s needs.” Pray for them and be benevolent and generous toward them.

Number seven, we must pray this prayer with a willingness to accept the kind of bread God supplies.

Have you ever met a picky eater? I love my grandkids, but a few of them are so picky. Our little grandson, Hans, loves macaroni and cheese. So my wife made macaroni and cheese for Hans. He said, “Nana, it’s the wrong kind! It’s supposed to be the blue box!” Excuse me?! He doesn’t like Grandpa when he makes him eat what he doesn’t want to eat.

Sometimes we complain about God's provision. If you're going to pray, "Lord, give me today my daily bread," don't complain when it's not the kind of bread you wanted. Whatever God provides, eat it and be happy.

The children of Israel were given manna. What did they do? They complained. "Manna again?! We've tried everything: manicotti, manna balls, manna malts. We want meat!"

So God said, "Okay; I'll give you meat. I'm going to give you so much meat, it'll run out your nose. You'll be sick of it." And they complained and they griped about the water, about what God provided. And we should be willing to accept whatever God provides. James 1:17 says, "Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and comes down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shadow of turning."

That good God is your Abba Father. He has promised to take care of you and to provide for you. And He wants you to be living in daily dependence upon Him.

And let's not forget that Jesus said, "Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God" (Matthew 4:4). And Jesus said, "I am the bread of life. He who comes to Me shall never hunger, and he who believes in Me shall never thirst" (John 6:35). And He also said, "Do not labor for the food which perishes, but for the food which endures to everlasting life" (John 6:27).