

BREAD TODAY AND TOMORROW

Lincoln Park Baptist Church, West Newton, Massachusetts
January 10, 1965

Scripture - Matthew 6:11

Introduction:

- A. Today we shall continue to bring you the meaning of the Lord's Prayer. As you remember, on the three Sundays after Thanksgiving, I preached on the first part of the Lord's Prayer:

*"Our Father who art in heaven,
Hallowed be the name.
Thy kingdom come,
Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven."*

During the Christmas season I stopped the series of messages on the Lord's Prayer in order to consider topics appropriate to Advent. Today I am renewing the series started on November 29 and interrupted on December 20.

- B. Our text for today is the first petition of the second half of the prayer. The first half refers entirely to God; the second touches on our needs. It is in this part that the believer asks God for very specific blessings.

What can be more specific than our petition:

"Give us this day our daily bread" or again the next:
"And forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors." Or again the last:
"And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil."

Notice the specificity of each petition:

- (1) daily bread
- (2) forgiveness
- (3) deliverance from temptation.

Let us now consider the first petition.

I. Bread for today and tomorrow

- A. Give us today the bread of tomorrow, or, Give us today the coming bread. These are possible translations of the Greek text, behind which there is an Aramaic form. What does it mean? Participation in the present time of the blessings of the end of time.
- (1) The miracles of the multiplication of the bread and fish are symbolic of the fellowship that the church already has in the present time with her living Lord. As they partook of the bread, they confessed that God was in their midst and they shared in the present the blessings of the end:

- forgiveness
- communion with God
- salvation

(2) The Lord's supper has also a reference to the end. As the church gathered together around the table and partook of food joyously, they experienced the presence of the risen Lord. The Holy Spirit was in their midst, giving witness to the risen Christ. Luke 22:14 – *“And when the hour came he sat at the table, and the apostles with him. And he said to them: ‘I have earnestly desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer; for I tell you I shall not eat it again until it is fulfilled in the kingdom of God.”*

Table fellowship with the Lord pointed to the future kingdom. With the resurrection the kingdom is even closer. We have the first-fruits of the Spirit.

B. Give us today our daily bread:

Very soon the church lost its eschatological intensity and came to think of the bread of tomorrow more in terms of the daily bread. So we have: *“Give us our daily bread.”*

Jesus himself was concerned with the daily need of people, in specific their need for food:

- (1) He enjoyed a wedding feast or regular banquet. He ate in the home of Zacchaeus the publican; also in the home of Simon the Pharisee. He multiplied the bread and the fish.
- (2) He was sure that God provides our daily needs: *“Do not be anxious, saying: ‘What shall we eat?’ or ‘What shall we wear?’ For the Gentiles seek all these things; and your Heavenly Father knows that you need them all.”*

II. The Bible has a deep concern for the whole man and for the common things of life – like food, clothing, politics. We have so spiritualized its message that we have come to think that the Bible speaks only to the inner needs of the soul. This is wrong. The Bible sees man as an entity composed of soul and body, and both have to be seen in the light of God.

A. The Bible and bread – James 2:14 – *“What does it profit, my brethren, if a man says he has faith, but has not works? Can his faith save him? If a brother or sister is ill-clad and in lack of daily food, and one of you says to them, ‘Go in peace, be warmed and filled’, without giving them the things needed for the body, what does it profit?”*

James is fuming against a one-sided concept of faith. An intellectual apprehension which has lost contact with the daily needs of men. He is saying Christianity is concerned with bread and butter issues.

B. The Bible and politics

- (1) Experience of Dr. Stendahl when he had to talk on the Bible and international relations. People think that somehow the Bible is non-political. This is an entirely false notion. The Bible is political from beginning to end.

(2) Role of the prophets to remind the nation where there had been a breach of the covenant:

- worship of other gods.
- treaties with other nations
- mistreatment of the poor, the orphan and the widow

The prophets attack the power-structures of society.

(3) N.T. The concept of the Kingdom is political – allegiance to a non-territorial kingdom – and outward reference for decision outside the sphere of the merely human. Rev. 11:15 – *“The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and Christ; and he shall reign for ever and ever.”* God is my Führer. No wonder Communism attacks the church, as also did Naziism. The Christian has an extra-human allegiance, and this is a threat to any state that considers itself an absolute authority.

(4) The Bible and the Family

The Bible is intensely concerned with what takes place in the family.

(Ex. 20:12) *“Honor your father and your mother, that your days may be long in the land which the Lord your God gives you.”*

(Col. 3:18) *“Wives, be subject to your husbands as is fitting in the Lord. Husbands, love your wives, and do not be harsh with them. Children, obey your parents in everything, for this pleases the Lord. Fathers, do not provoke your children, lest they become discouraged.”*

This has to be seen in the light of those who thought faith in Christ meant possession of eternal life already, to such an intensity that they had to abandon all family ties. It is in the everyday situations of the home that love, faith and hope are exhibited.

Conclusion:

When we say, “Give us our daily bread”, we are confessing that the physical needs of men are sacred and fundamental.

- (1) Food becomes a token of grace. God has made man, both his soul and his body. The body is sustained by physical food as well as by the word of God. *“Man does not live by bread alone but by every word that comes from the mouth of God.”*
- (2) The sphere of politics is also of concern to the church. It is in the sphere of politics that decisions are made that affect bread and butter issues.
- (3) The deep sense of gratitude – all our abundance – what others do not have.