

7/30/23 Christ Fellowship

## “The Lord’s Prayer” – Provision – Matthew 6

After the Korean War ended, South Korea was left with a large number of children who had been orphaned by the war. We’ve seen the same thing in the Vietnam conflict, in Bosnia, and in other places. In the case of Korea, relief agencies came in to deal with all the problems that arose in connection with having so many orphaned children. One of the people involved in this relief effort talked about a problem they encountered with the children who were in the orphanages. Even though the children had three meals a day provided for them, they were restless and anxious at night and had difficulty sleeping. As they talked to the children, they soon discovered that the children had great anxiety about whether they would have food the next day. To help resolve this problem, the relief workers in one particular orphanage decided that each night when the children were put to bed, the nurses there would place a single piece of bread in each child’s hand. The bread wasn’t intended to be eaten; it was simply intended to be held by the children as they went to sleep. It was a “security blanket” for them, reminding them that there would be provision for their daily needs. Sure enough, the bread calmed the children’s anxieties and helped them sleep. (Ligonier.org)

Let me ask you a question. How well do you sleep? Oh, I know some of you have physical problems that keep you from sleeping well. Your back hurts or your knees hurt or something else but most of us don’t have to worry about where our next meal is coming from or if we will be able to eat tomorrow.

If you do, we have a food pantry just for that reason and we would love to help you with that problem. See any church member after the service and they will help you with that. But for most of us, we go to sleep knowing that there is at least something in the cabinet or the fridge that we can eat tomorrow. God has blessed us by providing our next meal and so when we read the Lord’s Prayer in **Matthew chapter 6**, we often skip over the part about the daily bread without much regard but a closer study of what that means could very well change how we pray and even break the barrier that keeps our prayers from being as powerful and effective as they should be.

So, as we continue with our focus on the Lord’s Prayer, let’s look at it again in **Matthew chapter 6, verses 9-13** and we will focus today on **verse 11** but we will then get a good look at an example of it in the book of Psalms. I know you have it memorized but let’s read again the Lord’s Prayer from Matthew 6:9-13.

*"This, then, is how you should pray: "'Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name, 10your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. 11Give us today our daily bread. 12And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. 13And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one.'*

Give us today our daily bread. Sounds pretty simple, right? I'm asking God to provide me with something to eat. It seems the simplest of all of them and yet interpreters have given any number of meanings to it. Some people say it is actually referring to the Lord's Supper or Communion. We know that the Lord's Prayer is often used in conjunction with the Lord's Supper and rightfully so and some people say this petition is meant to mean the spiritual food a person gets from that ordinance.

Other people say this is talking about the Word of God which is the bread of life for believers. Jesus quoted **Deuteronomy 8:3** that says, *"man does not live on bread alone but on every word that comes from the mouth of the LORD."* We know that the Bible is truth and we feed on it to sustain us every day like hungry people eat bread and like a fat kid eats cake. Christians feed on the Word and we are thankful for it.

But then some people interpret this verse to mean that bread stands for Jesus Himself. In **John 6**, Jesus referred to Himself as "the bread of life" and as such we should be sustained and strengthened by the Living Bread. What more do we need besides Him?

In my mother's favorite hymn, "All That Thrills My Soul Is Jesus", the fourth verse says, *"Every need His hand supplying, Every good in Him I see; On His strength divine relying, He is all in all to me. All that thrills my soul is Jesus, He is more than life to me"*

So, is the verse referring to the Lord's Supper, the Bible or Jesus Himself? In my opinion: yes! Yes, and more! It is referring to everything we need to survive and thrive in this world and the next and all of it comes from the merciful and gracious hand of God and when we realize that and even more importantly, when we start to pray like that, we will start to see our prayers change, our prayer life change and the effectiveness of those prayers increase.

We learned last week that according to Jesus and what we call the Lord's Prayer, there is a method, a manner, an order to prayer that makes our prayers most effective. We saw last week that while any prayer is good and God hears every prayer, a prayer that begins with honest and heart-felt praise is recommended by Jesus. Start your prayer by praising God just for Who He is and what He has done. We then saw in Psalm 100 an example of what that looks like to shout for joy to the Lord and give Him praise no matter what kind of kind of circumstance we find ourselves in.

Today we see that Jesus says the next part of our prayer should be asking for God's provision in our lives and where it says, "Give us our daily bread" is way, way more than just asking for food. I'm sure that when Jesus was instructing His disciples on how to pray and He got to this part, His mind would have gone back to the story of the manna in the wilderness in **Exodus 16**.

The children of Israel were hungry and God sent them manna from Heaven and without it, they would have died. God provided water when they needed it. He provided shelter, clothes, protection, guidance and strength to endure. He provided everything they needed to survive and even thrive and we need to realize that...nothing...has...changed. He still provides everything we need and this prayer is not so much an asking for Him to do it but more of an acknowledgement that He is the Provider.

It is vital to the health and effectiveness of our prayer lives that we really understand this so turn to the **86th Psalm** and let's get an illustration or two (or four) of what it really looks like to acknowledge God as the great Provider. I don't know about you but I need illustrations. I'm not smart enough to just retain most things I am told without illustrations so we go to the book of Psalms for the illustration of this verse in the Lord's Prayer that says, "Give us our daily bread" and then we will look at the first four verses of **Psalm 86** and we will get four illustrations of it.

In **Psalm 86:1-4**, David says, *"Hear me, LORD, and answer me, for I am poor and needy. 2Guard my life, for I am faithful to you; save your servant who trusts in you. You are my God; 3have mercy on me, LORD, for I call to you all day long. 4Bring joy to your servant, LORD, for I put my trust in you."*

So, here you are, a member or maybe a regular attender of Christ Fellowship. Maybe you have been a Christian for fifty years, you study the Bible, you have heard a million sermons on prayer and yet you find yourself unsure about how prayer works. Well, don't feel bad. I don't think anybody really knows exactly how prayer works and the good news is that we don't have to know.

Because, while I don't know how it works, I do know that part of the secret to powerful and effective prayer is to start with praise and part of the secret is to humbly pray for God's provision just like David does here. When we pray, are we giving God new information about us? No, of course not. He already knows it. When we pray, are we giving God orders about what we want, like at a drive-through window?

Is that what David was doing in this first verse, giving God an order? *"Hey, you listen to me and you answer me, Mister!"* No. I may not understand prayer but I do know that method doesn't

work and it is not what David was doing. We can tell by how he follows it up. *“Lord, I am poor and needy.”*

In our prayers, we should first come to God with praise and then asking for His provision because we all, like David, are poor and needy. All of us, no matter our bank accounts or our wallets. No matter how big of a house we live in, God is the Provider of all things and we need to come to Him with that mindset. We should come like King David who was not informing God but admitting to God his helplessness and hopelessness without Him.

It was something David truly knew and understood and I say that because we see in **2 Samuel chapter 9** that David provided for somebody else who was helpless and hopeless. You’re going to need to keep your Bibles open and ready because we are going all over the place for more illustrations of what asking God for provision looks like.

In asking for His provision, we should go to God in four ways; ways that we see in the first four verses of **Psalms 86** and illustrated in different parts of the Bible. In verse one, we see we should go to God humbly. That’s the first way. David said he was poor and needy and He knew what it was to be poor and needy from being a shepherd to running from Saul in the mountains to being chastised by God and he proved he knew what it was to be poor and needy by the way he treated Mephibosheth.

Do you remember the story of Mephibosheth? Do you remember all the miracles Mephibosheth did and all the sermons he preached and all the wonderful ways he helped people? No, you don’t because Mephibosheth never did any of that. He never did anything. Mephibosheth was lame. He was crippled and helpless and in that society he was useless and if somebody didn’t have mercy on him, he would die from hunger, thirst or exposure. He couldn’t do anything for himself.

But look at **2 Samuel 9:6-8**. David asks around for any descendant of Saul’s and Mephibosheth is brought to him. It says, *“6When Mephibosheth son of Jonathan, the son of Saul, came to David, he bowed down to pay him honor. David said, “Mephibosheth!” “At your service,” he replied. 7“Don’t be afraid,” David said to him, “for I will surely show you kindness for the sake of your father Jonathan. I will restore to you all the land that belonged to your grandfather Saul, and you will always eat at my table.” 8Mephibosheth bowed down and said, “What is your servant, that you should notice a dead dog like me?”*

Oh, that ought to be our feeling when we go to God in prayer! *“Oh Lord, what is your servant, that you should notice a dead dog like me?”* When we truly understand Who God is and who we are, we should be amazed that the Creator, the Redeemer, the Deliverer and Sustainer, the

Great I Am would even consider us. If you want your prayers to be effective, realize Who you are praying to and then come to Him humbly!

Now, go back to **Psalm 86** and look at the second verse. In verse one, we see we should come humbly before God. In **verse 2**, we see we should come completely. Verse 2 says, *“Guard my life, for I am faithful to you; save your servant who trusts in you. You are my God.”* He asks God to guard his life, his breath, his being, who he is and what he has and he trusts God with everything completely. If God so chooses, God can take David’s life or bless it or curse it or forget about it but David trusts God completely for everything.

Now, turn to **Daniel chapter 3**. I know I’m not giving you a lot of time to look these up. Maybe you just want to write them down and look at them later if you can’t find them as we read them and that’s okay. But in Daniel chapter 3, we see one of Christ Fellowship’s favorite verses, I would have to say. We quote it often around here. In Daniel 3 we see the story of the three Hebrew boys who wouldn’t worship any other god besides Jehovah God and so they are threatened with the fiery furnace by old King Nebuchadnezzar and do you remember what they said?

**Daniel 3:13-18** says, *“Furious with rage, Nebuchadnezzar summoned Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego. So these men were brought before the king, 14and Nebuchadnezzar said to them, “Is it true, Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, that you do not serve my gods or worship the image of gold I have set up? 15Now when you hear the sound of the horn, flute, zither, lyre, harp, pipe and all kinds of music, if you are ready to fall down and worship the image I made, very good. But if you do not worship it, you will be thrown immediately into a blazing furnace. Then what god will be able to rescue you from my hand?” 16Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego replied to him, “King Nebuchadnezzar, we do not need to defend ourselves before you in this matter. 17If we are thrown into the blazing furnace, the God we serve is able to deliver us from it, and he will deliver us from Your Majesty's hand. 18But even if he does not, we want you to know, Your Majesty, that we will not serve your gods or worship the image of gold you have set up.”*

Woo! How ‘bout THEM boys? Huh? That is what I mean by trusting in God to provide for your life, your breath, your being and who you are and all you have. That is trusting God completely and that is what it looks like to ask God for your daily bread. Come to Him humbly and come to Him completely.

Going back again to **Psalm 86**, David next asks God for mercy. Look at **verse 3**. *“Have mercy on me, LORD, for I call to you all day long.”* David is not saying he deserves help because of the length of his prayers. He is asking for mercy as he makes it a daily habit, an hourly habit, even

a minute-by-minute habit of asking for mercy, not because he deserves it but because God is merciful.

His prayer life is such a part of who David is that he basically does it all day long. He has a running conversation with God as he goes about his day. We are told several times in the Bible to pray without ceasing or pray at all times and in all circumstances. If you want a powerful and effective prayer life, you have to go to God humbly, completely and here we see we need to come daily.

In **Luke chapter 2**, Jesus is just a baby and His parents take Him to the temple where they meet Simeon, who prophesied about Jesus there and then they meet an older woman named Anna. In **Luke 2:36-38**, it says, *“36There was also a prophet, Anna, the daughter of Penuel, of the tribe of Asher. She was very old; she had lived with her husband seven years after her marriage, 37and then was a widow until she was eighty-four. She never left the temple but worshiped night and day, fasting and praying. 38Coming up to them at that very moment, she gave thanks to God and spoke about the child to all who were looking forward to the redemption of Jerusalem.”*

What a blessing for Anna to be able to see baby Jesus and what a blessing for his parents to hear what she said about Him. But it says she never left the temple but worshiped night and day, fasting and praying. I know, some of you are thinking that if you have to fast and pray and stay at church 24/7 then you're out. You can't do that, can you? Well, nobody can do it 24/7, even Anna, but we can all be known for our daily praying.

For Anna, praying wasn't just something she did. It's who she was. It was what she was known for. Her worship defined her and it ought to define us. When people talk about us, they can say we are weird or ugly and that's their opinion but if our prayer lives are powerful and effective then they will have to recognize us as people of prayer and that is a fact because we go to God humbly, completely and daily.

Lastly, I want you to see that we should go to God in prayer expectantly. As we ask for His provision for everything we need to live and thrive in this world and the next, we should ask for provision humbly, completely, daily and expectantly. Look back at Psalm 86 one last time. **Verse 4** says, *“Bring joy to your servant, LORD, for I put my trust in you.”*

When you approach the throne of grace humbly like Mephibosheth, completely, like the Hebrew boys and daily like Anna, do you think that is a prayer God hears? Do you think God wants to answer a prayer that starts with praise and then asks - like that - for provision? Again, I don't know everything about how prayer works but I think it's safe to say you have God's ear

at this point and the better you know Who He is the more you will begin to pray more along the lines of His will and that will bring joy as you pray expectantly.

**Hebrews 12:2** says, *“Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith. Who, for the joy set before him endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.”* Jesus, of all people, was a man of prayer and it was because He was a man of prayer that He prayed so expectantly that He knew that God the Father would provide everything He needed and He could have joy even knowing that the cross was before Him.

Jesus prayed, *“Not my will but yours”* (Luke 22:42) and expected God to provide everything Jesus needed to survive and thrive in this world and the next and so can we. Go to the throne of grace humbly, completely, daily and expectantly and see your prayer life become powerful and effective. Let’s do that right now as the music plays.

If you don’t have a personal relationship with God through His Son Jesus then that is where you need to start. You can’t expect a powerful prayer life with somebody you don’t know. Ask Him to be Lord of your life today. Repent of your sin and ask Him for forgiveness. Then start in a life-changing relationship today. Why wait?