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Daily Bread

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TEXT: Luke 11:1-4 (NRSV)

He was praying in a certain place, and after he had finished, one of his disciples said to him, "Lord, teach us to pray, as John taught his disciples." He said to them, "When you pray, say:

Father, hallowed be your name. Your kingdom come. Give us each day our daily bread. And forgive us our sins, for we ourselves forgive everyone indebted to us. And do not bring us to the time of trial."

In my mind's eye, I can still remember this picture hanging in numerous people's homes when I was younger and I would stop at their place. It's a picture of an older gentleman sitting at a kitchen or dining room table with his head bowed and his hands folded and a loaf of bread there beside him and a Bible and some spectacles there on the table as well. Maybe you've seen the picture. And very often in caption around the photo or below the photo, the picture somewhere on the frame it said, "Give us this day our daily bread."

You know, as we head towards Easter in this Lenten season, we've been looking at this very unique prayer where Jesus taught his disciples when the disciples came to him and asked them, "Lord, teach us to pray." We've been looking at portions of this prayer just in adjusting our heart during this time of repentance, as we prepare for the great provision of God given to us on the cross at Easter. And today we're looking at this portion where this simple prayer for provision is offered. And obviously this is known as the Lord's Prayer or the Learner's Prayer, or when I was a football chaplain for some time, many in the football world, in the Catholic world, refer to it as the "Our Father". And we've looked at the reference to addressing God as father. We've also looked at hollowing his name and the kingdom come, praying for his will to be done. And then this prayer in Luke 11:3, "Give us this day, our daily bread." It's a prayer

that is a prayer for daily sustenance, for life. It's an acknowledgment, really, of our radical dependence on God. When Jesus was teaching His disciples how to pray, he suggested that they come daily to God asking Him for what's needed for life. And this is, of course, a realistic way of looking at life, because the Bible is very clear that you and I are utterly dependent on God for everything that we have. In Acts 17:24-26, we read that the God who made the world and everything in it is the Lord of Heaven and Earth. And He does not live in temples built by human hands, and he is not served by human hands as if he needed anything. Rather, he himself gives everyone life and breath and everything else. He himself gives everyone life and breath and everything else. From one man, he made all the nations that they should inhabit the whole earth. And he marked out their appointed times and history and the boundaries of their lands. Everything we have comes from God. James wrote in his epistle, he said, "Every good and perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of Heavenly Lights." Paul wrote to those in Corinth. He said, "What makes you different from anyone else?" He said, "What do you have that you did not receive? Where does life come from? How is life sustained? What is the mystery and the wonder of all existence? It is the overflow of the creation of Almighty God."

You and I are here today not because we're self-made men and women. That's a misnomer. We're here because we're creations of God put into the world by the Creator Himself, by God Almighty. All the days ordained for us were written before one of them came to be. When Paul wrote to the believers in Colossae, he simply said this about the preeminence of Christ, he said: "In him, all things hold together." When you and I rightly see the world for what it is and how it was created and what drives it and what's behind it, offering a simple prayer that is, "Lord, give us today what we need for today," just makes common sense. It is a radical expression of our total dependence on God for all that we need in this life. And it's not a prayer for extravagance or *filet mignon* to be provided. It's a prayer for the basic necessities of life: for food and shelter and clothing, for what we need to physically live. And God has so graciously made a world where you and I can thrive and live in.

But there are many resistances to the life that God wants us to have. There's a there's an enemy that opposes us. He wants to bring us down in the spiritual realm. We don't wrestle against one another, against flesh and blood in this world, but against the principalities and the powers and the authorities of this dark world. And this evil one has come into the world, Jesus said, to steal and kill and destroy. He wants to take from us what gives us life. And the power of prayer is beyond what we can understand. And Jesus said, you know, in this battle between good and evil, life and death, I want to encourage you daily to seek the Lord for what you

need. Seek the Lord for provision that's needed in the physical realm of your life. And not only this, but there's an awareness that not only does he provide, but he keeps for us what is needed for life. He sustains it in us.

When I was younger, I was working with my father in law on the farm, and we were working with some livestock. And every once in a while, you lose a you lose an animal, you lose a cow or you lose a pig or you lose a horse or something like that. And growing up on the farm, you realize how fragile life can be. And I remember the day when we experienced a death there and we were dealing with the animal. And my father in law, as we were talking about life, he looked at me and he looked me in the eye and he said, "You know, I really believe that life is very precious and fragile." And it resonated in my heart because I knew it to be true. The Scripture is very clear. This life is precious. It's a gift from God. And it's fragile. There are many enemies of life, and life can be snuffed out in a hurry. The Scripture talks about life being a mist or a vapor that's here today and then gone tomorrow. And not only does all of life come from God, but all of life is sustained by God. It's held together by Him. In reading the Scriptures, we see how true this is. Consider the story of Job recorded for us in the Old Testament, who in one day lost all of – he's a wealthy man with a large family – lost all his material wealth and his riches, his family. And Job says, "Then naked, I came from my mother's womb, and naked I will depart. The Lord gave and the Lord has taken away." And he said, "May the name of the Lord be praised." Job was really acknowledging the fact that not only does God provide for us what we have for daily living, but He also keeps it for us and sustains it for us. We can't even control how often we have it. Job teaches us that, and so does the story of Ruth and Naomi recorded for us in the Book of Ruth in the Old Testament. You read there that Ruth was married to a gentleman. She had two sons, and those two sons were married. And a famine, came in the Bethlehem area, and so they had to leave and go off to a foreign country. And while they were in the foreign country there, Naomi's husband died and both of her daughters in law's husbands, her sons, died. And Naomi knew then without the men there to work the fields and care for them, it would be hard to provide for themselves as three widowed women. And so she told the daughters in law they could go back to their homelands. And one of the daughters in law went back to their homeland. But Ruth said, "You know, I'm with you now, Naomi. I'll be with your people. Your people will be my people. Your God will be my God." And then Naomi and Ruth returned to the Bethlehem area with nothing. And people were surprised to see them coming back with no men and just the two of them. And when Ruth entered her homeland there, she said, recorded for us in Ruth, 1:20-21, "Don't call me Naomi. Call me Mara. Because the Lord Almighty has made my life very bitter. I went away full, but the Lord has brought me back empty." God's provision

comes to us not only to sustain us, but even what can sustain us is held by him. It's kept by him. The Lord can give and the Lord can take away. Job teaches us that. Naomi teaches that.

Consider the rich man who Jesus spoke about in Luke 12, who whose crops produced a bountiful harvest one year. And he bragged to himself "I'll big build, bigger barns, I'll store of grain for future years. I'll eat, drink and be happy." And Jesus almost interrupted his exposition, and he said, "You fool, tonight your very life will be demanded of you. Then who will get up all that you've stored for yourselves?" Our lives are in Almighty God's hands. He sustains them, He provides for them. And Jesus is teaching us to live with a sense of dependence on God – to appeal to Him every day for what's needed, for the sustenance of life, the basic necessities. It has been rightly said that the universe and all of its creatures are upheld by God like a ball in the air. And if God were to remove His hand, the whole system would fail and collapse completely. If God should withdraw his hand, our food would all vanish, the animals would disappear, the sun would go out like a candle and the play would be over because it is in him that all things hold together. And the Scripture says that he is actually restraining evil so that we might live; and being patient with the world, not wanting any to perish so more and more might come to him. The Book of Acts tells us that God put each person in each place in the time and the boundaries of their land for a reason, so that they might reach out to him and come to know him and even find him.

See, this prayer is not just for the physical life that God offers us when He creates us and breathes into us the very breath of life. But God wants us to be born again, spiritually, to be sustained spiritually by Him forever. You and I were made to walk in harmony with God, to be in fellowship with Him, to have our souls filled, to be overflowing like rivers of living water, flowing through our spirit and our soul. And so, when Jesus was encouraging His disciples, we don't want to look too narrow-mindedly at this prayer. When he was encouraging them to pray "Give us this day, our daily bread," he's not just talking about the basic physical necessities of life, but he is inviting the disciples to come before the Lord and ask for the spiritual empowerment that only comes from the very bread of life himself: Jesus. Jesus correlated himself with bread. Bread that gives sustaining power, sustaining energy to the body. Jesus said he was the very bread of life spiritually. And when we understand Jesus to be the bread of life spiritually, we understand that He has things we need to live the fullness of life that he wants us to have. You know, as the thief comes to steal, kill, and destroy, Jesus came that you and I might have life and we might have it to the full.

This goes beyond the biological life. This goes to the impassioned empowerment, the zest and the zeal of the Lord Almighty. This goes to the passions that God wants us to know. This is why it's such a great time to focus on this prayer as we head towards the Easter season, when we're literally going to be looking at the passion of Christ, and his passion that kept him moving towards the cross; the passion and the zeal that was in him, the great love that drove him to stay faithful, carrying that cross up the hill towards Golgotha. That passion that kept him there when the nails were driven into his hands and the spikes were driven into his feet. That passion that held him there when he shed his blood for the forgiveness of our sins. To provide for us in our soul and our spirit, the bread of life that's so needed, the forgiveness of sin. And then Jesus paid that ultimate price on the cross, purchasing for you and I the righteousness before God that only He could provide for us. And then He resurrected on that Easter Sunday morning, and he appeared to more than 500 people and then he ascended back into Heaven. And he said it was good that he would go back into Heaven so that he could send the comforter, the councilor, who we know of as the third person of the Trinity, the Holy Spirit, to empower us, to quicken us, to guide us, to lead us, to stir our souls, to correct us, to rebuke us, to train us in righteousness.

This is the bread of life coming to us in the power of his spirit, offering his body, the bread broken, as a symbol of his body being broken for you and I, for the forgiveness of sin, and then him ascending into Heaven and wanting to pour out his spirit on all people. These are the days that Joel spoke of when he'd pour out his spirit and inspire us and instruct us and guide us and instruct us in train. Our Soul longs for the guiding work of the Holy Spirit and the sprinkling of the love of our Heavenly Father into our hearts, and then stirring in us the hope of everlasting life. This is the spiritual provision that Jesus was insinuating we ought to pray for every day: "Lord, give us this day our daily bread." He will do for our soul what the physical bread does for our body. Whoever lives on the bread of Christ will live forever. This is the bread that was broken for us to eat and then find nourishment in.

I wonder today, are you happy with God's provision for you? Are you giving him gratitude and thanks, expressing your great love for him? You know, so often we read in the Scriptures that people turn to complaining when they lose sight of the graciousness and kindness of God. And this Lenten season is a time to repent from our discontent before God – from our wrong view of him, our disbelief about him being good and gracious and kind, and tell him we're sorry for grumbling and complaining. If you've developed a spirit of grumbling and complaining, I want to encourage you. You know, many Christians stop three times a day before a meal and they give thanks for what God has given to them, just the necessities of

food. And in some parts of the world, this is harder for people to come by. But the scripture says if you seek God with your whole heart, seek his kingdom, he'll meet your needs. And it doesn't matter where you live. And if we cry out to God, he will come and meet us there. And as he meets us, he wants us to give him praise and thanks for his provision. As we head towards Good Friday and then Easter. This is a time to be in repentance. We ask God for what we need: the health, the food, the sustenance, and then the spiritual vitality, the grace that we need to face the challenges that he brings in our lives. And as he does this, he wants us – it's his will – that we turn and give him thanks and give him praise. There are many who do pray and give thanks to God, many three times a day, but there are many who don't. Are you one today, even as you hear this, you could use a correction in your spirit? Turn your heart back to God and say God, I'm sorry. I thank you – I thank you for your provision. Continue to provide for me. I don't want it taken away. I want to continue to live in your good grace and your good kindness.

Daily for billions of people, for thousands and thousands of years God has provided. And as we seek him, he will continue to provide for us. He's worthy of our praise. Celebrating and affirming his faithfulness in the past is a great antidote or help to anxieties that we might experience in the world today. I hope you're seeing God's goodness in your life and training yourself to look for it. As we head towards Easter, let's remind ourselves to keep asking him for that daily sustenance for life.

Let's pray together. Heavenly Father, thank you for this time to look into your Word and remind ourselves of how dependent we are upon you. We give you praise today for your daily provision. We ask for your forgiveness when we've grumbled and complained before you. We ask you to restore in us the joy of the salvation you've provided for us. As we move towards this Easter season, we could be anticipating the great celebration of your great provision through your son Jesus. And we would offer you the fruit of the praise of our lips and the offering of our lives. It's a reasonable act of worship and service for your great love for us. We thank you for the great gift of your son. Jesus. It's in his name we pray. Amen.