

Lord, Teach Us To Pray

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Lesson 5

Not Living on Bread Alone: Praying to God for Our Daily Bread

Objective: To discern the deep meaning of what it means to bring before the Lord the petition, 'Give us this day our daily bread.' In doing this, we will consider 1) God's gift of food as a symbol of life and communion with him, 2) how this symbol of food led to and became a symbol of death, and 3) how Christ came to restore this symbol and us by his own refusing to live by bread alone. Lastly, we will ponder what it means for us to pray this petition.

1. Food In the Beginning

a. The Difference in the Biblical Account of Creation and the Enuma Elish

- Humanity: A savage or a beautiful representation (Gen. 1.26-27)
- The Task of Humanity: To ease the life of the gods as slaves or receive and honor God as sons and daughters (Gen. 1.28)
- The Role of Food/Provision: To be rendered up to the gods for their use or given by God as a gift of love and communion (Gen. 1.29)

About man's destiny all sources agree. However man may have come into being, he was meant to toil in order to provide food, clothing, housing, and service to the gods, so that they, relieved of all manual labor, could live the life of a governing upper class, a landed nobility. In the scheme of existence man was thus never an end (a goal), always just a means. (Thorkild Jacobsen)

b. Food, God's Gift to Humanity

- God gave/serves food to humanity as a means of life therefore humanity is dependent upon food in order to live

Having created the world, God gives it as food for man, and this means first of all that man's life depends on food, that is, on the world. Man lives by food, transforms food into his own life. This dependency of man on the external, on matter, on the world is so self-evident, that Feuerbach, one of the founders of materialist philosophy, consigned man into the famous formula: "man is what he eats." (Alexander Schmemmann, *Our Father*, p. 57)

- However, humanity was never to depend solely on food for life, but upon him who gives the food, and who is himself life

But the teaching and revelation of the Bible does not rest on this dependency. Man receives food, that is, life itself, from God. It is God's gift to man and he lives not in order to eat and thereby maintain his physiological survival, but in order to develop in himself the image and likeness of God (Ibid., p. 57)

- Humanity was created to find their life in God, in God who communicated his life, goodness, and generosity in and through the creation he made, i.e. in the Garden there was no secular/sacred dichotomy; all was from God, for God, and communicated God

2. Food and the Fall

a. Seeking Life Solely From Food, i.e. Creation, Equals Slavery and Death

- The rebellion of humanity consisted in their looking to food (as a symbol of all creation) to provide them with the life only God could give (see Rom. 1.18-25)

This is the famous story of the forbidden fruit, which man ate secretly apart from God, in order to become like God. The meaning of this account is simple: man believed that from food alone, that by pure reliance on its consumption, he could receive that which is actually possible to receive only

from God. By way of food he sought liberation from God, which only lead him to slavery and dependence on food; man became a slave of the world. But this also means a slave of death, for this food which gives him his physical life cannot give him that freedom from the world and death, which can only come from God (Ibid., pp. 58-59)

b. Living By Bread Alone Principle, a Communion With Death

3. Food and the Gospel

a. Israel, the People Called to Live on Every Word that Proceeds Out of the Mouth of God (Deut. 8.3)

b. Jesus' Temptation (Matt. 4.2-4)

- What Jesus is saying (doing) in resisting the Devil's temptation is that food isn't an end in itself, but a gift from the Father to be received gratefully as a gift of divine love
- In 'passing the test,' Jesus was undoing humanity's slavery to a 'false dependence on the world,' and to the death that results from it

c. Jesus, Table Fellowship and the Coming of the Kingdom

- Jesus' eating (partying) habits were a deliberate sign of the Kingdom, a Kingdom centered on eating and feasting (Is. 25.6-8)
- In these meals Jesus saying, dramatically, that the Kingdom has come in and through him
- No where is this more clearly seen than in the Lord's Supper, that meal that communicates God's life, goodness and generosity in Christ (see also Jn. 6.26-29;31-35)

d. Our Relationship to Bread (1 Tim. 4.8)

- Not to be hoarded selfishly
- Not to be consumed mindlessly
- Not to be rejected pointlessly
- Rather, to be received gratefully and shared faithfully

4. Praying 'Give Us This Day Our Daily Bread'

a. Praying for God to give us the food that is essential (substantive) for us; we are praying for that which we truly need to live and serve; 'Give us each day our daily bread, Lk. 11.3)

b. Praying that we would know and love God and his gift of Jesus as our ultimate source of life, as the absolute essential (Ps. 73.25)

c. Praying that the party of the Kingdom would continue, that we would be given and share tomorrow's bread today (Matt. 6.11)

d. Praying that by God's grace we would be grateful to God for all that he gives for our life and enjoyment (This way of life begins at the Eucharist)

e. Praying for forgiveness for all the ways we've misused food, i.e. God's world (Rom. 1.25)

f. Praying for contentment with that which God has given (Phil. 4.11-13)

g. Praying to be generous with that which God has given (1 Tim. 6.17-19)

