Today, we continue in our series of sermons on the Lord’s Prayer. When I was a kid, my grandmother taught me the Lord’s Prayer before our family was actively involved in church. She wanted to make sure I knew how to pray. She was a strong Christian. But, when I learned that prayer, I have to admit that I was more concerned about memorizing it than understanding it. So, I wonder if that’s what Jesus had in mind when he taught us this prayer or was there something else? If we really take the time to ponder the words that Jesus taught His disciples when they said: Lord, teach us how to pray.

You find that Jesus gave us a prayer that was meant to last us a lifetime and to guide our spirituality and our journey with God. There’s so much depth and profound substance to this prayer. Two Sundays ago we looked at the opening line of the prayer: Our Father who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name. We learned that Jesus wants us to feel so close and to have such intimacy with God that we feel comfortable calling God – Daddy. We learned that God in heaven is as close to us as the air we breathe and we are to respect God’s name and humble ourselves before God. And last week we talked about: Thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. We learned that before we pray for anything for ourselves, we are to yield our will to God’s will for our lives as Jesus did in the Garden of Gethsemane. Only after we have begun our prayers in this way are we prepared and ready to begin to ask for God to address our needs.

And now Jesus takes us to that place where we start to do that. It happens when we move from thy to us. As we do that, the first thing He invites us to pray is: Give us this day our daily bread. Bread – what is it exactly that Jesus is asking us to pray about and why is it so important to pray for bread first? There’s an old saying that says that: Bread is the staff of life. Maybe you have heard that before. It’s actually found in the Bible in 5 different occasions. And the Hebrew word for staff is…staff!

It’s a walking stick.
It’s something that when you can’t walk on your own, you lean upon it and without it, you can’t move forward.  
In essence, “bread as the staff of life” means:

Without this you can’t move forward.  
It’s what you absolutely have to have in order to survive, in order to be productive and move forward in life.  
Bread is important.  
It’s so important that there’re 300 references to it in the Bible.  
When you read those references, you find that the entire Biblical narrative unfolds before you, like for instance:

When Adam and Eve are being expelled from the Garden of Eden for having disobeyed God,  
God tells them that by the sweat of their brow from this point forward, they will eat …bread.  
So, bread is even part of that first story of what went wrong with humankind;  
Maybe you remember the story of Esau who sold his birthright to Jacob for a bowl of porridge and a loaf of …bread.  
Then we find that the Israelites, the sons of Jacob are in the land of Canaan and there’s a famine that comes to the land, so they go to Egypt in search of …bread.  
And they end up becoming slaves in Egypt for 400 years.  
When that 400 years are up God uses Moses to deliver the people from slavery and on the night when they are finally going to leave Egypt, Moses says:  
Hurry up, let’s go, we got to get out of here, and there wasn’t time for the yeast to work on their …bread,  
So they had to eat unleavened …bread.  
Then they were out in the wilderness for 40 years and they were hungry and they began to cry out to God and God sent them manna from heaven which they would make …bread.  

Now, let’s fast-forward to the time of Jesus.  
He’s just been baptized and He goes out into the wilderness to be tested and tempted for 40 days and 40 nights during which time He fasts and the Devil comes to Him and brings to Him a stone and says:  
Jesus, if you really are the Son of God, you can turn this stone into a piece of …bread.  
Then after that Jesus begins His public ministry and the Sadducees and the Pharisees are really upset with Him because He continually spends time with sinners, tax collectors and prostitutes and what does He do with them…He breaks …bread with them.  
Then there are the multitudes that come to hear Him preach, there’s 5,000, 7,000 people gathered around Him and He realizes that they are hungry so He turns to His disciples and says:  
What did we bring for lunch…Bread?  
So, he takes the bread and fish and He multiples it and feeds the 1,000’s.  

Then, there’s the last night of His life.
He sits down at the table with His disciples and He takes …bread.
And He gives thanks, he breaks it and He says, take and eat, this is my Body given for
you.
As often as you eat …bread, remember me.
Many scholars think that Jesus wasn’t just referring to one special meal that we partake
of on the first Sunday of the each month,
But that every time we break bread,
Every time we eat a meal, we are to pause and remember that Jesus is the Bread of Life.
The whole Biblical narrative can be told through the lens of bread.

We have this scripture text before us today where Jesus tells us to pray.
And when we pray, we’re to pray for ourselves and this prayer is meant to encompass a
whole lot of things.
So, I want to ask 3 questions of this passage of scripture.
The first one is this:
What did Jesus have in mind when he said:
Give us…?
I mean, how does God give us anything?
What are we asking God to do when we say:
Give us this day our daily bread?
Let’s begin pondering this together.
Then, Jesus says:
Give us “this day” our daily bread.
So, He’s setting the parameters between morning and night, just one day.
Secondly, why does Jesus tell us to pray:
Give us only this day.
And finally, we’re going to ask the question:
What did Jesus mean by “our daily bread”?

So, when we pray:
Give us this day our daily bread;
We’re trusting God to meet all of our needs;
Not just for food, but for everything.
Bread in the Bible represents more than just the stuff we eat.
It signifies all the needs that you have.
Scripture says that: My God shall supply all of your needs according to His riches and
glory. (Ephesians 3.16)
So, this is an invitation for us to trust God for everything that we need in lives.
We’re not to worry or be afraid, but simply to trust.
We’re to ask and we shall receive somehow, someway that we may not understand.
But, it’s hard to remember that, when we go through times of uncertainty or difficulty to
trust in God because most of us are really good at worrying.
That’s why Jesus tells us to pray:
Give us this day our daily bread.

God, I trust you to meet my needs.
I don’t know how you’re going to do that, but I’m gonna trust you.
And we find that Jesus offers us a few words of interpretation of this idea of trusting God.

In Matthew’s Gospel, just after Jesus teaches us about the Lord’s Prayer, He goes on to unpack this a little bit for us.
He says:
Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life,
What you will eat or what you will drink,
Or about your body, what you will wear.
Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothing?
Look at the birds of the air;
They neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns,
And yet your heavenly Father feeds them.
Are you not of more value than they?
And can any of you by worrying add a single hour to your span of life? (Matthew 6.25-27)
Therefore do not worry, saying,
‘What will we eat?’ or ‘What will we drink?’ or
‘What will we wear?’
For it is the Gentiles who strive for all these things;
And indeed your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things.
But strive first for the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well. (Matthew 6.31-33)

You notice that just before we ask:
Give us this day our daily bread, we ask…Thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.
Many of us are expert worriers.
And Jesus is saying: Just trust!
Somehow, someway, everyday give us this day our daily bread.
So, how does God gives us our daily bread?
What are we expecting when we ask God to do anything in our lives?
My experience is that with many things in life, we pray, and then we’re disappointed with God, because what we are expecting is instantaneous results and we’re expecting God to do something supernatural and miraculous.
But, is that really how God works?
Do we sit down at the dinner table and pray:
Give us this day our daily bread and…poof…the dinner magically appears??
Is that how it works?
Of course it doesn’t work that way, and you know that, so why do we expect it to work that way in any other area of our lives.
How does God gives us our daily bread?
There were 3 reasons why you were created according to scripture:
You were created to be recipients of God’s love because God loves to give love away.

Secondly, you were created to reciprocate God’s love.
That is to offer praise and thanksgiving.
And to be in relationship and fellowship with God.
And finally, you were created to do the will of God.
You were created to be God’s hands and voice on this planet and to do the things that God asks.
Which is what you prayed:
Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.
Now, give us this day our daily bread.
So, how does God give us our daily bread?
But, through the hands of people!
Have you ever stop to think about where our food comes from?
How does God gives us our daily bread?
There are farmers and ranchers who toiled for months in the soil and taking care of their animals in order to provide us with our daily bread and they pray for rain.
And after the grain is harvested, there are truckers who pick it up and truck it to the mills.
And there are Millers who mill it into flour.
And there are truckers once again or train operators who take it to the bakery’s.
And there are bakers who baked it and then there are truckers or trains that take it to the market-place or to distributors like Gordon Foods who take it to the grocery stores or restaurants.
And then in stores and restaurants there are people like chefs, and cooks, and butchers in the kitchens or freezer sections who are preparing the food.
And finally, there are wait staffs that bring the bread to your table.
Do you realize how many hands touched this bread in order to give us our daily bread?
And all of them, God used in order to answer our prayer:
Give us this day our daily bread!
This is how God works in our lives.
It’s not only that someone else is giving us our daily bread.
But, you are called to give other people their daily bread.

This prayer is an invitation for God to use us to meet the needs of other people.
This week I was thinking about the fact that most of us have food in the pantry to last a week or two if we had too.
So, to pray to the Lord:
Give us this day our daily bread doesn’t carry the urgency or mean much to us.
Because if we run out, we know where we can go to get more food.
But, there are people who don’t know where their next meal is coming from.
So, I wondered, what does this prayer mean to those folks?
And, how does God answer that prayer for people like that?
I am convinced that God answers the prayer through people like you who give your money to support the mission and outreach ministry of our church here locally and all around the world.
And the prayer is answered through many of you who roll up your sleeves and serve the Tuesday Community meal right here in our town.

You become the answer to someone else’s prayer!
This is how it works in the world.
God prompts our hearts and God uses us to answer other people’s prayers.
And the people you work with in the office or stand alongside of at the soccer game or
someone you see stranded alongside the road and they have been praying:
God, I feel hopeless, I don’t know what to do next,
Or I don’t even know how to change a tire;
And you sit down with them and say, I noticed that you look discouraged and I care about
you,
Or you pull over to help;
Guess what?
You become God’s instrument in answering someone else’s prayer.
When Jesus says: Give us this day our daily bread –
Why do you think He says “us”?

Yes, but you say, preacher, you say you believe in a God who is good and loving, how
can you believe that and rectify the fact that there’s 25,000 to 30,000 people a day who
die from starvation and malnutrition diseases around the world?
I always answer that question with a question:
Is there enough food on this planet to feed them all?
If there is, then where does the problem lie?
God is responsible for production.
We are responsible for distribution.
When we think of those people who are hungry, think about the fact that in our own
country, two thirds of us including myself according to my doctor, struggle with being
overweight and struggle with obesity while other people don’t have enough to eat.
Give us this day our daily bread is both a trust in God for what we need and not to worry;
And at the same time to recognize that God answers prayers through people and we are
called to be instruments by which God answers those prayers.
This leads us to the next phrase in this prayer where Jesus says:
Give us “this” day.

The words “this day” in the Greek indicate the time frame from morning until dusk.
God, give me just enough for today.
The challenge for us is that we don’t want just enough for today, we want more.
We want plenty!
We want enough for tomorrow and the next day and we don’t want to worry about where
our next meal is coming from.
Yet, God says, it’s not always helpful for you to have more than you need.
Sometimes when you have more than you need, you don’t think you need me anymore!
You know that’s true in a community of relative affluence.
We have the tendency to think –
I have a good job, I have a wonderful spouse, I have great kids, I have a house and a car
that runs, and I have a retirement fund, so I don’t need God.
Now, we don’t say that, but that’s have we end up living our lives.
We say it through our actions.
You may remember earlier that I mentioned that, God provided the Israelites with manna from heaven.

The substance they’d use to turn into bread.

And God gave them this instruction:
I only want you to pick up enough manna to last you for your bread needs for the day.

Don’t pick up enough for tomorrow, just enough for today.

But, the Israelites couldn’t do that.

They wanted to gather more and more.

Because they were afraid that God wouldn’t meet their needs the next day.

So, when they opened their jars of all the extra manna the next day, what happened?

It had spoiled and was full of worms.

And God says: Don’t cha get it?

I’m counting on the fact that you’ll trust me each day and let me supply your needs each day.

So, the words of proverbs are helpful reminders to us:

Give me neither poverty nor riches;

Feed me with food that I need,

Or I shall be full, and deny you,

And say, “Who is the Lord?”

Or I shall be poor, and steal,

And profane the name of my God. (Proverbs 30.8b-9)

This part of the Lord’s Prayer:

Give us this day our daily bread is a prayer for contentment.

Lord, help me be content with what I have.

Help me think that “just enough” is just enough and not to need more.

And finally, Jesus tells us to pray:

Give us this day our daily bread.

The Greek word for bread is: arton which means bread.

But, the Greek word for daily which is: epi – ousion is very interesting.

And the only time it only appears in the entire Bible is in the Lord’s Prayer. It doesn’t even appear anywhere in all of Greek literature.

Scholars think that the Disciples may have made up the word to try and describe what Jesus was saying in Aramaic.

The word epi – ousion is often translated as daily, but that meaning doesn’t completely capture what it means.

Epi is a modifier and means:

Around or on top of or upon.

And Ousion is important because by itself, it was a word that was used by the early church to describe how God and Jesus are of one essence or of the same substance.

So, epi – ousion in essence means:

That which sustains your very substance, your very nature, or your very existence.

Your daily bread, your staff of life, that which sustains you!
When we talk about our need for daily bread, I think we have two levels of needs. One is our basic needs which would include food, water, and shelter. The next level of needs would be things like our need for grace, unconditional love, and a connection with someone bigger than ourselves that gives our lives purpose. We all have this kind of hunger within us.
And how is this hunger satisfied?
We satisfy it with a different kind of bread.

You will recall that Jesus was tempted by the Devil in the wilderness. The Devil said to Jesus:
Come on, Jesus, you’re hungry and you’re the Son of God so take this stone and turn it into bread.
And what did Jesus say to the Devil?
He quoted Moses and He said:
One does not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God.
At one point the Disciples come to Jesus and say:
Jesus, you must be hungry, let us fix you a meal.
And Jesus says:
I have food that you do not know about.
What’s Jesus talking about?
He’s talking about His relationship with God.
He’s talking about the way He spent time in prayer that sustained Him and gave Him strength and gave Him a since of call from God to do the things that he did.
That time in prayer gave Him a mission and direction in His life.

In John 6, after Jesus has feed the multitudes and when he is done with that He says this was a sign.
Do you get it?
Do you understand why I fed thousands of people with just a few loaves of bread and there was plenty left over?
And just to make it even more clear, He says:
I am the Bread of Life!
Whoever comes to me will never be hungry;
And whoever believes in me will never be thirsty. (John6.35)
Jesus is our bread of life that satisfies the deep yearning in our hearts.
Do you remember what town Jesus was born in?
Bethlehem.
Do you recall what the word Bethlehem means?
Bet in Hebrew means house.
Lehem in Hebrew means bread.
God made sure that Jesus who is the Bread of Life was born in a town called the House of bread.
For Jesus would become our daily bread.
The Bread of Life!
In Isaiah 55.2, the prophet says:
Why would you spend your money for that which is not bread, and your labor for that which does not satisfy?
As I look around at you as a congregation, most of you know that you need something more than just what you see, feel and touch.
You know that there are higher level needs beyond your basic needs.
And that Jesus is the Bread of Life.
But, here’s the problem that I see:
We seem to be malnourished sometimes.
You plan on having one meal a week and you think that’s going to be enough to feed you.
You come for a feast on Sundays and we sing and pray and you walk out and feel confident in your faith again.
And then you go about your week and you don’t eat for 6 solid days.
If I didn’t eat anything physically for 6 days I’d be exhausted, lethargic and apathetic.
But, that’s what we do.
We go 6 days and don’t do anything to feed our souls,
Then we wonder why our faith has no power.
And we struggle week to week just to get by.
So how do you eat the Bread of Life?
We eat the Bread of Life in part by getting up in the morning and saying:

God, walk with me today.
Help me live for you and honor you today in everything I say and do.
Be my companion as I go about my day.
And it happens when you see someone at work and you stop because Christ is Lord in your life.
You stop in His name to love that person, to care for them and encourage them and you feel the Spirit well up inside of you.
And it happens when you open up your Bible.
And if you don’t have a Bible, we have free new Testaments down at the Welcome Center.
Stop there on your way out this morning and pick one up.
Carry your Bible wherever you go so that whenever you have a few free moments, pull it out and read a chapter.
Say to God, just teach me one thing from this chapter.
Help me to hear just one thing that will help guide me through my day.
And you listen and you receive spiritual sustenance.
Or it happens when you subscribe to a spiritual devotional guide or you purchase a daily devotional guide book at a Christian bookstore.
And that becomes a meal for you and you find that it nourishes your soul.
Then, you go home at night and before you go to bed you pause and say:
God, I’m sorry for the ways I blew it today.
But, I need you and I thank you for your love.
Help me as I sleep to nourish my soul.
It’s important to eat daily, your daily bread, your communion with God.
Let me close with this:
Maundy Thursday Story of Val Degroeff – the Bread Lady…..

It’s a symbol, a sign of God’s goodness and God’s promise to provide for us,
It’s a sign that we can trust God no matter what’s happening in our lives and God will supply all of our needs.
This bread is a reminder that God will take care of us daily.
We just have to trust him.
It’s a reminder that we’re to be bread for others.
This bread is a physical reminder of the One who sustains us.
Who broke bread and said to us:
This is my Body broken and given for you.
Do this and remember me.
Give us this day our daily bread!

Let’s pray:
Would you place your hands on your lap like you were about to receive a loaf of bread…

O God, we trust you with our lives, to supply our needs according to your riches and glory. Help us not to be afraid and not worry, but simply to trust, to look for your hand at work in other people who come our way that you have sent, use these our hands to supply the daily bread for someone else. Help us to be looking for ways that we can be your instruments for someone else and to be their answer to their prayers. Teach us to long for just enough, to be content and satisfied with what we have. And forgive us for the garbage we often eat or the times we go without eating and instead help us to have a hunger for your Word, a deep desire to feast at your table, and to walk in fellowship with you. Feed our hungry souls O God. Give us this day our daily bread.

And once again as we pray as Jesus taught us, let us pray with feeling when we say:

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name.
Thy Kingdom come, thy will be done; on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread.
And forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us.
And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.
For thine is the Kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever. Amen.