

THE LORD PRAYER
"Bread, Day by Day"

(On January 17, 1965, Dr. Terpstra began a series of messages on the Lord's Prays. The following sermon is the fifth in this series).

A man who spent five years in a German concentration camp remembers how the eight men in his cell block divided their portion of dark bread each morning. They had a piece of string as long as the loaf and in the string there were 8 notches. They took turns cutting the loaf, guided by the notches, and it was the privilege of the man who cut the loaf to have his first choice of the pieces on that day

This young man while in Seminary had been taught that when the Lord's Prayer speaks of bread: "give us this day our daily bread," that it is a spiritual bread, a manna from heaven, a food for the soul. As a result of his years in prison he became convinced that the bread was plain, ordinary bread.

We must not think that it is too condescending for God to hear our prayer for just plain bread. God does not despise the material, the physical. Jesus the Son of God was the incarnate Son of God, he took upon himself flesh and blood. He came "eating and drinking". He was not at all like the "spiritual men" of his day who fasted and kept aloof from society. God not only is the Creator of our spirit, but also of our body. There is no division of body and spirit, secular and holy, with God.

Some find this concept hard to accept. They want to divide this Lord's Prayer into two parts: that dealing with God,- the hallowed name, the coming kingdom, his will on earth as in **heaven** and that dealing with men, - bread, forgiveness of sins, and deliverance from temptation. Life created by God cannot be so neatly theorized. Flesh and spirit are closely interwoven. Man needs bread, plain ordinary bread, and plain ordinary bread, to be a spiritual man.

Jesus came from a poor home. It seems likely that Joseph died early in Jesus' life and Mary was left a widow with 7 children. Note the things Jesus speaks of in his teaching: the widow and her entire wealth of 2 pennies, the lost coin, the patched garment, the shopping for sparrows and the extra one tossed in when you bought five. It was this same Jesus from the large family of peasants in the poor section of Israel who taught us to pray, "Our Father who art in heaven give us this day our daily bread. Note that this is a prayer for bread, not cake; for the necessities of life, not for luxuries. It is a prayer which includes all of the needs and wants of the body. It is a prayer for food and clothing, for home and property, or work and income, for medical and mental care. "Our Father, give us bread" and then there follows a prayer for forgiveness, "forgive us our sins" and for guidance "Lead us not into temptation." Jesus taught us to pray first for the body, then for the mental and spiritual needs. Jesus is interested in your social and physical environment; he is interested in your economy!

Have we really ever thought that the meaning of this petition, "Father... give... us... bread?" Can it not be reworded, "Father, may we live simply in order that others may have the necessities of Life?" One is told to enter his closet and to close the door, and to pray privately ... but I can't just for myself!!! Jesus did not teach us to pray, "My Father, give me this day my daily bread," but "Our Father, give us this day our daily bread."

Oh, there is dynamite in the Word of God! Do we really dare to pray is prayer? Are we to the place where we are willing to think about our unfortunate neighbor, the needy people of the world? Do you recall the story in the New Testament of the rich man Dives, and the poor man, Lazarus? What is the moral of the story? Why do we think Dives to be a sinner? Why did he end up in the place of torment? Was it because he was rich? No, not at all! It was because of neglect!!! He had plenty, the best of food, more than he needed, and he overlooked the needs of a poor man, Lazarus, when it was within his power to help him. Dives had the best of medical care, but all Lazarus had were dogs to lick his sores. Here again was lack of compassion, of mercy for a fellow man, a neighbor. Complacency and contentment in the midst of a world of needy people sent Dives to Hell!!! This petition for God to "give us this day our daily bread" is a prayer for brotherhood. It calls for compassion, love, sharing, equality. MY friends, it often makes me shudder when I think of America: its deepfreezes, its rich foods, its overweight problem, its super abundance. And then I remember the little children I have seen in India, China, with their pot bellies as a result of malnutrition. Are we Americans going to be condemned to hell because of our complacency and contentment in the midst of a world of need? Are we only concerned about my bread, and not the bread of other men and women?

Fellow members of Makiki, I believe that the way to our fellow men is through God I believe the first commandment to be "Love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, soul and mind" and the second to be, "Love thy neighbor as thyself." But Jesus constantly taught that the real test of our love for God whom we have not seen is our concern for the men and women, boys and girls right around us.

Jesus said when you pray you say, "Our Father who art in heaven, •• give us this day our daily **bread**;" "Give"- this request shows our dependence upon God. This prayer does not teach laziness. The same Bible says, the man that will not work let him not eat. This prayer is a consciousness that we need God's gifts of time, health, brain, muscle, sun, rain and opportunity for work in order to have a harvest. Bread is a gift of God. The first 3 petitions of the Lord's Prayer center the Giver, now we are speaking about the gift: "give us this day our daily bread." This gift is to be received, not worshiped. Jesus did not despise the material, the physical, but he did keep it in its place. Man does not live by bread alone. To let the material get out-of-bounds is to begin to build bigger barns, and to begin to say to one's soul, "eat, drink and be merry." After all it was the material, - 30 pieces of silver that led Judas astray; a bowl of lentils was Jacob's do all; 5 yoke of oxen kept another from following Christ. Keep your eyes and heart upon the Father, the Giver, and don't become enamored with the bread, the gift.

"Give us this day our daily bread. "This day"- this petition teaches trustfulness. For a long time we did not know too much about the word translated "Daily." It is found nowhere else in the New Testament and not at all in Koine Greek. Then some manuscripts were dug up which proved to be ancient housekeeping books. Here the word was used. It was concern "for the coming day." We earn wages today for tomorrow's needs. We are to pray for needs of the day, one day at a time. The prayer is not for next week" or the distant future, It is not a modern day prayer for security for the rest of our days. "Bread" does not keep. It cannot be stored up. We are to walk by faith, -- With trust in God. We would rather not have it this way. We would rather not trust God for our needs. We would rather have an "air-tight!! - case in regard to the whole future.

"Father, give us this day our daily bread. "Give" ... our dependence u: on God; "bread" - simplicity of life; "this day"- living by faith in God: "us, our" compassion for our fellow man, brotherhood.

Yet" I am sure we have all come to the table where bread, the meal, is set before us, but we couldn't eat. Our heart was broken, our spirit was crushed we felt hollow and empty inwardly. Indeed, "man does not live by bread alone." Bread by itself is not enough. We must come to the place where we can look up and say, "Our Father who art in heaven." We need the Giver as well as the gift.. We need God as Father, as Lord, as Savior, as well as bread for the table. Do you know the Father this morning? The Father sent the Son in order that we might know Him. Do you know Jesus Christ, the Son, as Savior Has He ever forgiven your trespasses, taken away your sins?

You who are Christians have you like me often prayed this petition of he Lord's Prayer as a hypocrite? Have you been complacent in a world filled with needy people? Has your vocabulary become "I, me, my, mine" Have you become conformed to this world's quest for security, for the future, and would rather not .walk by faith, day by day? May God drive the meaning of this prayer home to the hearts of each of us this morning!!!

Is there one this morning here who is pressed in the ordinary things f life? There are needs for food, for clothing, for shelter, for doctor bills. Jes s taught us to pray about the holiness of God's name, about God's kingdom, about Go's will, about all of these high and lofty concerns. But He did not stop there. He observed the needs of peoples' bodies; He saw that the crowd had not eaten all day; e saw that the disciples were tired; He saw the man who could not walk. It is this same Jesus who says to you this morning" "man, woman, •• ask God for bread.^{1f} Come to Him about these ordinary things that concern you. Right now He is looking upon you with His Fatherly concern.

"He who did not spare His Son how shall He not with Him freely give us all things."