

In the Lord’s Prayer, Jesus taught us to pray,
“Give us this day our daily bread.”

As our catechism puts it:

Q. 104. *What do we pray for in the fourth petition?*

A. In the fourth petition, which is, “Give us this day our daily bread,” we pray that of God's free gift we may receive a competent portion of the good things of this life, and enjoy his blessing with them.

So how does this work?

Isaiah says,

“Come, everyone who thirsts, come to the waters;
and he who has no money, come, buy and eat!
Come, buy wine and milk without money and without price.
Why do you spend your money for that which is not bread,
and your labor for what does not satisfy?
Listen diligently to me, and eat what is good,
and delight yourselves in rich food.” (Isaiah 55:1-2)

Our problem – like Israel of old –

is that we do not delight ourselves in the rich bounty that God has given us.
Instead, we are always grasping after the things that God has given others.

We are covetous – we not merely discontent, we are *malcontents*.

Discontent means “lack of contentment – dissatisfaction with your circumstances”

But a malcontent is one who is dissatisfied *and rebellious*.

We grumble against God because we do not believe what he has promised.

But God says later in Isaiah 55,

“For as the rain and snow come down from heaven
and do not return there but water the earth,
making it bring forth and sprout,
giving seed to the sower and bread to the eater,
so shall my word be that goes out from my mouth;
it shall not return to me empty,
but it shall accomplish that which I purpose,
and shall succeed in the thing for which I sent it.” (55:10-11)

God’s word will accomplish his purposes.

And so therefore we pray,
as the Heidelberg Catechism puts it:

125. Q. What is the fourth petition?

A. Give us this day our daily bread. That is: Provide us with all our bodily needs so that we may acknowledge that you are the only fountain of all good, and that our care and labor, and also your gifts, cannot do us any good without your blessing. Grant, therefore, that we may withdraw our trust from all creatures and place it only in you.

Our Psalm of response, Psalm 34,
says the same thing.

I will bless the LORD at all times,
because the LORD has answered me and delivered me from all my fears.

Psalm 34 also weaves together the language of eating and blessing:

“Oh, taste and see that the LORD is good!

Blessed is the man who takes refuge in him.

Oh, fear the LORD, you his saints, for those who fear him have no lack!

The young lions suffer want and hunger;

but those who seek the LORD lack no good thing.” (v8-10)

Sing Psalm 34

Read Luke 1:39-56

Q. 104. *What do we pray for in the fourth petition?*

A. In the fourth petition, which is, “Give us this day our daily bread,” we pray that of God's free gift we may receive a competent portion of the good things of this life, and enjoy his blessing with them.

Introduction: “Blessed Are You among Women”: Mary and Elizabeth (v39-45)

Last time we heard Gabriel’s announcement to Mary that Mary would bear the Son of God.

And at the end of Gabriel’s announcement, he tells her that her relative, Elizabeth,
was in her sixth month of pregnancy.

And so Mary then arose *and went with haste into the hill country, to a town in Judah,
and she entered the house of Zechariah and greeted Elizabeth.*

And when Elizabeth heard the greeting of Mary, the baby leaped in her womb.

God had promised that John would be filled with the Holy Spirit from his mother’s womb (1:15).

John now demonstrates the presence of the Holy Spirit by leaping in his mother’s womb!

Notice that it was the voice of *Mary* that caused John to leap in the womb.

It does not say that the proximity of Jesus made John leap in the womb,
but the voice of *Mary*.

Certainly it was *because* Mary was bearing Jesus in her womb

that John leaped in Elizabeth’s womb,

but it was *Mary’s* voice that triggered the response.

When he heard the voice of the blessed virgin—

the one who was “greatly favored by God”--
the mother of our Lord--
he rejoiced.

We should not shrink from this conclusion!

It does not mean that Mary “speaks today” in some mystical way.

We hear Mary’s voice in the same way that we hear Elijah’s voice,
Samuel’s voice, or any of the prophets.

We hear it in the pages of Scripture.

But when John heard Mary’s voice, he leaped in his mother’s womb,
and when Elizabeth heard Mary’s voice,
her response was the same:

*She was filled with the Holy Spirit, and she exclaimed with a loud cry,
‘Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb!
And why is this granted to me that the mother of my Lord should come to me?’
For behold, when the sound of your greeting came to my ears,
the baby in my womb leaped for joy.
And blessed is she who believed that there would be a fulfillment
of what was spoken to her from the Lord.*

Three times Elizabeth declares Mary blessed.

She is blessed among women.

She is blessed because the fruit of her womb—our Lord Jesus Christ—is blessed.

And she is blessed because she believed the Word of the Lord.

In the same way, we bless Mary because she was the *Theotokos*—the God-bearer.

She bore in her womb the eternal Son of God as he became flesh and dwelt among us.

She is the only woman in human history who had one of the Trinity in her womb.

As the old hymn put it: “to show God’s love aright, she bore the world a savior”

Mary had a unique privilege:

she was the one woman who gave birth to the Seed of the Woman
that would crush the head of the serpent.

Even as the curse came upon the human race through the failure of a woman,
so also redemption comes to the human race through the faith of a woman.

And so we also bless Mary because she believed that there would be a fulfillment
of what was spoken to her from the Lord.

We bless her because of her uniqueness in salvation history (bearing the Son of God),
but we also bless her because she is an example of faith.

While she is unique, she is also one of us.

She was one who believed God’s promises and faithfully walked before God.

In practice, we bless Mary when we recite the creed each week
as we confess that Jesus was “born of the virgin.”

We remember Mary every week!

And there are dozens of songs (especially Christmas related ones)

that speak of Mary as the blessed virgin.
The apostles do not call us to worship Mary or pray to her.
But they do say that we should call Mary “blessed.”

We should give thanks to God for the blessed virgin who believed the promises of God,
and by the grace of the Almighty bore the Son of God!

Today we are looking particularly at how Mary’s song in verses 46-55
expresses the main themes of the Lord’s Prayer.

1. Of God’s Free Gift: God’s Holy Name and the Coming of His Kingdom (v46-49)

*My soul magnifies the Lord, and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior,
for he has looked on the humble estate of his servant.
For behold, from now on all generations will call me blessed;
for he who is mighty has done great things for me,
and holy is his name.*

You can see the same basic pattern in her song
that you find in the Lord’s Prayer:

1. Hallowed be thy name
(Read 1:46-49)
2. Thy Kingdom Come, thy will be done
(Read 1:50-52)
3. Give us this day our daily bread
(Read 1:53)
4. Forgive us our debts/deliver us from evil
(Read 1:54-55)

As Mary rejoices in the coming of God’s kingdom (v51-52),
she sees that the coming of the kingdom includes both
the humiliation of the mighty and the exaltation of the humble.
Those who exalt themselves will be humbled.
Those who humble themselves will be exalted.

Mary’s song is rooted in numerous Old Testament prayers.

Most notable, perhaps, is Hannah’s song from 1 Samuel 2.

Hannah’s response to the birth of Samuel forms the pattern for Mary.

Mary likewise rejoices in the salvation of her God.

Both speak of the holy name of the LORD.

Both speak of the LORD exalting the poor and humbling the mighty.

Hannah and Mary both look to God’s faithfulness to the poor as signs of redemption:

Hannah says “He raises up the poor from the dust; he lifts the needy from the ash heap
to make them sit with princes and inherit a seat of honor.” (1 Sam 2:8)

Hannah’s song looks forward:

“He will guard the feet of his faithful ones...
The LORD will judge the ends of the earth; he will give strength to his king...”
But Mary puts her song in the past tense:
“He has shown strength...
He has scattered...
He has brought down...
He has exalted...
He has filled...
He has helped...”

Hannah’s song looks forward at the dawn of the kingdom.
Mary’s song looks backward at the fulfillment of the kingdom.
Because Mary’s song sees with the eyes of faith that this child in her womb
is the one who will bring all things to their fulfillment.

And she declares that as the kingdom comes,
the hungry will be filled with good things.

“Give us this day our daily bread.”

The first three petitions of the Lord’s Prayer have focused on God:
“Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name,
your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven.”
Even so, in our prayers, we must keep our focus on God.
We must remember that in all that we pray,
we are praying that God’s name would be sanctified;
we are praying that the Kingdom of God would come;
we are praying that God’s will would be done.

But now we are turning to ourselves.
How should we pray for ourselves?

In the second three petitions, we pray that God would provide all that we need.

What do you need?

There are three things that the Lord’s Prayer says we need:
Give us this day our daily bread
And forgive us our debts
And lead us not into temptation
daily bread
forgiveness of sins
and deliverance from temptation

This is what we need!

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Mary's song in Luke 1 helps us understand the role of "our daily bread" in the coming of the kingdom.

When we pray,
 "Give us this day our daily bread,"
 we are asking God to provide a competent portion of the good things of this life.

2. A Competent Portion of the Good Things of This Life (v50-53)

And so Mary sings

And his mercy is for those who fear him from generation to generation.

He has shown strength with his arm;

he has scattered the proud in the thoughts of their hearts;

he has brought down the mighty from their thrones and exalted those of humble estate;

he has filled the hungry with good things, and the rich he has sent away empty.

Here Mary draws on the language of many Psalms.

She would have heard the Psalms sung in the temple whenever she was in Jerusalem –
 and probably she would have grown up with them being sung in her home –
 devout Jews would often memorize as much scripture as they could.

And throughout the history of the church,
 the Psalms have been at the heart of Christian worship and piety.

I hope that singing the Psalms is having the same effect on you that it had on Mary.

When Elizabeth says to her:

 "Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb!"

 calling her "the mother of my Lord,"

 Mary's response is to break forth into song.

She understands what God has done,

 and as she reflects on the message of the angel,

 she understands that the kingdom of God is coming—through her child.

We sang earlier from Psalm 34:8-10

 "O taste and see that the LORD is good!

 Blessed is the man who takes refuge in him!

 Oh fear the LORD, you his saints, for those who fear him have no lack!

 The young lions suffer want and hunger;

 but those who seek the LORD lack no good thing."

But we could have sung Psalm 104:27-8

 "These all look to you, to give them their food in due season.

 When you give it to them, they gather it up;

when you open your hand, they are filled with good things.”
Or Psalm 145:15-16
“The eyes of all look to you, and you give them their food in due season.
You open your hand; you satisfy the desire of every living thing.”
Or Psalm 84:11
“For the LORD God is a sun and a shield; the LORD bestows favor and honor.
No good thing does he withhold from those who walk uprightly.”

God provides for all his creatures –
but especially for his children.

As Jesus says while teaching on the Lord’s Prayer:
“do not be anxious about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink,
nor about your body, what you will put on.
Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothing?...
Therefore, do not be anxious, saying,
‘What shall we eat?’ or ‘What shall we drink?’ or ‘What shall we wear?’
For the Gentiles seek after all these things,
and your heavenly Father knows that you need them all.
But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness,
and all these things will be added to you.” (Matt 6:25, 31-33)

The reason why we can pray for our daily bread with such confidence,
is because we are praying, “thy kingdom come; thy will be done...”

After all, when we pray, “give us this day our daily bread,”
we are not asking for “riches” –
this is not the “name it and claim it” approach!
Rather, we are asking for “a competent portion” of the good things of this life.

Proverbs 30 says this nicely:
“Two things I ask of you; deny them not to me before I die:
remove far from me falsehood and lying;
give me neither poverty nor riches;
feed me with the food that is needful for me,
lest I be full and deny you and say, “Who is the LORD?”
Or lest I be poor and steal and profane the name of my God.”

This is the other aspect of “Give us this day our daily bread.”
Not only is it, “give me enough for this day,”
but also, “do not give me too much for today.”

How much is too much?
You have “too much” when you think that you are self-sufficient,
and so you deny the Lord!

If we have enough to provide for our household,
then that is enough.

As you pray, “give us this day our daily bread,”
there should be a genuine sense of dependence upon God.
You should recognize that you need God’s provision.

Because in the end,
God’s provision of our daily bread points us as well to his provision
of our spiritual sustenance.
“Give us this day our daily bread” speaks first and foremost to our physical food,
but physical food itself points us to the one who is the living Bread
who came down from heaven.

Too often we do not pray “give us this day our daily bread” –
but rather, “give me what I crave.”

God may answer your prayer.
He may give you what you crave as a means of judging you for your cravings.
Because with all cravings – with all inordinate appetites –
you can stuff yourself with all that your heart desires,
and yet it will not satisfy.
Cravings, lusts, appetites are a vacuum that cannot be filled –
a black hole that consumes light and life and yet remains dark and lifeless.

Israel wanted meat – and so God sent them quail.
But as they ate the quail, God sent a plague – and thousands died.

Even so, God may give you what you crave.
So beware of trusting “providential” signs.

You need to learn to discipline your cravings.
What do you crave?
What good things (food, clothing, sex, friendship) –
what do you love too much?

You need to deal with those cravings.
The problem with these cravings is that you cannot eliminate them entirely,
because they are desires for *good* things that God has placed within us.

But you need to discipline yourself to trust God for these things,
and not to insist upon them.

So if you crave food – if you love and enjoy food for its own sake,

then you need to develop the discipline of fasting.
If you crave your daily bread,
then there may be no way for you to pray “Give us this day our daily bread”
until you abstain from your daily bread,
trusting God that *he* will provide.

If you crave sex and you are married,
then it can be awfully easy to say “hey, let’s do it whenever I want!”
But Paul even speaks about married couples abstaining (fasting from sex, you might say)
for a time in order to devote themselves to prayer.

Whose kingdom are you seeking?

These things don’t change over night.
It takes discipline.
It takes commitment.
It takes faith, hope and love –
trusting that God will do what he has promised.

And that’s why Mary concludes by reflecting on God’s blessing to Abraham:

3. And Enjoy His Blessing with Them (v54-55)

*He has helped his servant Israel, in remembrance of his mercy,
as he spoke to our fathers,
to Abraham and his offspring forever.*

When we pray, “give us this day our daily bread,”
we are entering into this glorious history of God’s promises to Abraham.

All of the history of God’s dealings with his people are coming together in Mary’s womb,
as the Word became flesh and dwelt among us.

And so we pray that we might receive a competent portion of the good things of this life,
and that we might enjoy his blessing with them.

Notice that *we* might receive and enjoy...
it's not primarily about “me.”

The Lord’s Prayer is not an individualistic prayer.
It’s not about me and what I want.
It’s about “us” coming before *our Father*
and praying that *we* might enjoy his blessing in our daily bread.

When Jesus fed the five thousand, it was not to “wow” people with his divine power.
It was to signal the coming of the kingdom.
He was fulfilling what his mother said:

“He has filled the hungry with good things.”
Jesus is the one who feeds the poor and hungry.
When the kingdom of God comes,
the people of God receive their daily bread.

This is why James speaks of “true religion” as consisting in caring for widows and orphans.
When the kingdom of God comes, the poor and needy find an advocate.
When we pray, “give *us* this day *our* daily bread,”
we pray not only for ourselves, but also for others.
Indeed, it is hypocritical to pray “give us this day our daily bread”
and then neglect the poor.
This is why we provide food and funds for the food bank.
It is why we look for ways to hire those who are unemployed and in need.

How can we feed the hungry –
and in so doing *demonstrate* the coming of the kingdom?

The Heidelberg Catechism summarizes this as well:

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Reception of Karen Chang (from Grace Reformed OPC in Walkerton)
Max & Alli Thelen (with Benaiah and David) (from Immanuel PCA, Norfolk, VA)
Jordan Dorney (from Bohemia OPC in Bohemia NY)

Transfer of Eli & Kathryn Plopper (to Evergreen PCA in Portland, OR)
Ryan & Liesel Davidson (to Westminster PCA in Lancaster, PA)
Jonathan & Leigh Tsipis (to Christ Church PCA in Arlington, VA)