

June 30, 2013

## The Fourth Petition

Give us today our daily bread.

What does this mean?

God surely gives daily bread without our asking, even to all the wicked, but we pray in this petition that he would lead us to realize this and to receive our daily bread with thanksgiving.

What, then, is meant by daily bread?

Daily bread includes everything that we need for our bodily welfare, such as food and drink, clothing and shoes, house and home, land and cattle, money and goods, a godly spouse, godly children, godly workers, godly and faithful leaders, good government, good weather, peace and order, health, a good name, good friends, faithful neighbors, and the like.

1. Compare the subject matter of the Fourth Petition with that of the other petitions. What is unique about this petition? What might this teach us about Christian prayer in general?
2. Martin Luther reminds us that daily bread includes everything that we need for our bodily welfare. According to the following passage, to whom does God give daily bread? What does this tell us about our God?

“The eyes of all look to you, and you give them their food at the proper time. You open your hand and satisfy the desires of every living thing” (Psalm 145:15,16).

3. What is the most common way through which God supplies daily bread? What are some other ways?
4. What is the connection between this petition and the Seventh Commandment?
5. God supplies our daily bread, even without our asking. Nonetheless, Jesus teaches us to ask for it? According to the following passages, why does Jesus teach us to do this?

“Every good and perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of the heavenly lights” (James 1:17).

“Give thanks to the LORD, for he is good; his love endures forever” (Psalm 118:1).

6. Jesus does not want us to concern ourselves with the needs of tomorrow, next week, or next year; he simply teaches us to ask that the needs of “today” be met. According to the following words from Jesus’ Sermon on the Mount, why does he teach us to ask for bread only for today?

“Do not worry, saying, ‘What shall we eat?’ or ‘What shall we drink?’ or ‘What shall we wear?’ For the pagans run after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them. But seek

first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well. Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own" (Matthew 6:31-34).

7. Evaluate the following statements:

Our affluence can make this prayer (that is, the Fourth Petition) nothing but a ritual.

Purchasing insurance can be a sin.

There is a relationship between worry on the one hand and the confusion over a necessity and a luxury on the other.

8. What assurance regarding daily bread do you receive from the following passage?

"He who did not spare his own Son, but gave him up for us all—how will he not also, along with him, graciously give us all things?" (Romans 8:32).

Luther said:

"We cannot give God anything; for everything is already His, and all we have comes from Him. We can only give Him praise, thanks, and honor." (Plass, Vol. 3, p. 1353.)

Closing Prayer

Gracious Lord, if not for you, we would have nothing. Supply our needs day by day out of your unseen treasury. Lead us to use what we have and what we are to your glory. We ask this in our Savior's name. Amen.

At home

- Memorize the Fourth Petition and its parts.
- Read Matthew 6:25-34.

See next page for answers:

(1) The Fourth Petition is the only one of the seven that focuses on earthly blessings. Christians should pray especially for spiritual blessings but also for physical needs.

(2) God is gracious and, as such, gives daily bread to all people, even to unbelievers.

(3) God most commonly supplies daily bread by giving people the ability to work so that they may purchase what they need. He also supplies daily bread through inheritance, gifts, finding, trading, or, at times, through miracles.

(4) In the Seventh Commandment, God protects our and our neighbor's possessions. He demands that we be good managers of the things he gives us, including our daily bread.

(5) Jesus teaches us to ask for daily bread so that we do not lose our dependence on God and so that we receive our daily bread with thanksgiving.

(6) Jesus wants us to trust that God will supply our needs for each day. He does not want us to worry about the future.

(7) Affluence can lead us to think that we are self-sufficient rather than dependent on God. While insurance can be one of the means through which God supplies us with daily bread, the purchase of insurance can become sinful if it is done out of greed or worry. When people begin to see luxuries as necessities, they will be led to worry over their not having what they feel they need for this life. (8) Saint Paul uses an argument from the greater to the lesser. If God, in his grace, did not spare his own Son for the sake of our eternal welfare—and he didn't!—certainly he won't spare what is needed for our temporal welfare.