6th Sunday after Trinity
5th in a Series on the Lord's Prayer
Rolling Meadows - 1965

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IN NOMINE JESU

St. Matthew 6: 9 & 11 Our Father who art in heaven; Give us this day our daily bread.

GIVE US THIS DAY OUR DAILY BREAD

It has been said that 90 % of our life is taken up with little things, with trivialities. To know how true this is you need only think of the little things that can make a difference in the whole day. The moment the alarm clock goes off in the morning they come at us from every side - the hunger and weariness the worry about what we are going to wear, what we are going to eat, how we are going to accomplish the thousand and one little tasks we have before us, the upsetting cries and tantrums of the children, the uncomfortable seat on the train, the unexpected visitor who came to call right when we were in the middle of everything. I'm sure you can write your own list. Yet, it is only when the little things are in order that we can appreciate the big things. The Beethoven symphany, for example, to which I listened as I wrote this sermon, would have sounded much different if I had listened to it in the scorching desert, parched with thirst. A visit to the art gallery would be less edifying if we were to undertake it on an empty stomach without the fortification of daily bread. Last winter, when the ice storm knocked down many of the power lines and many homes around us were without heat or light, people came to realize once more the importance of little things.

Now just imagine that Jesus had forbidden us to relate all these little things to our Father in heaven and to talk about them to Him, because they are too trivial for Him, even though they mean so much to us! Imagine that Jesus had commanded us to pray only about the big things, like reverence for His person, the praise of His Name, The Coming of His Kingdom, and the recognition of His Will and purpose in the world. If this were so, would we not be left terribly alone? Then God would really be ruled out of our thronging everyday life and only a small part of our life would be considered worthy for God to have a part in. Then only in our Sunday best and with scrubbed and shining faces could we dare to pay an occasional visit to our stepfather, hiding our calloused hands and the lines of care on our faces. Then we should have to conceal from Him all the little joys and sorrows of our life

Thank God that this isn't so, that we do not have a Sunday stepfather, but the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. Thank God that this Father is so compassionate and realistic that He is concerned about the little things in our life including our daily bread. Thank God that He accepts us just as we are - with al of our little desires and little fears, with our hunger and weariness and all the little worries that fill our lives. We are not to spiritualize our existence as if there were nothing physical about it. If we attempt to spiritualize the body out of existence, as some philosophers, both ancient and modern, have tried to do, we misrepresent life. In fact, we do not understand it at all. Our Lord understood. He taught us to pray: Our Father who art in heaven, Give us this day our daily bread.

Jesus shows us the heart of the Father. He who holds the whole world in His hand, whose outstretched arm embraces the whole universe because all power has been given to Him in heaven and on earth - He occupies Himself with the trivialities of our human existence, with the grief of a mother who has lost her son, the pain of a paralytic, the weariness of His disciples, and He does not fail to notice that the people who followed Him into the wilderness are hungry. He is even concerned about the wine of a wedding, and He bestows His special love on the poor and outcasts, the little people: the lepers, the lame, the deaf, the blind, and the mentally ill. He knows that very often it is the little things that keep us from following Him - the love of 30 pieces of silver, or preoccupation with five yoke of newly purchased oxen, or being newly married, or an appetite for a bowl of pottage in an hour of exhaustion and hunger - these are the things that have always robbed men of their eternal birthright and blessing. Pray then like this: Our Father who art in heaven, Give us this day our daily bread.

To pray like this is to pray for all of the ingredients of our daily existence. Luther put it this way: Here we consider the poor bread basket, the needs of our body and our life upon earth. This petition includes everything that belongs to our entire life in this world; only for its sake do we need daily bread. Luther also suggested that instead of putting a wreath or a lion on their coats of

arms, the princes and governments of this world would be better advised to put a loaf of bread there. Related to daily bread are all the needs and wants of the body. Luther did not hesitate to enumerate some of them: Daily bread includes everything needed for this life, such as food and clothing, home and property, work and income, a devoted family, an orderly community, good government, favorab weather, peace and health, a good name, and true friends and neighbors.

Years ago it used to be said that the chemicals making up the human bod were worth $1.17. Inflation has probably raised that figure somewhat, but it is really of no interest to most of us. No price can be set upon the body and life of a man. All of us feel that the Psalmist knew what he was talking about when he said a long time ago: Lord, how merciful are Thy works! In wisdom hast Thou made them all; the earth is full of Thy creatures...These all look to Thee, to give their food in due season. When Thou givest to them, they gather it up; when Thou openest Thy hand, they are filled with good things. The whole 104th Psalm talks about the stuff of which life is made. God is the Giver of the raw materials of the earth. He is the Giver of the products of the field, the vineyard and the orchard, the hills and the plains, together with the strength, skill, and ingenuit to produce food and to build industry for the enrichment and enjoyment of man. To label God's gifts as unimportant, or even sinful, is possible only when a man has forgotten that God created life and that He sustains it by His almighty Word. He gives daily bread.

Our Lord's Prayer tells us how the daily bread God gives should be received - with the open hand of thanksgiving. It is to be received, not worshiped. Some people live to eat, rather than eating to live; living only for homes, food, appliances, automobiles, and forgetting what life is really all about; getting so absorbed in work, parties, money and pleasure that they forget what it means to live; abusing God's good gifts for their own benefit instead of using them for His glory; not minded to pray: Give us this day our daily bread. What such people apparently want is the gift without the Giver. They are perfectly willing to take daily bread but will not take the Giver of daily bread. The result is what we see

all around us: aching and empty hearts untouched by God the Giver. Our Lord told a haunting story about a man for whom bread was everything. He tore down his bar and built bigger ones to store his possessions. Then he said to himself: Soul, yo have ample goods laid up for many years; take your ease, eat, drink, and be merry But God said to him, Fool! This night your soul is required of you; and the thin you have prepared, whose will they be?

In Walter Flex's novel, The Wanderer between Both Worlds, he makes the pointed statement that in prayer we should reach for the 'hand' of God, not the 'pennies' in His hand. No one will disagree with the general truth of what he says But, at the same time, let us not despise the pennies either. It would surely be bad if we only wanted the pennies without taking the hand of the Lord. This is what the 5000 in the wilderness did: they let themselves be fed and then went thei way. They looked upon the bread and their full stomachs as ends in themselves. So they lost the meaning of the miracle, and Jesus spoke out in sorrow: Truly, truly, I say to you, you seek Me, not because you saw signs, but because you ate your fill of the loaves. And He could have gone on and said: That's why the 'Amen you say after your table prayer sounds like 'Let's eat,' and the next moment you have already forgotten that the Father is really present at your table and wants to give you a glimpse of the festal hall and your eternal home.

When we take the hand of the Father, we can talk to Him about the little things too. Of course we praise Him for His power and majesty - who holds the sun and moon and stars in His hands - who clothes Himself with the glories of the rain bow and the setting sun - who manifests His greatness in the smoking mountain peaks and rumbling thunder. But for us He was at His greatest when the sun was darkened and He stooped so low that He took upon Himself our sin and our death in the death of the Crucified. The great God comes to meet us in the little things i

stable - Roman cross -

life - in the simple water of Baptism, in the ordinary bread and wine of Holy Communion, in the foolishness of preaching, in our daily bread.

We are to pray for one day at a time. Tomorrow with its own cares is to be left in His hands. We are not to worry about what it will bring, but rather to

cultivate the certainty that it does come from God's hand. We can entrust this present day to the Lord because the future and the last day belong to Him. We ca entrust the little things of our life to Him because He is concerned even about t hairs on our head. We can talk to Him the way we feel, and come to Him just as w are. We can cast all our cares upon Him - all of them, not only the big concerns but also the small and foolish ones. He will be able to make something out of it But before we speak of daily bread and the many other things, we must first say, and say from the heart: Our Father! The Father must always come before the things but once this is understood, then bring to Him whatever there is to bring. Pray like this: Our Father who art in heaven, Give us this day our daily bread. Amen.