**John 19:16-30**

**March 25, 2020**

**Midweek Lent Service 4 – Give Us This Day Our Daily Bread – “Lord’s Prayer in the Lord’s Passion”**

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and from our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Amen.

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

It is not wrong for us to pray this particular petition and to think of food. Bread invokes in me an image of a homemade loaf of bread, still hot after you cut into it, eaten while still warm with butter. Oh, for that to be all of our *daily* bread, meaning the bread that we get to eat every day. It is a good example of daily bread because it is, well, bread, and it helps us understand the *daily* aspect of what God is giving to us. Homemade bread tastes the best on the day it was baked. While it’s warm, fresh, the crust is crunchy but it’s soft on the inside. When the bread is older it loses its taste, it goes stale, and it’s not the same. God gives us daily bread, but it’s more than just food, and it especially relates to something that we take for granted.

References to this petition and how it relates to the Passion of our Lord Jesus Christ can be found in the words of institution, one of the places it’s found is in Matthew chapter 26:26-29, here specifically reading verse 26 “Now as they were eating, Jesus took bread and after blessing it broke it and gave it to the disciples, and said, ‘Take, eat; this is my body” Later in the Passion, from the selected reading for this evening in John chapter 19, they offer Jesus a sour wine on a hyssop branch, and he drinks it in order to fulfill the Scriptures. The first reference speaks of literal bread, which is probably the most obvious correlation, but the bread itself is meaningless if we don’t properly understand what is also present. Of course, they had a meal together, but there was more going on than just bodily sustenance, this was the institution of a Sacrament that we still are blessed to receive today. Jesus was giving the disciples in this particular moment, the bread of life, and this bread was to satisfy the needs of their spiritual bodies, rather than just the hunger of our earthly bodies.

This is how Martin Luther describes what daily bread actually is and how we should see the wonderful provision of God our Father. “God certainly gives daily bread to everyone without our prayers, even to all evil people, but we pray in this petition that God would lead us to realize this and to receive our daily bread with thanksgiving*.*” What is meant by daily bread? “Daily bread includes everything that has to do with the support and needs of the body, such as food, drink, clothing, shoes, house, home, land, animals, money, goods, a devout husband or wife, devout children, devout workers, devout and faithful rulers, good government, good weather, peace, health, self-control, good reputation, good friends, faithful neighbors, and the like.”

So, which was the greater application in our Lord’s Passion, the fact that he was thirsty and fulfilled the Scriptures by drinking some sour wine? No, it was the giving of his own body and his own blood to be our bread and wine. While daily bread applies to the needs of the body, we can’t ignore the needs of our souls, and the truth that it is through the bread of life, Jesus Christ himself, we are saved.

God provides for us, whether we realize it or not, whether we ask for it or not, and whether we deserve it or not. This is a great joy and peace to us, because we in no way deserve the things that we pray for, as Luther states many times. In the midst of this pandemic, we have seen the abuses that come from a false understanding of all that God has provided in our lives. Especially when it comes to things, stuff, or as we’re using tonight “Daily bread.” We love the bread, the food, the stuff, famously in this whole debacle has been a need to make sure you have enough toilet paper! But in this faithful stocking so many have fallen off into the sinful action of hoarding. God provides our *daily* bread, meaning given every day, and that we are reliant upon him for these things every day. Hoarding works in the opposite of that mentality, hoarding isn’t about the needs of others, hoarding is all about the needs of yourself. Hoarding shows the intentions of your own heart and how you will make sure that you have enough at the expense of others. Hoarding spits on the word *daily* and disregards it. Hoarding is the opposite of sacrificing of yourself for the physical needs of others, instead it’s accumulating for your own comfort, so you never have to worry about a “daily bread” item again.

God’s provision is a daily outpouring into our lives of all that we need, which includes more than just food, it also includes government, and it includes health. Lately we’ve seen how health is the greatest gift God can give, and how we take it for granted. Look again at the list of all the things that God provides and that would fall under the category of “daily bread.” It’s humbling to read all of those things, and then to honestly ask yourself, “When was the last time I thanked God for these amazing gifts?” Think about that, He gives us these things *daily.* And for so long in our country, we were blessed with health. Health in the sense of going about our daily lives not living in the fear of catching and then infecting others so as to completely shut down our society. For so many years we went about our lives with the gift of health in this sense and were completely oblivious to what a gift that truly was. Think of your health now, think of all that could be afflicting you, and isn’t. That’s the gift of God in your life. Do we appreciate these gifts? Do we thank God for these gifts in more than just prayer but in what we say, in what we do, in how we value the greater gifts of His Word and His Sacraments? Do we live our lives in a proper thanksgiving of that gift even in the midst of quarantine and lockdown? You have the opportunity at this moment, with all the other distractions of the world taken away, to properly thank God and return to Him in His Word, daily, just as He daily gives to you, provides for you, and loves you.

But no matter what you do, your salvation rests not in the bread you can make of your own actions, but in the bread of life that was given to you, through the death of Jesus Christ. The greatest application of bread to Passion is in the death of Jesus Christ, because when Jesus says, “Take, eat, this is my body.” He’s saying that the body that you receive was given for you in death, and the blood that you receive was shed for you. It didn’t just magically happen; the Sacrament of the Altar is connected to sacrifice. The altar was the place where the sacrificial animal was taken to be killed for the sins of the people, and in this Sacrament we can’t ignore the language of death and atonement, or the blood of Jesus Christ making us one with God through His sacrifice. This bread that you will one day receive again, this bread that for a time has been taken from you due to disease and pandemic on Sunday, but that you can receive any day that you wish by simply calling me and reaching out, this bread of life is yours as a gift of God. And the truth is no matter what you do, you could never say thank you enough.

Have you ever been given a gift that no matter what you did you couldn’t quite say thank you to match the amazing love that you had been shown? We see it sometimes on television, reality shows are full of these sorts of moments. A group or organization has paid off an enormous debt, or they’ve fixed up a home, and it was all done for free. The person is completely overwhelmed and says thank you, thank you, thank you! Tears flowing down their face, but they know they can’t possibly repay the amazing gift that has been given to them. May we also see the gift of salvation, and the bread of life that Jesus Christ has provided this way. It reminds me of the last verse of one of my favorite Lent hymns, hymn 420 “Christ the life of all the living.” I invite you to read these words and meditate upon them, and honestly ask yourself these questions, “How could I thank God for these things? What would it look like to honestly thank him for all of this?”

Then, for all that wrought my pardon

For Thy sorrows deep and sore;

For Thine anguish in the Garden,

I will **thank** Thee evermore

**Thank** Thee for Thy groaning, sighing,

For Thy bleeding and Thy dying,

For that last triumphant cry

And shall praise Thee, Lord, on high.

A hymn was written on this very subject, hymn 703 “How can I thank You Lord”, and the answer is you can’t. Not properly, but don’t despair. He gives and gives and gives anyway. He gives in time of health, and sickness. He gives when government is good and bad. He gives and gives because he loves you. And he gave for your spiritual needs, and he provides your earthly ones. God bless you wherever you are and however you read this. Stay safe, healthy, and thankful. Be comforted in the Lord as we continue to journey to the cross and the empty tomb.

Amen.

The peace of God which surpasses all human understanding keep our hearts and minds through faith in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Amen.