

I want to start off by reciting the Lord's prayer together. But I want to use a different translation today, not the Living translation. It's pretty great that we have so many different translations of the Bible, and I really like the living translation because it's so easy to read, but for this week, I want us to read another version, probably one that sounds a little more familiar, and you'll see why I chose that in a minute, so let's do it:

"Father, hallowed be your name. Your kingdom come. 3 Give us each day our daily bread, 4 and forgive us our sins, for we ourselves forgive everyone who is indebted to us. And lead us not into temptation."

We're in this series right now about prayer, from a section of the Bible where one of Jesus' disciples tells him to teach them how to pray, and that's why Jesus gives us what we now call the Lord's Prayer. And if you're anything like me, prayer is not something that comes easily. It is something we need to be taught. Because there are a few pitfalls:

We make prayer about us. Or we don't do it. Or we just mumble a prayer real quick to fill our prayer quota or something. Like, sometimes when I'm praying before dinner, I'm just like – let's git-it-done, because I want to EAT. Which is kind of a disaster.

We need to pray. We need prayer. God doesn't need our prayers, he wants them, because he wants to be in conversation with us. He wants to speak to us, and we hear his voice when we're in conversation with him in prayer. So we're spending a few weeks in a series on prayer, where we can really focus on how we pray and what prayer means. We're devoting time to prayer, to talking to God, and listening for him.

So do you know how there are things we say but we don't even really understand what they mean? I have one example that I'll share – someone I know thought that when the weather guy says "Wind chill factor" they were actually saying: "Wind Shield factor," because it was measuring how cold the wind was when it hit your car's windshield when you were driving. And now this one: "Best thing since sliced....?"

But what the heck does that mean???? Like, is sliced bread that awesome? Like, is it really the best thing? And when was sliced bread invented, anyway? Well, as it turns out, not as long ago as we thought. And it means something a little different than we probably think. We might be like: "Oh yeah, that's awesome, like when I get up I'm like: 'cars are awesome, the internet has changed life as we know it, electricity is amazing and shapes my existence... but none of those things hold a CANDLE to SLICED BREAD.'" I don't. In fact, the hipster-types are all about the artisan bread now, which, you can't BEAT THAT. Mike Lynch probably thinks sliced bread is not the greatest thing – his special, handmade loaves that DO NOT come sliced – those are the best things, right?

So when we pray this prayer that a lot of us have memorized: Give us this day our daily bread, we're like: I don't have a hard time getting my hands on bread. Why do I have to pray for it? I mean, if I was really desperate, I could get some wonder bread for like 99 cents. And if you're like me, you find yourself keeping the same sandwich bread in your fridge for WEEKS. Not DAYS.

Well, we don't get it because sliced bread was invented in 1928, and we take it for granted now, but it completely changed the way we eat bread, so much so that we don't even think about it. So yeah, not even 100 years ago actually. And the recipe for bread changed— bread that tastes sweeter, lasts longer, can be wrapped up in plastic — so different from what bread was like.

Before that, you had to buy bread or make bread every single day. Because it would go bad after one day. Do any of you bake a basic item like that every day? Like, a loaf of bread for your kids' sandwiches? Bread making is so basic, so essential, around the world — it takes different forms, but in most cultures, bread is a staple, and life demanded that we make it every single day. But modern life means we don't have to make it ourselves every single day.

I don't make ANYTHING every single day. I heat up oatmeal in the microwave, and think I'm living a more slow and thoughtful life just from doing that. Five minutes. Not exactly instantaneous, but definitely not a chore. And coffee- yeah, that's definitely every day. And yet I found myself complaining about how it's hard to find time to get that coffee made and consumed with an infant, like I'm the first person in the history of the world who had to deal with this. Imagine if I had to make bread every day! Yikes. We'd be eating handfuls of raw dough, probably.

But bread is a staple. And it's just so luxurious. I mean, does anyone NOT LIKE bread? Show of hands: any of you not like bread? Like if there's bread on the table for a meal you gag a little, throw up in your mouth because it just is gross? Okay, maybe you're a unique and special individual, but I don't know a lot of people who don't like bread. Even when I was having morning sickness when I was pregnant and basically hated any and all foods, I still could eat bread.

My husband and I have been watching the Great British Bake off on Netflix (Yeah, you all who heard me preach about this know I have a problem! I'm working on it). But on this show, they show people making bread, and all these different kinds of breads, and it's crazy the amount of stress and steps it takes to make bread. There's something called a "starter" you need before you even mix everything together, that is yeast and other stuff and flavor that you need to make your dough, and you need to let it "prove" or as we say it: "rise" for enough time, and you need to knead different kinds of breads in different ways so it'll come out right, and you have to get it in and out of the oven in perfect time, and on top of that you want good flavor and a good rise on it, and you want it to sound hollow when you tap on it. All this stuff. There are so many varieties and kinds of bread!

And it's BEAUTIFUL. I just want all the bread when I watch that. There's something so comforting and beautiful about BREAD.

We just prayed together "Give us this day our daily bread," and that bread that we get every day, that's not factory made sliced bread. When we're talking about daily bread, we're talking about bread that's made with such work, such care, such attention to detail.

And then there's one more important thing: homemade bread is made with love. That's what baking is about, you know? Have you noticed that with people who are so passionate about cooking and baking — that love is that secret ingredient? That it's all about providing nourishment and care for the people you

love? My husband makes the best pumpkin cheesecake, and he makes it for special occasions. It takes a lot of work, but he loves to do it and do it well not because he wants to take it off the cooling rack, and then eat it all himself. He only makes it so we can share it with friends and family.

Give us this day our daily bread. We're saying this to God, our heavenly father – Give us this day our daily bread.

Like most things in the Bible, and like actual, real, homemade baked bread, this is a layered request. It's basic, but it's more complicated than we might think.

So what do we mean when we pray to God: Give us this day our daily bread? In the living translation, it says: "Give us each day the food we need." Give us the food we need every day. All right, let's get at that layer first.

This layer is about our daily, basic needs. Give us our daily bread, is the only "request" part of the Lord's prayer. So requests are not the only thing that prayer is about, but they are definitely a part. God wants us to ask him to meet our needs every day.

Because we have them. We have very basic needs for living.

A lot of us have our daily needs met; we live in a time and in a country where we live relatively stable existences. But what would happen if every grocery store disappeared? All modern conveniences, like irrigation systems, genetically modified foods, refrigeration.

Well, one thing is for certain: a lot of us would have very different careers. Most of us in this room would have a job that had something to do with farming.

And you know what: farming even 200 years ago was very precarious. So a lot of us New Englanders are Irish – show of hands, how many Irish folk here? Yeah, St. Patty's just happened, corned beef and cabbage, brown-colored (and green colored) adult beverages, woo-hoo! But you know why a lot of Irish people live in New England? Farming trouble. And it wasn't anyone's fault- it was the Irish Potato famine – lots of people starved because that very, very basic staple in the Irish diet was destroyed by blight.

So this was a major source of concern for the average person back in Jesus' day. There was a lot of fear. There was a lot of uncertainty. But Jesus is using this time to teach these people to remember that their daily bread, their food they need each day, comes from the hand of God. Not from their hands, not from their hard work, but from God's generous hand.

But even though we have more stability, do you find yourself having this same fear, this same concern that you will somehow not have what you need? That your existence isn't as stable as you may have thought?

It may not happen daily, but it often comes in times of crisis. I know for me and my husband, this has happened a few times. This happened when he lost his job as a teacher due to poor money management in the district's administration. We had a mortgage, we had life plans that we had to put

on hold, we had school bills, car payments, electric bills. It was tough. We prayed: “God! Give us each day the food we need! The work we need! Meet our daily needs!”

And he did. Both times. And many other times. We were fine.

It was worrying. It was stressful. But we were fine.

In the next chapter of Luke, in Luke chapter 12, Jesus tells the people: 27 “Look at the lilies and how they grow. They don’t work or make their clothing, yet Solomon in all his glory was not dressed as beautifully as they are. 28 And if God cares so wonderfully for flowers that are here today and thrown into the fire tomorrow, he will certainly care for you. Why do you have so little faith? 29 And don’t be concerned about what to eat and what to drink. Don’t worry about such things. 30 These things dominate the thoughts of unbelievers all over the world, but your Father already knows your needs. 31 Seek the Kingdom of God above all else, and he will give you everything you need.”

It’s so easy for us to think we are the ones who control our lives, who control everything. It’s on our shoulders, it’s up to us! We work to get what we need. We deserve it, so we get it. Like life is a work punch card, and you get your card punched and God sends a paycheck in the form of stuff.

But in this verse we see it’s not about DESERVING. And it’s not about DOING. It’s about RECEIVING. God gives us the food we need. God provides for us daily.

On a basic, fundamental level, God is caring for us. He is rolling up his sleeves, putting flour out on the table, and he’s kneading the dough for our daily bread. His hands shape it, and he hands it to us, smelling so good, with that nice crunchy crust, still warm. It’s from him, and we did nothing to deserve that daily bread. When we pray, we are holding out hands out to receive that daily bread from Him, in expectation and thankfulness, knowing we did nothing to earn it, and that we rely on it completely. We would starve without the hand of God.

Now, some of you might be listening to this and thinking: Well, there’s a problem here. Because look at this world! Look at what we’re dealing with. And I would say to you: “Yeah. I get that.” Because I thought the same thing while I was writing this sermon. Does God really give us our daily bread? Because I look at the news and see something very different.

A few months ago, I came across this picture, and if you’re a little kid, or if you don’t want to see something disturbing, I’d like to suggest you just put your head down for a second or close your eyes, but I think this matters, because we need to be reminded sometimes, even if it’s upsetting. So this is a

picture of an 18 year old girl in Yemen named Saida, and she is starving to death.



This picture made the rounds because it's just so disturbing and so upsetting that this could happen to someone. And more recently, here's a picture that NPR posted of a 9 month old boy named Sacdiyo, who's acutely malnourished. He's from Somalia.



And it's hard to wrap our minds around because in this day and age, it's hard to understand how this could happen. This girl and this little boy aren't starving because of a drought or famine – they're starving because of war. Saida isn't getting her daily bread because of war. Sacdiyo isn't getting his daily bread because of war. We pray: "Give US this day our daily bread" this is not just about individuals, this is not just about Americans getting their daily needs met. This is a humanity thing- this is asking God to provide for us, for humanity. So where is God? How is God providing for them in their daily need?

Okay, we're putting the picture down and you all can look up again if you looked away for a minute. But if you're like me, you see something like that and you ask: "Well, Jesus, you ask us to pray that prayer, but how can it be true? How can we get our daily bread from God if this world is so messed up? This world is broken and people are prevented from getting their daily bread. Even in this country, there are kids who don't get their daily bread, who are hungry and whose parents can't afford to feed them 3 square meals a day."

Those are legit questions. These are heartbreaking, but very real facts: God is in control and sovereign, and our source of provision.... But we also see people starving and suffering. We find ourselves suffering.

We see people we love suffering. So how are we supposed to respond? How can we pray “Give us each day our daily bread” when we know this is a reality?

Earlier I mentioned that there are layers to this phrase: “Give us each day our daily bread.” So yes, it does mean: Give us each day the food we need. Meet our daily physical needs. But when Jesus says the word: “bread” it doesn’t just mean “bread.” There’s another layer to it. There’s something else, something deeper than what we think of as “bread.” So how does God provide daily bread to Sacdiyo and Saida? How does God provide the food we need in the midst of war, famine, drought, injustice, and suffering?

Let’s dig deeper. Later in this same book of the Bible we’re reading, in Luke chapter 22, we come to what we now call The Last Supper, the last meal Jesus shared with his friends, the disciples, before he died on the cross. And we see bread come up again, let’s take a look:

*14 When the time came, Jesus and the apostles sat down together at the table. 15 Jesus said, “I have been very eager to eat this Passover meal with you before my suffering begins. 16 For I tell you now that I won’t eat this meal again until its meaning is fulfilled in the Kingdom of God.” 17 Then he took a cup of wine and gave thanks to God for it. Then he said, “Take this and share it among yourselves. 18 For I will not drink wine again until the Kingdom of God has come.” 19 He took some bread and gave thanks to God for it. Then he broke it in pieces and gave it to the disciples, saying, “This is my body, which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of me.”*

Jesus took bread at this Passover dinner, bread that reminded the Jewish people of God’s deliverance from slavery, and he gives it new meaning. It’s not just bread anymore – He told his disciples that this bread, this daily bread, something that was a normal part of their lives, something they needed every day, was HIS BODY.

I kind of wish I could’ve been a fly on the wall at this last supper. There’s nothing in the verses that tells us that the disciples were like: “Wait, what?”

I would’ve said that. But here’s what Jesus telling us: He’s saying that like normal daily bread, his body gives us life, that it sustains us, and that it is GIVEN to us. He’s telling us his body, broken like that loaf of bread that he broke into pieces for his friends, that bread isn’t something a person can earn. That bread is a gift given freely by him, and that it is our daily bread and that when we eat it, we do it in remembrance of him.

Now if someone tells you to do something in their memory, in remembrance of them, we’d get a little freaked out, right? Because that isn’t something you just say. If I have to head out for a night meeting at work, I don’t say to Jeff and Clementine: “Whenever you guys watch the Great British Bake off, do that in remembrance of me.”

Because it’s ominous. Jesus is telling them they have to remember him. He is talking about what’s ahead: about his death and about his resurrection. He is telling them that he is their daily bread.

So when we see pictures like that one of that girl in Yemen. When we lose our jobs, when we lose our loved ones, when we lose our health, we pray this prayer: “Give us this day our daily bread,” but our daily bread isn’t just the daily “stuff” we want or need. Our daily bread isn’t JUST our morning coffee, a

bowl of oatmeal, a peanut butter and jelly sandwich, a lasagna for dinner with our family, or cheesecake for dessert. Our daily bread is Jesus.

Give us this day our daily bread. Give us this day JESUS.

Jesus is the bread of life: he tells us in the gospel of John, chapter six starting in verse 32 Jesus said, “I tell you the truth, Moses didn’t give you bread from heaven. My Father did. And now he offers you the true bread from heaven. 33 The true bread of God is the one who comes down from heaven and gives life to the world.” 34 “Sir,” they said, “give us that bread every day.” 35 Jesus replied, **“I am the bread of life.** Whoever comes to me will never be hungry again. Whoever believes in me will never be thirsty.”

We pray for our daily bread, but our daily bread is not just the stuff that our bodies need – we need food, yes, but even more than our bodies need food, WE NEED JESUS. We need the Bread of Life. The truth is God can give us all the actual, physical food we need, and it still won’t be enough. There is more to life than food – and God meets that need through his son Jesus.

Jesus gave himself to us as spiritual food. This might sound weird, and those of you who grew up Catholic were taught that this was a literal thing, that communion wafers would actually become Jesus’ body, and I’m not going to get into all that stuff, but here at Harbor, we see communion as a representation of Jesus’ broken body, his sacrifice on our behalf, to provide us with our daily spiritual food that we need.

Only the spiritual food we get from Jesus will change us, will change our broken and messed up world. Our hope is not in this world and what it has to offer, but in Jesus, and what he offers us: himself. His love. His healing. Himself as our bread of life.

And every day, when we pray this prayer, we say: “Give us each day our daily bread.” We have to remember this double-meaning, this multi-layered meaning to what our daily bread actually is. It is God our Father, caring so well for us, and providing us with bread that never spoils, kneading it with his hands, fashioning bread so lovingly for his children, who are helpless without Him, who need his provision desperately.

God gave us his Son, Jesus, He has given of himself, and Jesus is that bread of life. And that bread is filled with more love than any loaf of bread that we might make. And it was a sacrifice – it was more than setting aside time in his day, and doing the labor of prepping, kneading, waiting, baking, and giving. It was a true sacrifice, of himself, of His Son Jesus, for our sakes.

So right now, we’re passing around some baskets that have little pieces of fresh bread in them, and I want you all to take one of those and just hold onto it for a second. We’re going to do our time of communion a bit differently this week: we’re doing it together right now, in response to the sermon. So as those baskets of bread are going around, I want you to take a minute and think about how you can pray this part of the Lord’s prayer right now. How you can ask God to give you the food you need, your daily bread.

Maybe you just need to take some time sitting in thankfulness, acknowledging that God has given you all you have and all you need, and yet you often live your life thinking you need or want more. It wasn’t what you deserved from God. It’s what you received, as a gift! It’s not about what you’ve done; it’s

about what God DOES. So when you pray this prayer, it's about realigning yourself to the: "Give us this day our daily bread," that he has already given and will continue to give you daily.

Or maybe you forget that you rely so much on God for your day-to-day. That everything you have, everything you are, is from the hand of God. That you cannot live, you cannot breathe, your body cannot function properly if there wasn't a God in His heaven caring and providing your daily bread to you.

Maybe you saw those pictures of Saida and Sacdiyo and it broke your heart, or made you angry, or both. And you need to pray fervently that God would give us this day our daily bread, really focusing on the "us" of that statement. That it's not just about "me" "I" what I want, but about "us," about people, about people who we don't even know, but also need that daily bread – that food and the love of Jesus. So as you hold that little piece of bread, ask that God would give "us" this day our daily bread, and ask Him to show you how you can show his love to those in need.

Or maybe all this is so new to you, and you don't even know who God is or who Jesus is, and if that's the case – you're in the right place. I'm going to let you into a big church secret: None of us fully get it, either! We're all figuring this out together. But you can just take this time in prayer thinking about what Jesus means about being the bread of life, of his body being broken for us.

Or maybe there's something else that God's put on your heart- Sometimes, that little voice in the back of our minds is actually God trying to tell us something. Just pray over that, ask God to show you.

But I'm going to pray, and then we're all going to eat that little piece of fresh bread together, and I want you to spend a few minutes as you chew and swallow it, just praying over this. As you eat this bread, think about how God is the one who gave it to you. Remember that Jesus is the bread of life. Think about how God has lovingly provided food, both physical and spiritual, for you every single day. Ask God to give you daily bread. And then we're going to come back together and we're going to pray the Lord's prayer together one more time. Let's pray.