

Emmanuel Ev. Lutheran Church—Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod
Pentecost 10
August 6, 2023
Sermon by Pastor Chris Pflughoeft
Give us today our daily bread

–1 Kings 17:1-6

¹Elijah from Tishbe, one of the settlers in Gilead, said to Ahab, “As surely as the Lord lives, the God of Israel before whom I stand, there will be no dew or rain during the coming years, except at my word.” ²Then the word of the Lord came to him: ³“Leave this place and turn east. Hide yourself by the Kerith Ravine, east of the Jordan. ⁴You will drink from the stream, and I will command the ravens to provide for you there.” ⁵So Elijah went and did just as the Lord had said. He lived in the Kerith Ravine, east of the Jordan. ⁶The ravens brought him bread and meat in the morning and in the evening, and he drank from the stream. (1 Kings 17:1-6 EHV)

“Let’s get this bread” is a phrase that was popularized in online circles. The phrase “Let’s get this bread” is meant to be a motivational phrase. You are encouraging someone to work hard for personal, physical, or financial gain. If you go to work on a project, you might have said to your buddy, “Let’s get this bread.”

As Christians who pray the Lord’s prayer often, “bread” as slang for overall physical welfare makes a lot of sense to us. Consider the use of the term in the Lord’s Prayer and Martin Luther’s explanation of it. “*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.*” Certainly, as Christians, we understand the concept of “getting that bread.”

We have a different approach than this phrase would allude to though. This phrase considers all that we must do to receive personal, physical, and financial gain. Yet Christians recognize that “this bread” is a gift from God. Therefore, we pray as Jesus taught us. “**Give us today our daily bread.**” We receive our daily bread which comes from the living God through the means that he provides.

The section of Scripture that shows us that God gives us our daily bread is our first reading for today, 1 Kings 17:1-6. As Christians, I assume that you are familiar with Elijah. You remember the big events of his ministry: raising the widow’s son, the fiery confrontation of the prophets of Baal, and being taken up to heaven.

You come into this lesson with a lot of background knowledge of Elijah, interestingly this is Elijah’s first mention in the Bible. He did not get an introduction. Instead, Elijah appeared as one who stood before God and opposed the wicked King. In Elijah’s opposition to Ahab and God’s provision for Elijah, we learn of God’s power to provide. In response to this section of Scripture, we can say “**Give us today our daily bread.**”

Our daily bread comes from the Lord for he is the living God. In the following six chapters of 1 Kings, there is a showdown between Ahab the king and Elijah the prophet. This showdown is not about these two individuals though. This showdown is between the false gods of Ahab, Baal and Asherah, and the Living God of Elijah, the LORD.

Baal and Asherah were companion idols of the Canaanite people. You likely recognize their names because of the constant temptation the people of Israel had to worship these false deities. Asherah was the goddess of fertility. Baal was the god of wind, rain, and fertility.

In response to the people of Israel and their king falling into this idol worship, the LORD, who is the living God, sent a drought to the land. Although the people claimed that Baal was the god of the rain, the LORD, the living God, demonstrated who was truly in control of the weather. As the prophet of the LORD proclaimed, there would be no rain until God’s prophet said there would be rain. The living God was in control.

Imagine you go to Fry’s tonight. You are there with a list of grocery items that you need for your family. After scanning all your items in the self-checkout, you press the button to pay. Then to pay for your groceries, you attempt to insert Monopoly money into the machine. What is going to happen? The machine will not accept fake money. Why is this? Because only real money will pay for the groceries. Fake money doesn’t work.

This is like the provision of our daily bread. A fake god cannot provide daily bread. Only the Living God can provide for our daily needs. Therefore, we pray to him, “**Give us today our daily bread.**”

To whom do you look for provision in your life? Who or what do you trust to provide for all your needs? As Christians, we know that God is our provider. This makes sense. He is the creator and sustainer of the universe. He is the Living God. I know you would answer that you look to the LORD for provision.

I must ask though, do your actions line up with this confession? Perhaps one specific sin can demonstrate a distrust in God to provide. This is when you break the seventh commandment which says, "*You shall not steal.*" How are you tempted to break the seventh commandment? Perhaps you are not tempted to "*take your neighbor's money or property.*" Maybe you are tempted to "*get it by dishonest dealing.*"

To pursue financial gain and reception of our daily bread through "*dishonest dealing*" is sinful. This demonstrates distrust in God. Yet, this is all too common among people who claim to be Christians. What are some examples of this? Some people will try to receive financial gain by failing to report all that they owe in taxes. They will make money "under the table." How could a Christian do this? Do you not trust God to provide what you need? Other people will try to receive financial gain by underpaying the people that they employ. Perhaps they intentionally employ people that are undocumented immigrants so that they can do so. How could a Christian do this? Do you not trust God to provide what you need? Still, other people will try to receive financial gain by ripping others off through high-interest loans or unfair rent. How could a Christian do this? Do you not trust God to provide for what you need? Perhaps another may receive financial gain by lying to a government agency to receive greater benefits. How could a Christian do this? Do you not trust God to provide for what you need? All these are examples of ways in which people break the seventh commandment. All these are examples of ways in which people demonstrate a distrust of God. To distrust the LORD's ability to provide for your physical and financial needs demonstrates a lack of faith in the Living God.

Brothers and sisters, if you have broken the seventh commandment in any of these ways and demonstrated a failure to trust God, you must confess this sin. You also must discontinue the sin. Financial dishonesty is not fitting with saving faith.

Then, let us look to the Living God who provides for all our greatest needs. Consider what Jesus said about the LORD's provision, "*Look at the birds of the air. They do not sow or reap or gather into barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not worth much more than they?*" (Matthew 6:26) You are worth much more than those birds of the air. Your Father in heaven provided your greatest need by sending His Son to be your Savior. The Son of God took flesh to live for you. He gave you the righteousness that you needed. The Son of God, Jesus Christ, went to the cross to die for you. He provided the forgiveness that you needed. The LORD cared for your needs in the greatest way through Jesus. He gave you the Bread of Life. As Jesus said, "*I am the living bread which came down from heaven. If anyone eats this bread, he will live forever.*" (John 6:51) Because the Living God has given you the bread of life you can trust that he will provide your daily bread.

Considering this section of Scripture, we also respond "**Give us today our daily bread**" through the means that you provide. We see that Elijah trusted the LORD to provide for him even though it didn't make sense. We too can trust that God will provide even if it doesn't make sense for God to provide through the means that he chooses.

After Elijah told King Ahab the reason for the drought, the LORD directed him to go to the Kerith Ravine. While he was there, the stream began to dry up. The LORD provided food to Elijah by having ravens deliver bread and meat in the morning and evening.

It is interesting to note how God's form of provision for Elijah didn't make sense according to the natural process of things. Ravens are scavengers. It is against their nature to deliver food to a person. God commanded them to do this, so they did. God is in control. He provided for Elijah in the way that he saw fit. The LORD gave Elijah his daily bread.

Think of the process that the LORD uses to bring you your daily bread. Let's use actual bread as an example. How does Wonder bread appear on your table? God provided the money to purchase it through your job. God watched over the store and those who work at it where you bought the bread. God protected the truck driver who delivered the bread to the store. God guarded the factory at which the bread was produced. God provided the rain and the harvest for the grain to grow. There are many steps along the way. Even the ordinary way that God provides for you is extraordinary. All these facets are encompassed in the prayer, "**Give us today our daily bread.**" The LORD provides for you through these means.

Do you accept the means through which God provides for you? Are you content with your salary? Are you happy with your career? A way that we can show distrust in God's provision is by being discontent with his means of provision. Now, pursuing career advancement is one thing. Seeking to better yourself is another. But being discontent with the amount of money, vocations, and abilities God gives you is a sin. Your salary, no matter how big or small, is a means through which God provides for you and your family. Your job, no matter how important

or unimportant, is a means through which God provides for you and your family. Your skills and abilities, no matter how special or ordinary, are the means through which God provides for you and your family. To be discontent with these means or any others that God uses to provide for you is an attack on God. You are saying God is wrong for choosing these means to provide for you. That is a lack of trust in God's provision.

People of Emmanuel, God provided for you in the greatest way. He provided for you through important means. We know that we have a God who works through means. He works through means to provide you with your greatest needs: righteousness, and forgiveness. These are brought to you through the means of grace. Through the Word and sacraments: baptism and the Lord's Supper, God has delivered to you the righteousness of Jesus and the forgiveness won on the cross. God provided for your ultimate need through these means.

This same God, the Living God, provides for your physical needs through means as well. Through the means of work, gifts, family, and many others, your God cares for you in this life. He will continue to do so until he brings you to be with him in paradise. God provides for you through the means that he chooses. Therefore, we pray, **"Give us today our daily bread."**

Some people say "Let's get this bread." As Christians, we pray to God, **"Give us today our daily bread."** The LORD provides for your needs. As the Living God, only he can do it. He has given you your greatest need of salvation in Jesus. Now, he continues to provide for your every need. Amen.