

## **Lent Study on the Lord's Prayer – 1<sup>st</sup> April, 2020**

### **'Give Us This Day Our Daily Bread – how God feeds his people.'**

#### **Opening Prayer.**

Heavenly Father, we look to you in our need, for you give us food in due season. Though we go astray in desert wastes, and find no place to dwell; and though our souls are hungry and thirsty within us, you hear us when we cry to you in distress; you set our feet upon the right way, till we come to the city that you have prepared for us to dwell in. We give thanks to you Lord for your goodness and the wonders you do for your children; for you satisfy the longing soul and fill the hungry soul with good things. (*Adapted from Psalms 104 & 107*).

#### **Scripture**

***Therefore do not worry, saying, 'What will we eat?' 'What will we drink?' or 'What will we wear?' For it is the Gentiles who strive for all these things, and indeed your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things. But strive first for the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well. Matt 6:31-33)***

***Lord Jesus Christ, we thank you for all the benefits you have won for us, for all the pains and insults that you have borne for us. Most merciful redeemer, friend and brother, may we know you more clearly, love you more dearly and follow you more nearly, day by day. Amen (After Richard of Chichester – 1253).***

#### **Questions for reflection.**

***Q. What three things do you feel most thankful for in this current health crisis?***

***Q. How may Christ be calling you to follow Him this Lent and Holy Week?***

#### **Bread of Heaven**

We recall that God fed the Israelites with manna from heaven after they had escaped from slavery in Egypt and were wandering in the desert, and when they complained that they lacked now the food they had enjoyed in Egypt. We also recall that on the night of their escape, God had commanded them to bake unleavened bread to sustain them on the journey, a command recalled each year at the Feast of Passover, when Jewish people remember the Exodus by eating unleavened bread for seven days. In the wilderness the Israelites learned to depend on God's grace for their daily bread/mannah, of which there was just enough for each day's need.

We likewise remember how Jesus fed the five thousand in the desert by breaking five loaves and calling on the disciples to distribute bread to the crowd, not only to feed their physical needs, but also as a sign of the deeper spiritual sustenance that we all need (John 6.35).

Again, at the Last Supper (which took place at Passover), Jesus took a loaf of unleavened bread, said a prayer of thanksgiving over it, broke it and said: "Take, eat. This is my body that is for you. Do this in remembrance of me" (1 Corinthians 11:24). In so doing he renewed and transformed the meaning of the Passover Feast for his disciples and all who believe in Him.

All of these scriptural events merit recollection when we petition God to "give us this day our daily bread", a petition that encourages believers to place the Lord's Prayer at the heart of their daily prayers. This is a modest prayer that, like the Israelites in the desert, we may be content with *just* enough for our daily needs, and so is the antithesis of the 'prosperity Gospel' which asks for the trappings of wealth – a new car, a bigger house, fine jewellery - rather than just enough to sustain us each day. Such contentment in having enough to meet our true needs is the key to spiritual blessing and happiness.

God's gift of physical and spiritual bread calls for our thankfulness, and reminds us that all life's blessings – food, clothes, shelter, work, family and friends – are gifts provided by God, and so we are deeply thankful for them. Living in relationship with the creator of the world we give thanks for every moment, every meal, for each new morning and at the end of every day. The Lord's Prayer overcomes the separation between our physical and spiritual nature and helps us reconnect the whole of our life with God's bounteous provision. We are praying for physical bread to sustain our bodies and 'living bread' to nourish our souls, so that the whole of our being may thrive.

### **Questions for reflection**

***Q. How easy or difficult do you find it to pray for your own needs?***

***Q. How would your attitude to money & possessions be changed by praying this prayer every day, and meaning it, in terms of having 'just enough'.***

***Q. How far does a desire for 'more' shape your life?***

***Q. How could you build into your day moments of thanksgiving to God for all his gifts.***

***Q. Do you find it helpful to say a prayer of thanks before each meal?***

***Q. What difference does it make that we say 'give us this day our daily bread', not 'give me this day my daily bread'?***

***Q. How can we learn to marvel more at everyday miracles, e.g., the creation of a field of wheat from a few seeds?***

Heavenly Father, we give hearty thanks for your goodness and loving kindness. We give thanks for all the blessings of your creation, and your immeasurable love in giving us your Son, Jesus Christ, for the salvation of the world. Give us grace to show forth your praise by giving ourselves to your service and reaching out to those in need, as you reach out to us in Jesus Christ, in this current pandemic crisis and always. In the light of your Holy Spirit show us the possibilities of a life full of new possibilities and new beginnings. Amen

***Conclusion: The Lord's Prayer and The Grace***