

"Give Us This Day Our Daily Gluten"

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Luke 11:1-10 CEB

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Let us pray: Gracious Lord, with patience and perhaps impatience alike, we have gathered together here another day. With your Holy Word having been read, may your Spirit move through each one of us this morning. May the words of my mouth and the meditations of all of our hearts be pleasing to you, God, now and forever. Amen.

When I told my parents that I was going to attend seminary, they didn't respond as I had expected. It was February 2015, the finish line to my Bachelors in Theatre was in sight, and I had finally accepted that God has called me for ministry. When I went to tell my father, I knocked on his office door, and then I sort of just stood there, unable to figure out what to say. I mean, I had put so many years towards acting, I had been so sure. The silence was long enough that he swiveled around in his chair to look at me, and without my saying anything he said, "Oh, you're going to seminary." Then when I went to tell my mother, I found her reading, I walked into the room and said, "Mom, I've decided to go to seminary and begin the ordination process." Without even bothering to look up from her book, she said, "yeah, I know." And that was that! Not quite the big reveal I was expecting if I'm being perfectly honest. I know that not everyone has quite the flare for the dramatic that I have but what a let down! They were apparently in on something for a long time, that I had yet to tune in to. Apparently, they had been biting their tongues and being patient for 20 years.

Thinking about that, I decided to ask my dad when it was that he knew that I was going to pastor churches. His answer had a lot to do with simply how much as a child I seemed to like to shadow everything he did, I was always pumped to go to church or talk about church or ask questions about church. So from back when I was in the single digits, apparently my parents were pretty sure I was going to end up right here, and even though they *knew* that, they also knew that trying to get me to see what they already could see would only backfire on them, I'm nothing if not stubborn. So they'd give the occasional nudge, support me where I was at each and every given day, and trust that those days would eventually add up and lead to, well, here. Actually, they were so committed to their patience, to their being uninvolved in my discernment, I must say, that sometimes I was like, "Do you even want me to be a pastor?" When I feel impatience over many things, I think about their example of patience with me and how that has brought me here, exactly where I'm supposed to be. Them being impatient, would have probably made the process to get here longer.

Impatience can often get in the way of what God is building. I can imagine God sometimes being like, "We all have the same goal here, I just need you to back off for a second and let me do my thing." I think about this, I think about my obsessive desire to plan, the intensity in which I love my planner as I had mentioned in a past daily devotional (it's real intense), the way I abhor the response, "Oh we'll just figure it out closer to" - No. You might as well just run your nails across the chalkboard for me, thanks. I think about this each and every time we recite the Lord's Prayer: "Give us this day

our daily bread". That's not the bread I need tomorrow, it's not the bread I need January 23rd, 2022, Lord, I'm asking you to give me the bread I need today and only today, nothing more nothing less; and tomorrow, I'll ask the same. "Give us this day our daily bread".

Our recitation of the Lord's Prayer comes from the Gospel of Matthew and today's Gospel reading from Luke. Ours now has a couple extra pieces to it, but in both Gospels is this line, "Give us the bread we need for today." Christ is teaching us to reach out to God daily, to ask for God's loving guidance, and care, and the necessities we need to carry on, but is being very specific in this teaching. It's not just about us receiving this bread from God representing what nourishes us, mind - body - and spirit, but also to recognize our tendency for greed, our tendency for impatience, our tendency to hoard and hold things close to our chests so that no one will take it from us; our tendency to not actually trust God with tomorrow, so we ask for tomorrow's fill now, just in case.

My habit, or gift - who knows, of planning so far in advance can cause issues, right? That list of tasks with the impossible deadlines that I gave myself can then become so astronomically long that I then constantly feel like I'm failing, always falling short. The color-coded charts are fun, but they also show a desire to control things that are simply out of my control. That's when I grip to this line, "Lord, give me just my daily bread. Free me from worrying about something that shouldn't be today's worry."

Jesus goes on though from just teaching the disciples how to pray. He has the disciples imagine that they had an

unexpected guest and had to go to a friend to borrow some food, but the friend comes up with excuses as to why to not help; then Jesus gives this weird line, "I assure you, even if he wouldn't get up and help because of his friendship, he will get up and give his friend whatever he needs because of his friend's brashness." Okay, strange. But what Jesus is ultimately getting at is the importance in being persistent in praying, persistent in bringing our needs to God, even when it may feel or appear like we're being ignored. Keep asking for your daily bread. Shamelessly ask for your daily bread. "Ask and you will receive. Seek and you will find. Knock and the door will be opened to you. Everyone who asks, receives. Whoever seeks, finds. To everyone who knocks, the door is opened." God wants to give us our daily bread! Even in the book of Exodus, when God is giving Moses instructions it reads: "I'm going to make bread rain down from the sky for you. The people will go out each day and gather just enough for that day."

Consider the following story from a number of decades ago by Rev. Ralph Neighbour who pastored Houston's West Memorial Baptist Church:

"Jack had been president of a large corporation, and when he got cancer, they ruthlessly dumped him. He went through his insurance, used his life savings, and had practically nothing left. I visited him with one of my deacons, who said, 'Jack, you speak so openly about the brief life you have left. I wonder if you've prepared for your life after death?'

"At that, Jack stood up, livid with rage. 'You (blinking) Christians. All you ever think about is what's going to happen to me after I die. If your God is so great, why doesn't he do

something about the real problems of life?' He went on to tell us he was leaving his wife penniless and his daughter without money for college. Then he ordered us out.

"Later my deacon insisted we go back. We did. 'Jack, I know I offended you,' he said. 'I humbly apologize. But I want you to know I've been working since then. Your first problem is where your family will live after you die. I spoke to a realtor in our church and he has agreed to sell your house and give your wife his commission. And I guarantee you that, if you'll permit us, myself and some other men in the congregation have pledged make the house payments until it's sold.

"Then, I've contacted the owner of an apartment house down the street. He's offered your wife a three bedroom apartment plus free utilities and an \$850-a-month salary in return for her collecting rents and supervising plumbing and electrical repairs. The income from your house should pay for your daughter's college. I just wanted you to know your family will be cared for.'

Hearing this, Jack broke down and began to cry like a baby. He had never heard of anything like this. He had never been around people like this. What could possibly make people do things like this? It had to have come from God!

Jack died shortly thereafter, but having experienced, through so many sacrificial and giving Christians, God's remarkable love even while rejecting him, he gave his life to Jesus Christ before his passing.

His funeral turned out to be a joyful celebration of new life. And his widow and daughter, touched by these caring

Christians, each responded to the gospel message as well, and are both now active members of the church.

All this life, people finding their way into the joy of the Kingdom, because some faithful people decided to live lives that only made sense if God was in them.

Might we do the same.

You see, the church leaders were impatiently trying to rush to the end goal, when the actual way to get there, the way God was at work to getting him and his family there, was through simply meeting his needs of that given day. God's got tomorrow covered.

There have been many days throughout my life where my parents probably wanted to try and feed me the bread that childhood me was not ready for. It's not what I needed then. God will do the goodness that is God's very nature, we just need to ask for what we need right here, today, and have the patience to let God offer tomorrow's bread tomorrow.