

As we gather tonight for our Community Thanksgiving Service we will receive an offering for a group called, Washington Kids in Transition. This is a group who serves our Edmonds school district and one of their goals is to give a “take home” meal to the homeless kids in our school district (the Edmonds district has around 600 this year). Bag lunches are given out on the buses so that these students have an evening meal. They have found that many of these students would have nothing to eat until they are back in school the next morning. They are also trying to help with providing week-end meals to these homeless students. And, if they have young family members who are not in school they work to provide a meal for them also.

In chatting with Pam Martinez of Holly House last week she shared that they are now partners with an alternative high school in Lynnwood. This is a school where students who do not fit into a traditional high school can come and get their high school diploma (Diane taught in a similar school in the South Central LA area). Pam shared that one of the needs is for food gift cards to places like Subway, McDonald’s and Taco Bell (these are located near the school). These cards are used by the students to get a noon meal or an afternoon snack.

We serve a substantial “snack” to our Wings students each Tuesday and Thursday. We know in years past for some of the students this was their evening meal.

As Jesus taught his followers how to pray these words were a part of his prayer, “*Give us this day our daily bread.*” They were hungry, anxious and afraid. They were now exiles from Egypt living in the desert. At least in Egypt, even with the slavery they had their daily bread. Now that they are exiles in the desert there is little water and no food. They are angry. There is no grain for bread and even if they had seeds to plant, planting one day does not give you a harvest the next. They were close to revolting against Moses and Aaron. We do strange things when we are hungry. How do you feed a nation in the desert when there is no place to secure the grain needed for daily bread?

God supplied. Each morning there was “manna” covering the ground, a bread from heaven. They were instructed to gather what they needed - no more or no less. On the sixth day there were to gather a double portion for there would be none on the Sabbath day. They discovered that if they gathered too much it went bad (there could be no hoarding). God would supply their daily bread. Everyone had what they needed for the day.

The crowds find Jesus in John 6. He had just fed 5,000 people and they come looking for him seeking to find their daily bread. John 6:31 reads, “...*our ancestors ate manna in the wilderness...*” They too wanted the manna from heaven, their daily bread. It would certainly make life easier, no one would go hungry. Jesus had fed them once, will he do it again?

However, the manna had stopped when Israel had a home, a place to plant and harvest. There was no longer any need for the daily manna to fall from the heavens. It was probably an adjustment for them. Most of them had only known the daily manna - they had not had to plant and harvest to get the grain for their daily bread. They would learn again the cycle of life: planting and harvesting. It would be supplied by the work of their own hands (maybe they would appreciate it more). God still provided but now through the work of their hands.

Jesus said that when we pray we are to pray for our daily bread. Bread was the staple of their meals. Now for some in our world it might be better translated as our daily rice or our daily taro. Whatever the daily staple of the people is. We have a friend in the Philippines who will not say he has eaten unless the meal has rice. When they send out for pizza they have to cook rice for Joel or he will complain that he has not eaten. Whatever the daily staple is Jesus says

that we should pray that all people have it. Remember, this is a prayer with only plurals - it is not a prayer for individual needs (of course, we are included in our) but for universal needs.

Now, Jesus does not say that we are to pray for our abundance. I wondered what they would think of if they saw our “super” markets today? The choices would overwhelm. I mean, just look at the choice we have for flour: white, wheat, unbleached, bleached, rye, rice, potato, etc. And, then look at the choice we have of breads! We stockpile. Of course, we are being told that we need to be prepared for the coming natural disaster be it an earthquake or snow storm. Our freezers are stocked for many tomorrows. We often forget that many in the world still rely on “daily” provisions. Many countries around the world now have milk that does not need to be refrigerated. It has a shelf live of years. Why? They have no way to cold-store milk. The development of this non-refrigerated milk has helped with their daily provisions and nutrition.

The homeless in this country have no place to store food. They are dependent on “daily” food and there are those who would stop even that. Not sure it’s accurate but a news article this week said that a neighboring State is considering making the giving of money to panhandlers illegal. You could be arrested and fined for doing so. Some cities have tried to stop feeding programs. There are some in MLT who would like to stop the weekly meal being served by Betheseda Lutheran.

One commentator on this prayer of Jesus wrote that Jesus was not only talking about “spiritual” bread but our bread for daily meal consumption. When you take this approach it is easy to neglect feeding the hungry, etc. When you say his only concern was for our spiritual needs then you can easily dismiss feeding those who are truly hungry for physical food. If this was Jesus’ intention then why did he feed 5,000 and 4,000 because they were hungry and he had compassion for them?

We know we have better attention spans when we are not hungry. Children do better in school when they are fed. Workers are more productive when they are not hungry. We all do better when we have “our daily bread”.

I love the story of an Indian woman whose family was in need of their daily rice. However, the first thing she did when she was given a sack of rice was to measure some out and take it to her neighbor. When questioned why, her response was, “But, they are hungry too!”

We are so blessed, are we not?

Kitchen Mother Version of the Lord’s Prayer by George Ella Lyon:

Give us this day
bread we could feed
the world and snatch us bald-headed
if we try to swallow it all.

NIV, New International Bible Society, Zondervan, 1973, 1978, 1985
NRSV, Division of Christian Education, NCC, 1988