

## **BREAD FOR A DAY**

**Jesus taught his disciples to pray, “Give us this day our daily bread”. This was a part of the ancient Jewish wisdom – deeply imbedded in him – the old faith of “the people of the land”. And Jesus was of the people, the plain people – the small farmers, craftsmen, shopkeepers, and he shared the simplicity of their life and faith, their work ethic. Their faith had to be simple, their ethics workable, for they lived a plain life, open to the sky above and the earth beneath. They had neither the technology nor the bureaucracy to insulate, to protect them. They did not live in urban Rome, but in the rural provinces. They were exposed. They had to depend on God and their own good sense. So they prayed plain prayers.**

**Jesus must have remembered his father praying them, folding his laborer’s hands, and saying, “Give us this day our daily bread.” He, Joseph, had a wife, six children, and he was likely an old man who felt the nearness of death. Later, Jesus’ mother as a widow must have prayed that same prayer every morning: “Give us today the bread we need. Amen.” And then it was back to the garden, the shop, and the kitchen, to make that faith work for one more day. It was all they asked. Jesus grew up this way, praying, “Give us this day .....**

**It was a prayer out of humble supplication, “Give us”. This was not a demand. It was a supplication, a hope, an expectation – but not a demand. Food for the body is difficult to raise and dear to pay for. In a time of Roman occupation, widespread corruption, and small justice for the common man, it is very difficult for us to understand the humility of this plain-peoples prayer. We live in a time of demands – white demands, black demands, poor demands, rich demands, young demands and old demands, but always demands. Human needs have not changed; human rights have not changed. It is only a shift in attitudes. We so often think that by some mysterious means, God is in our debt, that the world owes us everything, that society, the “others” (whoever they are – white, black, old, young – etc.) must pay us.**



But this is not only a prayer out of humility, “Give us” – it is also in the second place, a prayer out of humanity. It is, “Give us”. “We are in it together. We are in this life together”, said Jesus’ plain prayer to God. “None of us can make it alone. No one can win alone. No one man or woman, no one group, can succeed by itself.

And the longer humanity survives, the more and more “us” it becomes. Someone has figured out that if U.S. population increases at it’s present rate for the next 1400 years, the body weight of Americans will out-weigh the continent! I do not believe that. But the awesome truth is, there are getting to be more and more of us, packed, wedged closer and closer together, one giant urban complex of seeking, needing, sweating human beings, the earth a-crawl with the flood of us, so that at this very hour, no one can safely or sensibly pray, “Give me – me – me!”, but must with great humanity pray only, “Give us – us – us!”, for we are in this together. We are all “boat people” and this small earth is our boat – at best it is a frail craft – afloat in the dark terror of the universe.

Strange, Jesus and the plain people, had a sense of this 2000 years ago, when the earth numbered its folk as only a few. So, “Give us”, he prayed, and we are one family, a large family. We live in one, small earth craft and unless we are a community, not all the technology, not all the bureaucracy in the mind of man can protect us from one another.

Even in our own tiny house, the pronouns make or break it. Think, “I – me – mine” all the time, and you’ve cracked the foundations you live on at home. Only when you think “We – us – ours”, do you begin to put it back together again, and make it a well-working house, a home worth living in.

So it is with the whole earth. It’s the humanity to say “us” and live like it. “Give us”. But if this plain prayer is out of humility, and out of humanity, it is also out of simple reality. It has the plain-people’s wisdom about time and necessity in it. It is



**“give us this day our daily bread”. This has the Old Testament’s sense of real time and real need in it.**

**As we are always saying – the only real time you have is today. How is your time? Much (maybe most) anxiety and conflict is living in yesterday or tomorrow: Have you ever heard the following? – “Oh, what you did to me! What you said to me! How you treated me! I will nurse yesterday forever in my mind to hold it against you as an open wound”. Or, “Oh, what’s going to happen to me? What loneliness, what sort of rejection, what suffering, what poverty, what hunger, what pain, what death?” That is the voice of trying to live where you cannot live – in yesterday – or – tomorrow. “No, no”, says the plain prayer. “Live in the one place where you can live. Live today. Learn from the past, plan for the future, but do your living in the only place it’s possible – in today.”**

**The Creator God was wise, very wise – when he said, “Let there be lights in the firmament of the heaven to divide the day from the night, i.e. that is to say the earth was created for only one day at a time, for God knows that’s all we mortals can take. But we can take each day as it comes – if we stick together. We can face any one day. We can make today’s decisions. We can do today’s work. We can face today’s evils, it’s pain. We can do it wisely, calmly, without terror, if we do it now, today.**

**So don’t postpone life, either your own, or someone else’s. To say, “I will fulfill your needs, I will give you your rights – later,” is never practical, for it’s later than you think. By then, your spouse, your brother, your parents, may be dead, your children gone away, your community in flames. It is, always, in the wisdom of the plain people, “this day”, this is the day, now is the time, for the work, the choices, at hand. So, begin. Now! Now is never too late.**



**And if the plain prayer has a real sense of time, it also has a real sense of necessity. For its expectations do not outreach its abilities. "Give us this day", what? "Our daily bread – what we need today.**

**How much do we really need? As much as we think? I think not. Peace, contentment, the creative life, come with the simplicities, the elementals: the bread of work to do, the bread of love to share, the bread of God – the opportunity to work, to work well, the chance to share the chance to share the body, the mind, the heart, and the right to see a purpose in it all, an order, a goal, to feel part of a providence, a great plan – in short – the right to worship.**

**So, this plain prayer, is not just one of humility and humanity and reality (real time and real need) – it is in the fourth place – one of faith too. For it is not simply a prayer to oneself, or one's fellows, it is a prayer to our shared hope, our shared dream, to our sense of providence, in short, to our God, to "Our Father who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name, thy Kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. "Our Father – give us this day our daily bread."**

**Let us pray:**

**O Lord, we ask you for this day's life – for work, for love, for faith – not to hoard, but to share, to share, without anger, without shame of the past, without fear of the future. So give us yourself, O Lord Christ. For that is what you called yourself – the "bread of life". So may grace, mercy, peace -----**