

Living the Word of Life

“Give Us This Day Our Daily Bread” (Matthew 6:11)

Huh? Do I need to pray that God would supply me with food for each day? Hey, I can go to the local supermarket and buy food for today and tomorrow and the next day and the next. Yet this is what Jesus said should be included in our prayers. There seems to be a gaping disconnect between how original followers of Jesus lived and how we live today. Manual laborers in the times of Christ were paid wages daily. They didn't have bank accounts. They mostly lived a day-to-day subsistence. In contrast we (most of us, anyway) today know only prosperity, financial security, and the ability to experience luxury. A biblical worldview isn't ours. Is that how it's supposed to be? I suspect not. Let's discuss this.

What does, “Give us this day our daily bread” mean? The concept is so alien to us I think we simply ignore the words. But we'd better not ignore it. The Lord's Prayer is in two equal parts, 3 verses oriented to God and 3 verses focused on us, on our needs. Yet it's a unit, a whole. It's all about honoring God for His character. His will flows from His perfect character. His will is His kingdom, which is future, when the Son and the Spirit will be fully revealed and fully glorious. Our desire should be that the realities of heaven become fulfilled here on earth. So the context for this prayer is our serving God by finding and preparing people from all over the world for the future Kingdom. Then the plea for our needs focuses on our three most basic necessities: sustenance, forgiveness, and protection from evil and sin. We'll need these to be effective, fruitful, faithful servants of God. Our work is making disciples, that is, getting others to honor God; we're here to promote God's honor. If we're devoted to and are busy carrying out God's revealed program for this era, we're not to worry about tomorrow; God will take care of that for us.

Although we all have Bibles in our homes, we somehow fail to grasp the core biblical worldview: We're here on mission. So our lives are to be simple, narrowly focused, and dependent on God to use us for His purposes. Even though we live in this modern era, our worldview should still be biblical. A biblical world view is making the Word of God come to life in us, in our lives. A self-indulgent life, oblivious to God's revealed will for us but adorned with recurring pangs of piety, although acceptable in today's world, is certainly not following Jesus. As adopted sons, God has the fatherly obligation to feed His beloved children, to meet their needs. And as His children, we have the filial obligation to obey our Father, to imitate Him, and to trust Him. This is the worldview implicit in the Lord's Prayer.

There's more. If we're living the biblical worldview, the circumstances of our lives, indeed, the events of the world we dwell in, should all be in the context of trust. We trust our Father to rule His cosmos according to His perfect will, and to control the things that happen to us personally as well. He knows and has split-second, total control over everything that happens in His creation; He is also wise and good. Therefore He can be trusted for *everything*. We also trust God that His agenda is being carried out of bringing to fulfillment His long-ago promised Kingdom. And any adverse circumstances in our lives are according to His perfect will for the perfecting of our faith. Living this worldview, living out the Word of God, is called “walking with God.”

The promised future Kingdom is exceedingly important to God. It's His great desire. The Son was sent to establish that Kingdom and, though rejected, He will come again to make that a reality. Is it our great desire as well? All creation awaits that kingdom, and if the Word forms the pattern for our thinking, we should be eagerly anticipating it too. Trusting in the sovereignty of God makes reading the daily news thrilling, because every detail of current events must be God's doing. He is carrying out the necessary preparations for the Son to return and establish the Kingdom. Thus, for example, the whole Covid ordeal we experienced must have been God's work. The march of socialism throughout the Western world likewise must be God's doing. If we connect the Bible's great hope with what's happening in the world, we should be both excited and grateful for the privilege of seeing God at work.

We modern believers are so removed from a biblical worldview, however, that we don't even understand the most basic terms any more. We've redefined them, mainly according to our self-absorbed wants. Let's consider here just a few to demonstrate my point:

- “Love” in the Bible is selflessly (even involving self-sacrifice), generously seeking the good or blessing of others by doing for them what is necessary, helpful or wise. There may or may not be an affective component to it.

Love for God is obediently, trustingly serving Him as He instructed. We also show love for others by ignoring their sins and forgiving their offenses. Love is as love does.

- “Faith” in the Bible is knowing God and lovingly trusting Him. It’s perfect confidence that what He’s either promised or stated as truth will be realized, *and then* acting or living in a way that’s appropriate to what He’s said. [That second phrase is key to understanding biblical faith.] Faith is as faith does.
- “Born again” is living the new life that’s imparted to us by the resurrected Christ Jesus. It’s not a slogan nor a category of identities, but a living out of the Law of Christ, which is the Word of God. It’s Christ living out His life in us by the power of the indwelling Spirit, and it occurs as we obey His Word.
- “Worship” demonstrates to God how much He is worth to us. It necessarily involves self-sacrifice, the more we believe He’s worth, the greater our self-sacrifice. We worship God by making His thoughts, values, and priorities our own. We worship God by seeking to know Him to an ever greater degree, and by trustingly obeying and serving Him. We worship God by doing His revealed will.
- “Salvation” is being in an intimate, personal, loving relationship with the living, Creator God, by being *in Christ* by faith. It’s a life that mimics God’s character, lives out His righteousness and goodness, and that fulfills His revealed will for us. It’s not a theological concept, but a radically new kind of life defined and described in the Word of God. It’s pursuing a life of holiness while assiduously eschewing sin. It’s being committed to knowing and serving God. It’s being in love with Jesus.
- “Church” is a fellowship of believers in love with each other. It’s a community of people with like faith who gather to bless each other, help each other, instruct each other, encourage each other. In other words, it’s for horizontally directed love (not vertical, it’s not for “worship” of God). Church is an earthly, here-and-now cameo of the *koinonia* we’ll experience in the future in heaven.

In many other ways, too numerous to list here, what we suppose is Christianity isn’t biblical. We’re either so chained to our traditional ways that we can’t see it, or we’re simply oblivious to biblical truths.

Living a biblical life isn’t impossible today. Some things are beyond repair, for example the modern structure of church. But we don’t have to enter a nunnery or a monastery to live out the Word of God. We need to know the Word and reflect on how to put it into practice. So, for example, we’re to be content with what God has provided. That means trusting God that His provision for us is precisely what He has willed to be blessing for us. Seeking more denies God’s loving and perfect will for us and draws us into worldliness if not idolatry.

The Kingdom of God is righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit. God intends for us to enjoy certain of the blessings of the Kingdom now, in this life. Righteousness is fulfilling the Word of God, making God’s revealed righteousness our own experience, as enabled by the Spirit. Peace is an attitude of contentment with life, with God, and with others. That too is a gift of the Spirit. Joy is also an attitude, one of constant pleasure regardless of adversity because of a radical trust in a loving and good God, and it’s another fruit of the Spirit. Living the Kingdom is living in conformity with the Word of God. It’s supernatural, and it comes only to those whose minds and hearts are committed to knowing, loving, obeying and serving God.

What may be the most serious disconnect between living a biblical worldview and our modern lives is in the domain of the will. It has to do with our inner selves. All through the Bible, from Adam in the Garden to the very end, we find people struggling with their will, whether to obey God or not. And too often failing. Only Jesus had a pure heart of love for God and was able to perfectly obey Him. “Not my will, but Thine,” encapsulates His perfect righteousness. That is why we must have Jesus! And that is what salvation accomplishes. He rose, ascended to heaven and sent His Spirit to indwell believers so that we can obey God. *If we want to*. Writing the New Testament, the apostles assumed that we’d want to. In the Book of Acts, many did, and the Church grew. But . . . Do we? My suspicion is, we’re so concerned and occupied with fulfilling our own desires and priorities that we quench the Spirit. So no obedience, only failure.

God gave us His Word purposely so that we would know how to live. We dare not ignore it nor refuse to live it, because if we do, we’re not really living, just existing. That’s tragic. Let’s so thoroughly saturate our minds with the Word that our lives reveal the living God.