

When I think of prayer I think of the hospital. I suppose that is because I pray with people more there than anywhere else. Many times at the end of a visit I will ask the patient, Can we pray together? and then <sup>I</sup> will pray for and with the person lying there. I have prayed for many things, for God's presence most of all, but also for faith and strength and healing and understanding. Sometimes the prayers seem a routine, going from room to room, praying for the same things in each room. Sometimes the prayer arises with a sense of urgency and emotion. Sometimes I sense that I speak <sup>to God</sup> on behalf of this person lying there ~~to God~~, putting into words what this person seeks and feels most deeply. sometimes I sense that my prayer comes from the other direction, a word from God to one who ~~is~~ needs to hear that word.

One thing I have found troubling. Someone is sick for a long period of time. Day after day, week after week, I enter the room, we visit, I pray, and after a time it seems that the prayers have all been said. Healing hasn't happened, at least not in the way <sup>for</sup> which I had hoped ~~for~~, pain is not eased, the faith of the one lying there dries out. I ask, can we pray together, if you want comes the dispirited reply.

I wonder, why should I pray for faith, for healing, for strength, for God's presence again? God knows what we want and need.

It is like what I felt when my mother had cancer. Day after day after day I prayed, saying in every way I could think of God please heal my mother. Guide the ~~xxxxxx~~ doctors, make the chemo therapy a success, give a miracle, until even as I prayed for her to die to finally end her pain I still prayed for healing. Through it all I wondered about praying the same prayer over and over. Is it right to do that? Or do I become as a whining, nagging child, who can't accept the way things will be.

I've wished I knew about prayer, how to pray, what to pray. I've remembered Jesus' story about the man who <sup>could</sup> ~~was~~ knocking on the door in the middle of the night, making such a racket that the man finally ~~got~~ <sup>got</sup> up and ~~gave~~ <sup>gave</sup> him the bread he ~~was~~ requested. And the story about the widow who keeps bothering the

judge until he finally gives in. I keep in mind Jesus statement, Ask, and it will be given you, seek and you will find, knock and it shall be opened unto you. Through ~~the~~ parables ~~and~~ ~~the~~ teaching Jesus tells us to be persistent in our praying, to come before God with our every request, to not give up or lose heart. But I haven't paid nearly enough attention to Jesus' most important teaching about prayer.

Lord, teach us to pray, the disciples asked, and he taught them, Father, hallowed ~~be~~ thy name, thy kingdom come, Give us each day our daily bread, and forgive us our sins, for we ourselves forgive everyone who is indebted to us; and lead us not into temptation.

This is one of the two Biblical versions of what we know as the Lord's prayer. We are more familiar with the form of the Lord's prayer recorded in the gospel according to St. Matthew but essentially the two versions are the same. This ~~morning~~ <sup>Evening</sup> I want to focus our attention on but one petition, what we know as the 4th petition, Give us this day our daily bread.

In the catechism Martin Luther asks the question, What is meant by daily bread? ~~and then~~ Daily bread includes everything needed for this life, such as food and clothing, home and property, work and income, a devoted family, an orderly ~~government~~ community, good government, favorable weather, peace and health, a good name and true friends and neighbors.

Give us this day our daily bread. Give us this day everything we need for this day. This is what Jesus has taught us to pray.

How often we get sidetracked in our living when we do not pray and live this simple petition. God made us to live one day. God provides us bread for one day. God gives us food, clothing, home, property, work, income, family, community, government, weather, peace, health, friends and neighbors sufficient for one day. But we want more. How often I find myself troubled and upset about next week or next month. My leg was aching Friday morning, I had trouble sleeping. I found myself upset about how I would deal with the discomfort if it would persist for a week. For Friday I was able to handle the discomfort

but as I thought about the future, handling the discomfort on other days then I started to get into trouble.

Give us this day our daily bread. I find that each day God has provided the help and the strength and all that I have needed to get me through. Yet I continue to look ahead and see many demands and begin to worry and panic.

~~through the years I have exchanged my prayers in hospital rooms and  
living rooms and I pray for what is needed for each day~~

One day at a time, we all know this simple phrase. It is trite, we speak it without thinking. Just as we pray give us this day our daily bread without thinking of all that we are asking for. But though we know about living one day at a time, living one day at a time is a gift and an art. Knowing that God will provide what we need today, though he will not provide a vision of tomorrow, knowing that he will provide for today, this is what we need.

Give us this day our daily bread. This is a prayer that must be prayed new every day. It is a one day prayer, for one day only.

So many of our questions about prayer are answered when all of our prayers are one day prayers. When the patient in the hospital does not look ahead a week or a month, or try to imagine how they will manage for a lifetime, but prays for one day then he or she finds God has heard and answered. When the person facing grief asks God for strength for one day to live without this one that has died, then strength for one day is provided. When parents each day ask God for wisdom and understanding in raising their children, then wisdom and understanding for one day are provided. But when parents take the whole load of their children's future on their shoulders, or the grieving person bears the weight of years of living without this loved one, then they are often crushed beneath the load.

Give us this day our daily bread.

I think about my mother's cancer. She was not healed. But day after day, one day at a time strength and faith were provided by God. Even all she needed for the day of her dying.

Give us this day our daily bread. What does this mean? Luther asks. The answer we memorized is: God gives daily bread, even without our prayer,

to all people, though sinful, but we ask in this prayer that he will help us to realize this and to receive our daily bread with thanks.

Whether we pray or whether we do not, God provides for one day. All people though sinful receive what they need from God. But as we pray for daily bread we are reminded who provides for this day. God provides for one day for you.  
Amen.

*Let us pray: Father, we thank you that you have provided all that we need for this day. Amen.*