

Title: Needing God
Text: Matthew 6.11
Theme: God's daily provision
Series: Matthew #31
Prop Stmt We need God daily.

After much thought and intense study of my gifts and abilities, I have come to the conclusion that my calling in life is to be a philanthropist. I feel much more fulfilled when I am able to give to others, than when I have to depend on others. Making others happy, being a hero, fulfilling the dreams of children, being thought of as successful, generous, magnanimous and yet refined, definitely lines up with my skill set. Frankly, I do not do well when I am the one who is needy. I am just not wired to be the one who has to ask others for help. Therefore, I have concluded that I must be made for; I must be called to be a philanthropist.

A prominent businessman was speaking at Oxford University and said, "As you know, I have been fortunate in my career and I've made a lot of money – far more than I could ever spend, and far more than my family needs." But in a rare moment of self-revelation he added, "To be honest, one of my motives for making so much money was simple – to have the money to hire people to do what I don't like doing. But there's one thing I've never been able to hire anyone to do for me: find my own sense of purpose and fulfillment. I'd give anything to discover that."¹

Isn't it ironic that the very thing that we want: independence from everyone (including God) leaves us so totally empty? Perhaps being dependent on God is not so bad after all. Jesus had not only something to say about this, he taught us to pray like it because we need to learn to live like this.

Read Text:

How are we supposed to live now when his will on earth is not yet being done? We are to live in dependency upon him everyday. Can you imagine living so close to the edge that you pray daily for bread because otherwise you do not know where it is coming from? But, is this prayer only for those who are so impoverished and needy that the cupboard is bare, the refrigerator is empty and they literally do not have any money or is this part of how the people of God are supposed to pray? If we are all supposed to pray like this, then what is Christ teaching us, when he teaches us to pray like this? This is reality.

I. **We all need God.** "*Give us*"

Christ teaches us to pray like this because we do not think like this on our own. We presume that we do not need God, at least not completely. We may find ourselves in tight spots from time to time and we would like a little assistance. In fact, we like a Home Depot view of God. We imagine God saying, "You can do it, let me help." So, we may

¹ Taken from Os Guinness, *The Calling*

turn to God from time to time in order to ask him for his opinion on a matter. And like an op ed. piece we will evaluate what God suggests and see if it really fits with what we are thinking.

But, here is what Jesus is teaching. We are in desperate need of God. This is our reality, whether we realize it or not. No matter how healthy you appear to be, how well your job is going, how successful your children are, or how well you are doing in school. We need to see ourselves as Hezekiah, besieged in Jerusalem by the Assyrians. We need to see ourselves as Moses at the Red Sea with nowhere else to turn. Everyday we need to realize that we have no plan B. We have no money in savings for a rainy day. We have no food in the pantry, no money in our pockets, no car that we can sell, and no jewelry that we can pawn. We have nothing and we have no means by which we can get anything. In other words, we are the diver on the bottom of the ocean floor, whose oxygen tank just ran out and we are entangled by a plant from which cannot break free. In reality, this is our condition every single day. We just do not know it. After all, most of us have some food in the pantry, some gas in the car, some money in our wallet and some money in savings. We do not generally live with the question of, will we eat, but rather, what will we eat or where will we eat and will it be done exactly as we want. It does not occur to us to pray with a deep sense of desperate dependence because we think that we have that covered for now. Jesus is saying that we all need God. We all need to pray, “*Give us*” because we do not have. You cannot pray this while holding on to and depending on things that insulate you from depending on God.

Have you ever seen those experiments with monkeys in which they put a prize of some type on the other side of a glass wall? In the glass is a hole that is large enough for the monkey’s hand to fit through, but when the monkey grabs the prize (usually something shiny or a nut) the monkey’s hand will no longer fit back through the glass. Now, the monkey is in a bit of turmoil. It wants the treasure, but it cannot hold on the treasure and retrieve its hand. What will it do? We are like that monkey. Only we cannot hold on to God in desperation if we are trying to hold to other things. It is so ironic that the very things that God gives us, often become the things that we trust in and begin to assume that since we have them, that we really do not need God.

But, when we pray this from our hearts, we are admitting that God is the giver, and we are needy. If you are going to be a genuine follower of Christ, you must get to this point, where you realize that you have nothing to offer God that he needs and that He has everything that you need. You bring your sin and your guilt to him. He brings Christ to you and forgiveness and righteousness. You bring brokenness and weakness and failure. He brings wholeness, strength and perfection. But, when you finally give up trying to achieve God’s favor by what you do and you trust in Christ as your Savior and King, this begins a life for you in Christ, in which you are continually admitting your need of God. This is how we live. We are all beggars who have been personally invited into the banquet hall of the King, and clothed with robes of righteousness. And we cannot take credit for a single part of it.

II. **We all need God now.** “*Give us this day*”

This very moment, we are completely dependent upon God for our very life. Our heart beats, our mind functions, our blood circulates, our nervous system is carrying messages, our kidneys are filtering and our lungs are oxygenating only because a merciful God has given us another moment of life. At any second, any of those functions could fail, and our life, as we know it, is over. A stroke, aneurism, heart attack, or seizure could stop our life process. Right now, we live this day in dependence upon God. Right now, the sun is shining, warming the earth, at just the proper temperature. The Earth is around 93 million miles from the Sun, and is situated in a very narrow band with the correct distance for habitability. If it were only 5 percent closer to the Sun, the Earth would become like the planet Venus, boiling hot, and uninhabitable. However, if we were just 20 percent farther away, the Earth would become like Mars, freezing and still uninhabitable. What keeps us in this zone? What keeps the earth rotating and spinning and orbiting? What keeps the sun shining, burning, yet, not so far extinguishing? Life, as we know it hangs by a seemingly tenuous thread.

Last Sunday, we rejoiced together that Amanda was able to walk again. For two months, she could not move her leg, her foot, not even her toes. Now, every morning when she wakes up, she is grateful to God that her leg works. She no longer presumes that her leg will work. When I wake up, I presume that my legs will work and that they will hold me up. (I do not presume that my brain is functioning until I jump-start it with a bit of coffee, but I do presume that my legs will work.) Should I presume that? No, When I wake-up, I ought to thank God that he allowed me to wake up. He gave me/us another day. He gave us thoughts of him. He gave us affections for him. He gave us fresh grace for this day. He gave us great and precious promises and mercies that are new for us every day. And, if I went to bed last night with food in the pantry and the refrigerator, I need to be grateful and in a sense pleasantly surprised that it is still there and was not stolen in the night.

But, ironically, when we pray, we often pray for things that will keep us from having to be desperate for God. We pray for a steady job, a steady income, for consistent health, for good relationships, for a decent place to live, etc. Is it ok to pray for these things? Certainly! But, do not pray for these so that you will insulated from having to depend on God. We tend to pray for things to go well, and yet, when we things are going well, we tend to be satisfied. Beloved, Jesus is calling us to pray with desperation and to realize that we really are totally dependent upon him, no matter how much food is in the pantry, or how much money is stuffed under the mattress.

III. We all need God now for daily needs. – “*daily bread*”

It was customary in those days for a Jew to pray in the morning and in the evening. In the morning, he would pray for bread for that day, and in the evening he would pray for bread for tomorrow. This prayer did not assume that bread was already there. It was a prayer that reflected lessons learned from daily manna that had been provided by God.

Bread not only refers to actual bread, but it was a metaphor then, like it is in our culture for a person’s needs. We say things like, “he brings home the bacon” or “he’s earning the

bread.” So, when Jesus is teaching us to pray for bread, he is teaching us to rely completely upon God to provide for our daily needs. This does not mean that we pray and do not go to work. Oh no. It means that we pray for strength to be able to work and pray with thanksgiving that God has provided a job and pray with humility that we are able work for another day. It means that we pray with gratitude on our way to work, and pray for perseverance as we look for work.

One of the encouraging and comforting aspects of this prayer, and yet the most debated part as well, is the fact that Jesus commands us to pray for bread. That is about as common as it gets. Cathi figures that if Jesus wants us to pray about bread, then it is okay to pray for the Tigers. But many have found that praying for daily bread is too common and mundane for Jesus. Therefore, Jesus must have been talking about some eschatological bread of the messianic banquet. But, he is not. He is talking about the concern that God has for our every day needs. Go to God. Depend upon him for your daily needs. What happens when you are facing 3 midterms in one week, or facing an impossible deadline at work, or facing a crisis decision, or a serious legal, financial, family or health matter? You say, “Oh God, I do not know how I am going to make it through this. Oh God, I do not know how I am going to make it through this day!” Jesus is teaching us to pray and think like that everyday. We are to pray with a desperate dependency everyday because we need to think like this. And the truth is, we have very big daily needs! What do we need? We need to think about God. We need to believe his promises. We need to have food. We need to have shelter. We need to have clothes. We need to have wisdom. We need to have strength. We need protection. We need to have diligence to work. We need to be responsible to fulfill our commitments. We need to be led by His Spirit. All of these are daily needs. There is no request that is too common that it cannot be asked of God. But, notice what this request says. It says that I am at the mercy of God for daily bread. I am in a relationship of dependency upon God for daily needs. That is contrary to what many of us think.

Let me give you an example. About 40 years ago (I’m guessing), there was this commercial for Palmolive dish detergent that showed a manicurist by the name of Marge who would tell her lady clients that they should use Palmolive dish detergent because it is so gentle and soothing on their skin. The client would say something like, “Marge tell me more about this Palmolive, and Marge would say, “Honey, your hands are already in it.” I do not think that we realize how immersed we already are in an entitlement culture.

Our world tells us that we are entitled to a job. We are entitled to healthcare. Do you realize that is fundamentally not true? Is it a kindness that many jobs provide healthcare? Yes! Am I entitled to it? No! But, we do not realize how our culture and particularly the affluence of our culture skew our perspective. God does not owe me a job, nor healthcare insurance. God does not owe me a pension or social security. All of these things, as I said, tend to insulate us from realizing how dependent we are upon God. Not only that, but when I embrace my dependency upon God, and instead of fighting him and being angry that he is not giving me what I have imagined as “my best life now”, then I am in a position where I have to rely upon him for everything. And while that may seem frightening, the truth is, it is actually very freeing.

One night when I was in Russia, we had gathered at the church building for a service. I think that I had preached that night, but after the service the people were talking together in groups, when a girl had a seizure and fell to the ground. The town we were in was not a major city. I am not certain that they had any kind of an ambulance service anyway, but it was in the dead of January in northern Russia and the roads were friendly. The hospital had a reputation of being one of those places where, if you went in, you never came out. So, what do you do? The response of the college-aged students, who had been talking with her when she collapsed, was one of urgency, but not panic. They immediately gathered around her and began to pray.

I have thought a lot on that scene. These young students had, for the most part, grown up having to depend on God for many daily needs. Therefore, instead of living with a sense of entitlement, they lived with a sense of dependency upon God. And yet, we would look at them at times with pity because in terms of material goods they have much less than we do. Our idea of sacrifice is giving up ice cream for three days so that we can fit into our designer jeans. But, perhaps we are the ones who are poorer for it. Many of you have been in 3rd world countries on mission trips and have had the opportunity to minister with and worship believers in those settings. Many of them have so little in terms of stuff, yet they have so much in terms of joy. Maybe they know something that we don't know. Maybe there is a joy and a rest that comes from daily dependence that would otherwise not be there. There is! And Jesus wants us to live this way.

IV. We will always need God for daily needs. – *“pray then like this”*

If this is how God always wants us to pray, then I need to not only start praying in deep dependence upon God, but I need to guard my heart from worry about daily needs. Some of you are consumed by fear of what is going to happen to you tomorrow. What is it that you say? “Oh, I don't know what is going to happen? I don't know how this is going to turn out? Oh, can you promise me that everything is going to be fine?” Now think about that for a second. When you say, “Oh, I don't know what is going to happen.” Do you think anyone besides God does? So, why are you fretting over not having information that no one but God has? I say to people that I know who are prone to worry, “Why pray when you can worry?” After all, worry is so effective at solving problems. It is helpful to relationships, it makes you feel better, well at least you appear to be concerned. But seriously, why pray when you can worry?

Do you hear what Jesus is saying? You are the creation. He is the Creator. You are born and were re-born in order to be in a relationship with him, whereby he leads and you follow. He supplies and you receive. He will give you what you need, when you need it. When you worry, you are trying to borrow tomorrow's problems today. God will not give you grace today for tomorrow's problems. He will give you grace today for your problems today. He did not promise to give you bread today for your need tomorrow. He will give you today, what you need, but not necessarily what you want. He loves you too much to always give you what you want. In fact, sometimes, what you need is a need.

I will conclude by reminding you of something that I pointed out when we studied Hebrews 4.16, which says, “*Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need.*” The last phrase of v.16 is translated, “that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need.” A literal translation of this would be, “that we may receive mercy and find grace in a timely need” or “in a well-timed need.”

It is a wonderful expression that reminds us that God’s supply of mercy and grace matches our need, God’s supply shows up right on time, and the timing of your need is part of God’s plan. That is why you need to come to him boldly. He timed your need to be met with his grace. So, his grace is a well-timed help and his grace helps in our time of need. Both of those aspects are present in this phrase. The one underscores our need and the other underscores God’s timing. God is infinitely more concerned about you look like Christ than he is about your relief from stress. The truth is, we live in a constant state of need. You and I cannot move one single inch for God, apart from his help. We cannot accomplish anything of eternal significance without his empowering. I need help to preach, you need help to listen. I need help to understand, help to obey, help to love, help to think about others, help to consider it joy when I am tested, help to react with joy when I am inconvenienced for the sake of another, help to be content when I suffer loss, help to be at rest when my circumstances are upside down, help to not give in to temptation, and help to press on as a pilgrim.

God has not only provided for our needs, he has provided us with our needs that we might know his mercy and grace like never before.

Beloved, this issue, perhaps more than any other, reveals our heart. If I love God only because of the benefits, then there is no attraction to this promise of learning and experiencing his mercy and grace. If I love God only for what I can get out of him, then knowing him as merciful and enjoying him as grace is useless. I just want my health status fixed. I just want my employment picture resolved. I just want... Maybe you need to sit still and know that he is God, that his throne is grace and that you will receive mercy and find grace when you come and ask for it.