

VIDEO SERMON SERIES

# Sermons on the Heidelberg Catechism

by Rev. Bartel Elshout

*Sermon #61, Lord's Day 50*

## The Christian's Petition for Daily Bread



The John Knox Institute  
of Higher Education

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*Entrusting our Reformed Inheritance to the Church Worldwide*

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Bartel Elshout is pastor of the Kalamazoo Reformed Church of Kalamazoo, Michigan. He previously served as pastor of the Heritage Reformed Congregations of Jordan (Ontario), Chilliwack (British Columbia), and Hull (Iowa). He continues to serve as a part-time instructor at Puritan Reformed Theological Seminary in Grand Rapids, Michigan. He previously served as the founding principal of the Netherlands Reformed Christian School in Pompton Plains, New Jersey and as an evangelist in Denver, Colorado. He is also the translator of Wilhelmus à Brakel's *The Christian's Reasonable Service*, *The Christian's Only Comfort in Life and Death* by Theodorus van der Groe, and Alexander Comrie's *The Distinctive Marks of Saving Faith*. He was previously married to his late wife, Joan, with whom he has two children, David and Sarah, and seven grandchildren. He is presently married to Clarice.

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*Sermon #61 Lord's Day 50*

**The Christian's Petition  
for Daily Bread**

*Matthew 6, verses 9 thru 13*  
Question and Answer #125

**i. Introduction**

- 1. A Humble Request to God**
- 2. A Desire to End in God**
- 3. A Longing to Trust in God**

**Introduction**

Boys and girls, when God sent Elijah to the wilderness, he had no way of providing for his needs. All there was, was a brook that provided him with water. But God, in a marvelous way, gave his servant, Elijah, each day his daily bread; except that that bread came to him in a very unusual way. It was brought to him by ravens—unclean animals, animals that are not inclined at all to give what they find to others. And so, God supernaturally overruled the nature of those ravens and used them as his chosen instrument to give unto Elijah each day his daily bread. And so, I recognize that that was a very unusual way in which God provided for the daily needs of his servant. But what we need to recognize, however, congregation, is that even though our food does not come to us that way, that it is, after all, God who gives us each day our daily bread.

And we're going to consider that important petition, the fourth petition of the Lord's Prayer, the disciples' prayer, in which Christ, in teaching us how to pray, also directs us to pray for our daily bread. And that, of course, encompasses all of our daily needs. And the Heidelberg Catechism, in its exposition of that petition, beautifully emphasizes and highlights that praying that petition is very profitable; praying it thoughtfully every day, as a reminder of our complete dependence on God for all of our needs, our temporal needs, and our spiritual needs.

And so, with God's help, we will consider the fourth petition, and let's do this by way of Lord's Day 50 of our Heidelberg Catechism. And there, we read, in,

Question #125: *Which is the fourth petition?*

The Answer is: *“Give us this day our daily bread”*—and remember that all of those petitions are addressed to our Father which art in heaven, so we could say, *“Our Father which art in heaven, give us this day our daily bread”*—*that is, be pleased to provide us with all things necessary for the body, that we may thereby acknowledge Thee to be the only fountain of all good, and that neither our care nor industry—our diligence—nor even Thy gifts, can profit us without Thy blessing; and therefore that we may withdraw our trust from all creatures and place it alone in Thee.*

So we have *The Christian’s Petition for Daily Bread*. First of all, *A Humble Request to God*—give us this day our daily bread. For it’s a recognition that, ultimately, we cannot provide for it ourselves. We are dependent upon him—a humble petition. Secondly, a petition in which we *Desire to End in God* as the giver, as *the only fountain of all good things*. And thirdly, *A Longing to Trust in God*, and *therefore that we may withdraw our trust from all creatures and place it alone in Thee.*

*The Christian’s Petition for Daily Bread; A Humble Request to God; A Desire to End in God; and, A Longing to Trust in God.*

### **1. A Humble Request to God**

And congregation, first of all, we need to consider the unique position of this petition. Because Christ did not arbitrarily place that fourth petition there. In other words, we cannot truly understand the significance of the fourth petition unless we view it in light of the three petitions that have gone before it. There’s a direct connection between those petitions and the petition for daily bread. And as we have pointed out to you, in teaching us how to pray, Christ is teaching us that, in our prayer we must first of all worship. In our prayer, we must first of all focus on who God is before we consider our needs. That’s why the structure of the Lord’s Prayer parallels the structure, actually, of the Ten Commandments, where the first table is focused on God; the second table is focused on how we interact with our neighbor. And so, the first section of the Lord’s Prayer is entirely focused on God. It’s focused on his name—the hallowing, the honoring of his name; focused on the coming of his kingdom throughout this world; and also the doing of his will, to live in obedience to the revealed will of God precisely in the station of life in which God has sovereignly placed us. And so, in order to live such a God-honoring and God-glorifying life, we also need to have our daily needs met, for we are called to serve God with our body. And in order to serve God, in order to live a God-glorifying life, in order to live a life that is according to God’s agenda—because that’s what those three petitions actually define for us; they define for us the agenda of the Christian life—and in order to serve God, in order to be doers of his will, in order to honor God, we need a body that enables us to do that. And to that end, our bodies need to be sustained. And so, what that means is that even though the focus of this petition is on the fulfillment of our daily needs, our temporal needs, we have to view this petition in a very spiritual context. In that sense, it is a very spiritual petition. Sometimes the application is woven in that we also are in need, of course, of the Bread of Life. And that’s true. We need the Bread of Life in order to sustain our spiritual life. We need to feed upon Christ. But we have to be careful that we don’t spiritualize this petition. We don’t have to spiritualize this petition, because the context of this petition is already a very spiritual one. As we will see in a moment, it’s also not arbitrary that following that petition, Christ directs us to pray, *“Forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors.”* And so, my challenge now tonight is to show you how this fourth petition fits in between those three opening petitions and the petitions that follow.

And so, the Heidelberg Catechism gives a very appropriate exposition of this petition. The Heidelberg Catechism does not over-spiritualize this petition. It says, first of all, it means that,

when we pray this, we are saying, “Oh, heavenly Father, our Father which art in heaven, *be pleased to provide us with all things necessary for the body*. Congregation, I think there’s no one here who would dare to confess that we can actually sustain our own lives by ourselves. Our problem is that we take it so very for granted. We take it for granted that we rise from our beds. We take it for granted that we have health and strength to engage in our daily calling. We take it for granted that, in the morning, there is a breakfast before us. We take it for granted that we are fed three times a day. We take it for granted that our shelves of our grocery stores are stocked. But what the Catechism is saying, we need to recognize then we pray this prayer, that everything we need for our daily lives, everything we need for our needs to be met, to enable us to live a fruitful life, to live a productive life, but above all, to live a God-glorifying life, everything we need, ultimately, comes from God.

And yet, what’s remarkable is that Christ uses utmost simplicity in this petition. He said, “Give us this day our daily bread” (Matthew 6:11). In other words, the focus of this petition is not on what we want, but the focus of this petition is on what we need. And the simplicity of this petition highlights the fact that when we live a God-glorifying life in which we hallow his name, and promote the coming of his kingdom, and are the doers of his will in the station where God has placed us, is that we are to do that as strangers and pilgrims. That’s the biblical definition of the life that we live here below. In other words, if we have a proper biblical focus of our lives, we ought to realize that our journey here on this earth is very short, and that that journey is going to land us on the shores of eternity. I think when Moses repeated the Word of God that man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God (Deuteronomy 8:3), what God meant to communicate to the people of Israel is that even though our daily needs must be met, there is more to life than living for the here and the now. We read Matthew 6 to you again, and what marks the life of the Gentiles? They are completely obsessed with, “What shall we eat? or, What shall we drink? or, Wherewithal shall we be clothed?” (verse 31). And Christ specifically says there you ought not to live like the Gentiles. Yes, those needs are real. Those needs must be met. And he’s saying, “Your heavenly Father knows that you have need of all these things” (verse 32). But we are to come and seek to love God’s kingdom, seek the kingdom of God first, and his righteousness (verse 33).

And that’s why this petition is so very sobering. And congregation, it’s not too many generations ago that our ancestors and our forefathers literally had to live by the day, and sometimes did not know where the bread would come from, and sometimes did not know how they would feed their families, and in remarkable ways, experienced God’s Fatherly care in providing for their daily needs.

You know, Agur, the remarkable godly man that we meet in Proverbs 30, he had this remarkable petition. We preached about this text a couple of years ago on prayer day. But what does he say? He said, “Feed me with food convenient for me” (verse 8). In other words, he said, “Lord, let me not be rich, and let me not be poor,” because he realized that both extremes have their unique temptations, but “Lord, feed me with food convenient for me.” And that’s what Paul means in 1 Timothy 6, verses 6 through 8, very well-known verses, he says, “But godliness with contentment is great gain. For we brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out.” And then, this remarkable statement: “And having food and raiment let us be therewith content.” So Paul is saying, inspired by the Holy Spirit, that if our basic needs are met, we ought to be very content. And congregation, that includes me too, you know very well that we have gone far beyond that; that we are far beyond what so many in this world are still facing this day. A vast number of human beings on this planet will wonder from day to day how they will feed themselves, how they

will clothe themselves. And so, our danger is because of our extraordinary prosperity to which we have grown so accustomed, that we only pay lip service to this petition, “Give us this day our daily bread;” that we pay lip service to the fact that we owe everything to God.

It’s only a few years ago that we had to deal with the COVID crisis. What I remember so, so vividly is how, within a few weeks, the world came to a grinding halt. This modern Western economy came to a grinding halt. Suddenly our supply chains were interrupted. Suddenly we saw something we’re not accustomed to, we saw empty grocery shelves. Then we realized how much we had taken for granted, that day and night, day and night, the wheels of progress are turning day and night to fill those shelves to meet our needs. And God dealt a mighty blow to our proud, our arrogant, our idolatrous culture, of which we also are a part. We’re kidding ourselves if we think that we are not infected by it. But sadly, as you all know, our world did not learn its lesson. Our world scrambled, scrambled to put itself back on its feet. It was a powerful reminder—if God willed, if God so purposed, he could again bring everything to a grinding halt.

“Give us this day our daily bread”—congregation, and I ask myself that question, are we yet, in some measure, living a life that matches that petition? How real is it to me? How real is it to you that we are but traveling through? How real is it that we came into the world with nothing and we will go out with nothing? Elon Musk<sup>1</sup> is the wealthiest man in the world. He’s on track to become the world’s first trillionaire. And boys and girls, when he dies, there will be no U-Haul<sup>2</sup> trailer behind his hearse. When he dies, he will leave this life with nothing. That’s why Jesus said, What does it profit a man if he gains the whole world, and in the end he loses his soul? (Mark 8:36). And so, there you see that even though this petition focuses on our daily needs, it has a very spiritual focus. Christ chose his words very carefully.

But we also need to realize that this petition is in the context of a prayer that is addressed to our heavenly Father: “Our Father which art in heaven...give us this day our daily bread.” And what a precious petition that is. Because fathers, you know, as fathers, how deeply we care about our children; how committed we are in meeting the daily needs of our children. But that pales in comparison with the love the Father has for his children. “Like as a father pitieth his children,” we sing in Psalm 103, “so the LORD pitieth them that fear him” (verse 13). And so, the heart of God is moved. The heart of the Father is moved when his children humbly and sincerely pray each day, “Oh, my heavenly Father, give me this day my daily bread.”

We need to recognize something else—that when God grants that petition, and he does that daily, he does that also on the basis of the merits of Christ. That’s an important thing to realize. In that sense, the bread of God’s children drips with the blood of Christ. Because, congregation, we realize that even God’s common grace, his common mercy by which he sustains all men in this world, by which he even sustains the ungodly, that God’s common grace cannot be divorced from the cross of Christ. A holy God, who is of purer eyes than to behold evil, a holy God cannot be gracious to sinners except on the basis of shed blood. And so, in that sense, even the ungodly benefit from what happened on Calvary’s cross. It’s not a saving benefit, but they benefit from it. The blood that dripped from Christ on this accursed earth, in a sense, sanctified it. So that God can be gracious even to the ungodly on the basis of the sacrifice of Christ, and this is especially true, especially true for the people of God. And congregation, that puts a whole other perspective on this petition.

And so when you reflect, and I hope you do, at the end of the day, when you reflect on the

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1 Elon Musk (born June 28, 1971) is an American businessman and entrepreneur, known for the achievements of his companies, Tesla, SpaceX, Twitter, and xAI. He has been the wealthiest person in the world since 2021.

2 U-Haul is an American moving company that rents trucks and trailers to the public.

day, and when you recognize again how amazingly God has cared for us, how amazingly he has provided for us, that we have lacked nothing another day filled with mercy, another day, is that all of these mercies have been secured by the sacrifice of Christ. Because Jacob, when he was on his way back, when he faced the danger of meeting his brother, he humbled himself greatly before God. As you know, he left his parents, he left his land with just the clothes on his back. He didn't even have a pillow to sleep on—a stone was his pillow. But he came back a wealthy and a very prosperous man. And when he faced Esau, you know what he said? He humbled himself before God, and he said, "I am not worthy of the least of all of the mercies, and of all the truth, which thou hast shewed unto thy servant" (Genesis 32:10). Congregation, those words are frequently quoted, also by me, "I'm not worthy of the least of thy mercies." Do you believe that, congregation? Do you really believe that? That you are not worthy of anything you are receiving this day. You are not worthy of your bread. You are not worthy of your clothes. You are not worthy of all your creature comforts. We are not worthy of even the least of God's mercies. It's grace, and grace alone; it's for Christ's sake that God provides for us, provides for all of humanity, but especially provides for his children. And because of that sacrifice, our heavenly Father has a heart that overflows with grace, overflows with mercy; a Father who will never forsake the work of his own hands; a Father who provided for the people of Israel in the wilderness in such a remarkable way. Nehemiah, in Nehemiah 9—one of those chapter 9 prayers; you have Nehemiah 9, Ezra 9, Daniel 9—in Nehemiah 9, that remarkable prayer, he recounts the mercies of God towards Israel. And he says this, and how applicable that is to us as well; "And," he says, "gavest them bread from heaven for their hunger, and broughtest forth water for them out of the rock for their thirst.... Yea, forty years didst thou sustain them in the wilderness, so that they lacked nothing" (Nehemiah 9:15 and 21).

## 2. A Desire to End in God

And congregation, that's the story of my life, that's the story of your life. We have not ever lacked anything. Sometimes at the breakfast table we remind ourselves of it. And in my prayer, I say, "Lord, again, food and drink before us. Lord, there has never been a day in our lives that we did not have our daily bread, not a single day." But we need to remember. We need to do more than pay lip service to this. We need to realize, that's our second point, that with all these blessings, all these temporal blessings, all the ways in which God sustains our lives and provides for all of our temporal needs *for our pilgrim's journey*—I would emphasize that—*for our pilgrim's journey*, that we should end in God. *That we may thereby acknowledge God to be the only fountain of all good things.*

That's why the petition begins with the word "Give." That's the recognition that everything we have that pertains to this daily life is a gift. It is a gracious, unmerited gift. We sang Psalm 145 together; in verse 15, we read this, "The eyes of all wait upon thee; and thou givest them their meat in due season." That applies to all of creation. Think about it. God provides for all animals, the entire animal world is under his government, even the insects, but especially, especially his people. "Thou givest them their meat in due season." Thou givest them their meat at exactly the right moment. In Acts 14, verse 17, we read—Paul is speaking here, he says, "Nevertheless he"—that is, God—"left not himself without witness, in that he did good, and gave us rain from heaven, and fruitful seasons, filling our hearts with food and gladness." He's talking here to Gentiles. He says, "He has not left himself without witness." And congregation, that's why we need to pray this prayer. Christ wants to compel us to consider this daily, that daily we realize that it is God who provides the rain; it is God who provides the fruitful seasons; it is God who fills our hearts with food and even with gladness in a fallen world.

That's why we have to realize that a prosperous economy is the work of God's hands. Do we have any idea how complex that magnificent work of God is? All those wheels of providence, wheels within the wheels, all intercepting, all according to God's sovereign purpose. Oh, the work of creation is a great work, but the work of his providence is so very extraordinary. And congregation, if those wheels did not turn precisely according to his determinate counsel, in precisely the right way, and at the right time, your and my needs would not be met. And so, what a magnificent work this is. Acts 17, verse 25, now Paul is speaking in Athens. He says, "He giveth to all life, and breath, and all things." And perhaps the reason why Christ also chose the word "bread." Because the word "bread" symbolizes the marvelous work of God's providence. So, boys and girls, you know that bread does not grow in the field. You cannot harvest bread. In order to have bread on your plate, an incredible number of things had to happen. First of all, the seed had to be sown. The wheat had to grow. The wheat had to be harvested. The wheat had to be threshed. Flour had to be made, bakers involved in baking it. The bread had to be packed, it had to be shipped to your grocery store, and finally, it ends up on your plate. It's an amazing sequence of providential events. That's why Christ also chose this word, "Give us this day our daily bread." Lord, grant that all of the wheels of providence, that they may turn in such a way that also my needs are met, so that I will be fit to serve thee, to walk in thy ways, to be a doer of thy will in the station in which thou hast sovereignly placed us.

That's why I've already alluded to it, this petition is so convicting, if we stop and consider what it means. Because we take it for granted. It would be very good, actually, if you, with your families tonight, if you have the time, if you read Deuteronomy 8. It's another chapter I could have chosen. And listen to what God says here, in verses 11 to 14: "Beware that thou forget not the LORD thy God...lest when thou hast eaten and art full, and hast built goodly houses, and dwelt therein;...thine heart be lifted up, and thou forget the LORD thy God." That's the danger to which we are exposed. And so, praying this petition is a humbling confession that nothing can profit us without our Father's blessing. It says it so powerfully there in the Catechism, *That neither our care nor industry, nor even Thy gifts, can profit us without Thy blessing.* Proverbs 10, verse 22, "The blessing of the LORD, it maketh rich, and he addeth no sorrow with it."

And congregation, if we would spend more time, and I include myself, if we spend more time on consciously reflecting on how remarkably, and how faithfully, and how consistently God provides for our temporal needs, we would have great reason, first of all, to humble ourselves, to see God's extraordinary faithfulness over against our unfaithfulness. And I think that's the reason why the next petition says, "Forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors." If we consider how remarkably God gives us our daily bread, over against who we are; his faithfulness over against our unfaithfulness; and how we come short in living according to that agenda of hallowing his name, seeking the coming of his kingdom, and doing his will; and then to see how faithfully he provides for our daily needs, we have abundant reason to humble ourselves and say, "Forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors."

It's also remarkable that Christ teaches us to pray for *daily* provision. That's how he took care of the people of Israel in the wilderness. You know that story, boys and girls. It's an amazing story. For forty years, they lived in an environment where they could have never survived. It was a wilderness. There was no food, there was no water. And yet God sustained them for forty years, but he did it day by day. Every morning, when they woke up, they had to believe by faith that if they opened the flap of their tent, that the manna would be there again, and it was, and that, day by day. So what happened to those who gathered more than what was needed from the day? Well, we know from Scripture, the worms would come in it. And so, God, in a very powerful way, taught

the people of Israel, as he molded them to be his people, from Egypt, going to Canaan, to depend on him by the day; day by day. And as I said already earlier, for our forefathers, that was very real. They needed God day by day.

And congregation, so it ought to be with us. Oh, may God grant that we would not just thoughtlessly pray this petition. You see, God is honored, God is so honored when we recognize him every day as the overflowing fountain of good. He is so honored, when we confess every day, “Lord, it is in thee that we live and move and have our being. Lord, thou art the fountain of all good things. Everything I have, everything I own, everything I am I owe to thy grace.”

And so, that should make us live accordingly. That means that we should work accordingly. Because God, of course, has also purposed that he provides for our daily bread by our diligent labor. What he did for Israel in the wilderness was very unique. The normal way by which God now provides for our daily bread is when we labor diligently in the calling that God has placed upon us. But we have to do both. We have to work hard, and we have to pray diligently. And the Latin phrase, *ora et labora*,<sup>3</sup> is “pray and work.” Because when you only do the one, that’s very unhealthy, and if you only do the other, that’s unhealthy. There’s a well known story of a father who wanted to teach his son the meaning of *ora et labora*, pray and work, and they’d read this story. It’s been around for a long time. And so, he did something very unique. He took his son out to the lake in a rowboat. And on the one ore, he painted the word “PRAY”, and on the other ore, he painted the word “WORK”. And he went to the middle of the lake. And he said, “Son, I’m just going to use the one ore, the one that says, “PRAY”. And you know what happened, of course? That boat went nowhere. It just went in circles. So, he said, “That doesn’t work, does it? Now, let’s use the other one that says “WORK”—*labora*. And again, the boat went in circles. It went nowhere. He said, “Watch, son, what happens when I use both ores, PRAY and WORK; I use both ores. Now, the boat make progress.”

And that should be our life. That’s the whole thing. It should be more than a lip service. Every morning, it should be our earnest prayer, “Lord, give me this day our daily bread. Lord, provide this day for my needs and the needs of my family. Give me this day what I need to serve thee, and to honor thee, and to walk in thy ways.” It also reminds us, by the way, that we only live one day at a time, congregation. We know that, but we fail to recognize it. We all know, and we can think of experiences. But that’s reality. That’s reality for all of us. I’ve lived long enough, and been in the ministry long enough to know how very unexpectedly, and in most unusual ways life can suddenly come to an end. And so, even this petition reminds us of the fact that we are but traveling through, that our being here is but temporary, and that we need to take one day at a time, as we rush towards the conclusion of our earthly journey.

And that’s why, of course, during that earthly journey, if we only live for the here and now, we will yet perish. And so it is true that, in order for that journey to end well, we also need the Bread of Life, the Lord Jesus Christ. But that’s not the focus of this petition, but it’s true. And in that sense, it’s also true that man shall not live by bread alone. We shall not live by merely having our daily physical needs met. There’s more to life. We need Christ, we need him, the living bread, for only then will our journey end well.

### **3. A Longing to Trust in God**

And so, we have seen *A Humble Request to God*, *A Desire to End in God*, and, *A Longing to Trust in God*. And that should all be self-evident already from what I’ve said. It says here, *Therefore*

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<sup>3</sup> *Ora et labora* is a principle of many Christian religious orders and schools around the world, the monastic practice of working and praying, as taught by Benedict of Nursia in the 6th century, the father of Western monasticism.

*that we may withdraw our trust from all creatures and place it alone in Thee.* Congregation, again, that's easier said than done. Do we put our trust in God alone? Because we are so prone to do otherwise. We are so prone to trust in our own abilities, our own strength, our own gifts, and to trust in the creature, to trust in the arm of flesh. And that's what alarms me right now, when I hear this bold forecasting that there's a golden age coming for this country. It frightens me. What kind of a golden age? A golden age in which we prosper economically, and yet we do not repent of our grievous national sins? That's why the Bible forbids us to put our trust in princes—"Put not your trust in princes, nor in the son of man, in whom there is no help" (Psalm 146:3).

And so, congregation, yes, we must pray for our leaders, we must. And we are so privileged that we live in a country that God has prospered above all nations of the world. But I'm so afraid that for so many, all that matters to them is for the United States to be the economic powerhouse of the world, because that will line our pockets as well. That's not what this petition means. And therefore we may withdraw our trust from all creatures: "Put not your trust in princes, nor in the son of man, in whom there is no help." And again, Deuteronomy 8—again, very convicting language—Moses is saying to the people of Israel, "And thou say in thine heart"—listen carefully—"My power and the might of mine hand hath gotten me this wealth. But thou shalt remember the LORD thy God..."—and here comes the important phrase for all of us—"For it is he"—listen carefully—"that giveth thee power to get wealth" (Deuteronomy 8:17–18). So, if we prosper in our business, who is it that gives us those providential opportunities? Who is it that gave you the intelligence, and the wisdom, and the gifts to run your business in a profitable way? Where did that come from? The language of Deuteronomy 8 is clear: "He it is that giveth thee power to get wealth," And so, if God has prospered you financially, it's nothing to be ashamed of, but it is He who enabled you to do it, and He gave you that wealth in order to serve him. Because that's the focus of this prayer. Whatever God gives us, the purpose of those gifts is always that with those gifts, we would seek that we would honor him.

And so, there is much implied in this petition. It's a profound petition. It's simple, and it's convicting. So it is a petition that should lead us to put our trust in our heavenly Father alone, a Father, first of all, who is omniscient; a Father who is all-knowing; a Father to whom we can make all of our needs known; a Father upon whom we can cast all of our burdens; a Father to whom all of our circumstances are known. That's what we read in Matthew 6: "Your heavenly Father knoweth that you have need of all these things." He knows that we have need of them, even before we ask. And congregation, it's not often that I say something about myself personally, but I actually mentioned to the Confession of Faith students, when my first wife was being treated for cancer, we had no medical insurance, and I will not give you the details, but I can tell you, we experienced in a most remarkable way, that God knew of our needs, and he provided for us in ways we could not even imagine. We experienced, he knew of our circumstances, he knew of our needs, and he remarkably inclined hearts, so that by the time my wife died and was buried, I did not owe one cent, not one cent, not because of me, but because of our heavenly Father, who gave us our daily bread, who knew of our need, and who remarkably provided for that need. He knew about our situation—omniscient. He's omnipresent—the eyes of the Lord are in every place. What a comfort that is for the people of God, to know that he is omnipresent; that no matter what circumstances I find myself in, I can cast my burden upon him; that he is omnipotent; he is almighty, all qualities that earthly father's don't have. Our knowledge is limited. What we can do, we can only do one thing at a time. Our ability is limited. But dear people of God, your heavenly Father to whom you lift this petition, "Oh, my heavenly Father, for Christ's sake, give me this day my daily bread," is a Father who knows all your circumstances; a Father who knows where you dwell; and a Father

who is Almighty, and who is able to meet your needs.

And so, congregation, may God grant to me and to you that we will again recognize the significance of this petition, that we bow our knees and say, “Oh, my heavenly Father, give me this day our daily needs,” and to end our days reflecting on the fact of how remarkably and how faithfully he does this.

And my dear friend, if you are not a child of God, if you have not yet come to a saving embrace of Christ, and your whole life is filled with God’s goodness, God has been gracious to you; he has spared your life until this moment. You too have lacked nothing. Well, what does that do to you? It should humble you. Paul says this, in Romans 2, verse 4, “Or despisest thou the riches of his goodness and forbearance and longsuffering; not knowing that the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance?” That means, the very fact that God cares for you daily, that he keeps you, protects you, gives you health and strength, gives you the ability work—all of that are calls to repentance; all of that are reminders of a God who is sustaining you, even though you are still turning away from him and living in rebellion towards him. How amazing is the grace of God. That’s what Paul says, “Not knowing that the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance.”

And so, in conclusion, oh, dear believer, “Our Father”—I didn’t say much about that word “Our.” I apologize for that. I realize that now, but that’s significant too. In other words, it’s a petition for the whole family of God, not just myself. “Our” Father, give us this day “our” daily bread. Your heavenly Father knoweth what you need in all things. And may we humble ourselves before him, and confess even tonight, that we have taken so much for granted; that we take his faithful Fatherly care so for granted; that we take our prosperity so for granted; that afresh, we would do more than pay lip service to these words, and that very consciously, we will begin our week tomorrow, when we begin our day, we will say, “Oh, my heavenly Father, I recognize that it is in thee that I live, and that I move, and that I have my being. I recognize that I’m entirely dependent on thee. I could not take one step without thee. I could not take one breath without thee. Oh, my Father, give me this day, for Christ’s sake, give me this day our daily bread, and give me the grace to recognize it. Give me the grace to acknowledge it. Give me the grace to humble myself, as Jacob humbled himself with his vast wealth surrounding him. He said, “Lord, I am not worthy of the least of these mercies.”

And you know how you can find out whether you mean that or not?—is how you react when the least little thing doesn’t go your way, when the least little thing doesn’t work out the way you thought it should. Then you find out, and I include myself, that most of the time, we don’t really mean it. If we really meant it, we wouldn’t be so upset when things don’t quite work out the way we would like them to, because we are not worthy of the least of his mercies. But the wonderful thing is that this petition cannot be divorced from the finished work of Christ. For his sake, he cares for us; for his sake, he gives us each day our daily bread. And therefore, “Happy is he that hath the God of Jacob for his help, whose hope is in the LORD his God” (Psalm 146:5). Amen.

### **Let’s pray.**

Lord, wilt thou bless thy word, an encouraging, and yet a very convicting word, a word that compels us to examine ourselves in thy presence, a petition that compels us to confess before thee that far too often, we take thy mercies for granted. Far too often, we fail to realize that we are truly not worthy of the least of thy mercies. Give us a fresh impression that everything we have, everything we own comes from thee, the overflowing fountain of good. And enable us, by thy grace, to be satisfied with bread, to live as strangers and pilgrims, realizing that all that we have in this world must be left behind when our journey ends; though we pray that when our journey

ends, that we may be possessors of the riches that are to be found in Christ, that treasure which is in heaven, where neither rust nor moth corrupt it. So, go with us then into this coming week. Enable us to labor diligently in the calling thou hast given us, and that we may do it with the perspective given to us in the Lord's Prayer. Keep us safely in all that we do, and gather with us again this next Lord's Day. We ask it in Jesus' name. Amen.