

Grace to You :: *Unleashing God's Truth, One Verse at a Time*

The Provision of Prayer, Part 1

Scripture: Matthew 6:11

Code: 2239

Turn in your Bible to Matthew chapter 6. We're continuing now after a break through the holiday seasons, and the last couple of Sundays, we're continuing in our study of The Disciple's Prayer in Matthew chapter 6. The Disciple's Prayer in Matthew chapter 6. May I read it to you again so that you'll have the setting for our thoughts this morning? Verse 9, "After this manner, therefore, pray ye. Our Father, who art in heaven. Hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom Come. Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever. Amen." Now, our study this morning is going to concentrate on verse 11, a simple, familiar phrase. The petition: "Give us this day our daily bread."

The word "bread" opens up to us the simplicity, the commonness of this petition, and yet suggests to us a deep and profound meaning that demands our careful study. May I say this at the beginning this morning? I'm constantly being overwhelmed as I study this, hour after hour, day after day, week after week. I'm constantly overwhelmed in the depth of this prayer. Never in my life until I've done this series here have I ever really perceived what is in this prayer, in terms of its richness. In fact, there was almost a resistance in my heart to ever preach this because it was such a masterpiece in and of itself. I didn't want to add any MacArthurisms to this profundity. It would be tantamount to, in my own mind, taking a brush and fixing up a Rembrandt, or getting a chisel and trying to help Michelangelo a little bit with an angel he had carved. I would really be out of my league, and I felt a little bit the same way in wanting to approach an understanding of the Lord's Prayer. I almost felt like all I should do is read it, and move on, and let it speak in its own majestic simplicity. And yet, as I thought about it, there is such a power to it, and such a presence in it, and such a breadth, that unless we perceive the fullness of what is here, we will miss the simplicity of it. And so, in a certain amount of ambivalence I have chosen to try to expand, and analyze, and enforce to your hearts the fullness of what this marvelous prayer really means.

And we come here to what perhaps seems like the simplest of all, "Give us this day our daily bread," and we wonder if whether we need any thought about it at all, and that only shows that we don't really understand all that's here, so let's approach it.

Thinking about bread kind of triggered my thoughts this week. I was reading in the newspaper about the fact that America, trying to exert some pressure against Russia for her invasion of Afghanistan, is deciding now to withhold billions of tons of grain from Russia, grain which was earmarked for the

feeding of animals, animals which are earmarked for the feeding of people. And because the grain production in Russia is down at least 20 percent and maybe more, Russia is desperately in need of the grain that we can provide. Not giving them this grain supposedly will have an impact upon them. It was interesting to me that we had that much grain to give away, or to sell. And as I began to examine this thought, I realized that we have more grain than we can possibly use. In fact if we don't unload this grain we don't sell Russia, it will drive the price of grain down so low that all the farmers will go into a recession. We have so much surplus. And so, the government, I guess, is going to buy the grain, which means they will print more money and inflate all the rest of the money, and we'll be in the same mess anyway, but at least it'll spread it around and the farmers won't have to bear the whole load. But we have so much grain.

And as I was thinking about that, and there was an article in TIME Magazine that I was given to read. I was aware of the fact that when you come to the statement, "Give us this day our daily bread," it may at first seem a little irrelevant to us. I mean when is the last time you prayed, "Lord, I plead with You to provide for me a meal." I dare say your last prayer may have been more like this: "Lord, please prevent me from eating another meal. Teach me self-discipline. Lord, I must lose weight. I not only have enough for me but several others." It does seem a little remote, doesn't it? I mean, when is the last time we really got desperate about our food? You say this message ought to be preached in Bangladesh, or Cambodia, or Sahara or somewhere, but not in America. This is irrelevant. But that only illustrates our lack of understanding of its marvelous truth.

Do you know how much we have in America? Well, we have grain in America that is absolutely beyond our power to conceive. Because of our technology, because of the richness of the soil, because of the sophistication of the machinery. For example, they're now working on new kinds of corn and grain, they're now tested in Mexico, that recycle themselves and regenerate like grass does, that you don't even have to reseed them. Geneticists are now working on corn that will deposit back into the soil its own nitrogen, and will save us something like 13 million tons of fertilizer, which is made from natural gas, and that'll save energy. They have now developed corn that grows with its ears instead of like this, like this, and that means you can get them closer together, and fields can double or triple their productivity. The equipment that we have, take for example one of the hundred thousand dollar monstrous combines, can now spew out \$118,000.00 dollars' worth of soy beans in a day. One of those machines.

The US crops, the result of near perfect weather, and land, and technology are beyond our imagination. In fact, this year, our crops will be worth \$61 billion dollars. That's 17 percent over last year's all-time high of \$52 billion. Just to give you some idea of it: the corn alone would fill two million jumbo hopper train cars that would stretch thirteen times back and forth across the United States. And we have enough machines now, if they were all lined up wheel to wheel, we could harvest Iowa in one day. And by the way, normally to harvest Iowa if you did it by human beings, would take 31 million people using 61 million horses. Technology has given us incredible amount of productivity in

terms of food.

And to say, "Give us this day our daily bread," is a little remote. I mean I went shopping with my wife last night, and frankly there was bread ad infinitum, ad nauseam, in the store I was in. You could get any kind of bread in any color package you wanted. It didn't seem to me a major prayer request at the time. What does this mean to us then? What is this text saying to us? Or should we just preach a sermon and say, well, you're going to have to imagine that you didn't have any, and then if you can only imagine that you don't have any, then imagine that you're desperate, and imagine that you're praying for some. That's too unreal. Does this say anything to us? I think it does. Let's find out.

First of all, you have to understand the context: the Lord is talking about prayer here because prayer is one of the elements of His kingdom. And Matthew, the whole Book presents Christ as King, all 28 chapters. Chapters 5 to 7 present the characteristics of His kingdom, or the standards of His kingdom, or the principles of His kingdom, and one of those is prayer. And so, Christ is presenting here the proper way to pray, the proper pattern for praying. And in this very simple prayer, we have all of the necessary ingredients for prayer, if you want to pray according to His standard. And one of the elements of praying is to pray for our daily bread. Now, that doesn't assume that we have it or don't have it. It's just there, and we have to deal with it as it is. We need to know how to pray. Now, in this prayer, the Lord gives us a model for our prayers that is without equal in the Bible, and we've been through that. We've spent already six weeks on it and I don't want to go over and plow the same soil again but I do want you to know that this is a pattern for all your praying. You know what I found myself doing whenever I pray, whether it's praying with the elders, or praying at home, or praying in the office, or praying just wherever I am, driving, or with the Lord, or with somebody in a group, or two people who are gathered, or whatever. I find myself running my prayer along the skeleton of this passage, and touching base with each one of these principles. Identifying with them. And this is what I've prayed: that God would make this the pattern of my praying so that my prayer would take on the character of Christ's prayer. And I hope that's happening in your prayer as well.

But in this prayer, we noted first of all two sections: the first one dealing with God, the second one dealing with man; the first one dealing with God's glory, the second one dealing with man's need. First we saw three requests: "Hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come. And thy will be done," and those focused on God and His glory. Then we see three other requests focusing on man and his need: "Give us this day our daily bread. Forgive us our debts, and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil." God, then, is the supreme issue here, and not until God is in the proper perspective can man pray properly about his own needs. Keep that in mind.

First, we see God's name, God's kingdom, God's will, and then we move to man's need. We cannot pray properly in regard to our own human situation until God is in the proper place. Now, may I hasten to add this: that when we get to the second part of the prayer, it doesn't set God aside. Even though God is primarily exalted in the first half, the second half exalts Him, also and does not set Him

aside. For example, the fact that God gives us our daily bread, forgives our debts, and leads us not into temptation is an expression of His power and His grace. So God is brought to earth, as it were, in the second part. Now note this: "Hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done," where? "In earth, as it is in heaven." How does God hallow His name, bring His kingdom, and do His will in the earth? By giving us our daily bread, by forgiving us our debts and by leading us in our lives.

In other words it's as if the second half brings God into human life, brings God into the earth, brings God into human existence, so that these two are contiguous. It is not that the first three butter up God: the first three sort of flatter God and then we really lay it out as to what we want for our own sake. No. We are saying, God, glorify Yourself in our daily provision. God, glorify Yourself in our constant forgiveness. God, glorify Yourself in the leading and the directing of Your Spirit in our lives. God, be on display in Your world, that Your kingdom may come to earth. So, it is not a setting aside of God, in any sense. Prayer is not buttering up God and then demanding certain things from Him.

My heart is continually grieved today in this movement, in Christianity, that goes about demanding things from God. A lady sent me a booklet and she said, "I don't think you understand the true resource we have in prayer. Please read this booklet." And the booklet just goes again and again along this line of: we have a right to demand things from God, because of who we are. That isn't the point of prayer, at all. We are to give God the privilege and opportunity of revealing His glory through the meeting of the deepest of human needs. But it is because we want God to be on display, not because we make demands on Him for our benefit. If prayer becomes man-centered, if prayer becomes self-centered, if prayer becomes selfish in any sense, it ceases to be the kind of prayer our Lord said should be characteristic of His kingdom. And yet so many people approach God that way.

We approach God in prayer to get something for us rather than to allow Him to glorify His name. And what we want, and when we don't get it, then we begin to question God. Whereas, if we just allowed God the right to make the choice as to how He would reveal His glory, no matter what He did we would then say, "So let it be for Your glory. If that's what You choose as the avenue for Your majesty, so let it be." But when we become self-centered in our prayers, then we become questioning of God, and then that is a serious sin. We are pragmatists in our society. We are vending machine operators. We stick a quarter in and we want a product, for ourselves. And so, consequently, we treat prayer that way.

In fact we treat a lot of things that way. I think about giving so often. Some people I know give in order to get. They heard a sermon that if you give to the Lord He'll return, press down, shaken together and running over. If you give to the Lord, He'll give you back so many fold, and that's true. That's not why we give, though. That's God's choice to do it. Why we give, is that so that He can be glorified in His response, not so that we can get. It's like the lady who sent \$5.00 to Bishop Sheen, and the next day she got a check for a \$100.00 in the mail. She won a contest. She told her young boy, she said, it's so wonderful, giving really works. To which her son replied, well, if it worked so well the first time why

don't you put the \$100.00 back on Bishop Sheen and see what happens. It's like betting on a horse. You put a hundred dollars on Bishop Sheen. One writer says: if all the testimonies uttered during annual stewardship drives were to be believed, tithing would be commended for its profit and taught as an investment principle in business administration courses. Now, I think we do the same thing with prayer a lot of times too. We use prayer as a way to get, rather than an avenue for God to gain glory which is what John 14:13 says it's for.

Now let's look at the three petitions that give God opportunity to glorify Himself. First of all: "Give us this day our daily bread," speaks of physical life, physical life. Secondly, "And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors." Speaks of the mental life, and we'll get more into that next time. Thirdly, "Lead us not into temptation, deliver us from evil," is the spiritual life. Bread, that's our physical life. Forgiveness, that frees our mind from the anxiety and the pain of guilt, and the burden of sin. And leading us and directing us away from evil is the spiritual direction. By the way, bread takes care of the present, forgiveness takes care of the past, and help takes care of the future. So, all the dimensions of life are covered, and all the needs of life are covered. It's amazing, the marvel, the wonder of how God's infinite mind can reduce all there is of human need to three simple profound statements.

Now listen, beloved, this whole prayer is set up to glorify God, the whole thing. "Our Father, which art in heaven," that's God's paternity as we have seen. "Hallowed be thy name," God's priority. "Thy kingdom come," God's program. "Thy will be done," God's purpose. "Give us this day our daily bread," God's provision. "Forgive us our debts," God's pardon. "Lead us not," God's protection. And finally, God's pre-eminence, "For thine is the kingdom, the power, and the glory, forever. Amen." All of it is for God's glory. Don't ever forget that. If you never learn anything else from this lesson, learn that all your prayers are for God's glory. All of them are. Do you know something? Even when you stick food in your face, it's for God's glory not for your sustenance, primarily, did you know that? That's why it says in First Corinthians 10:31: "Whatever you do, whether, you eat, or drink, do it all," what? "To the glory of God." You say, how can eating food be to the glory of God? It is if you know where it came from, right? It is, if you remember the source of your food. It is, if you remember the capacity that you have to enjoy the flavor. It is, if you're thankful to the one who provided the nourishment in it. Every single thing is for the glory of God. Everything. And prayer, nonetheless, is for His glory.

And so we come then to this thought that no matter what we ask, it is for His glory that we ask it, not for our gain. We're not badgering God to make Him change His mind for us. David Meyers says in a book called "The Human Puzzle," "Some petitionary prayers seem not only to lack faith in the inherent goodness of God, but also to elevate in human kind to a position of control over God. God, the Scriptures remind us, is omniscient and omnipotent, the sovereign ruler of the universe. For Christians to pray as if God were a puppet whose strings they yank with their prayers seems not only potentially superstitious but blasphemous as well. When prayer is sold as a device for eliciting health, success, and other favors from a celestial vending machine, we may wonder what is really being

merchandised, is it faith or is it faith's counterfeit, a glib caricature of true Christianity?" Elton Trueblood said, "In some congregations, the gospel has been diminished to the mere art of self-fulfillment. Egocentricity is all that is left." And boy there is so much of that today in Christianity, where prayer is simply an ego-centered, self-fulfilling, self-indulging exercise to try to elicit from God what I demand. That's not right. These petitions here, though directed at our essential needs, are ways in which God's glory comes to earth, and makes itself manifest. And so JI Packer says, "The prayer of a Christian is not an attempt to force God's hand, but it is a humble acknowledgment of helplessness and dependence."

So, with the right perspective then, let's look at this petition, for God's glory. "Give us this day our daily bread." This is a basic need of man, the term bread, beloved, means all of man's physical needs. It's a broad term. It is a prayer for the physical need of man to be fulfilled. And that's a very obvious thing. But in our society it's somewhat remote because we have so much, so much. What does it really say to us? Let's find out. First of all I want to, we're going to go through five points: two of them this morning, and then three I think next time. But I want you to get these 'cause they're so important.

First of all: the substance. What is the substance here? It's bread. See it there in verse 11? Bread. But it isn't just talking about bread in terms of a loaf of bread. "Give us this day our daily bread," is talking about the physical. You see, man can't even be a spiritual being unless he is a physical one, right? God has to begin with the physical. It thrills me to know that God, the God who is the God of infinite celestial epochs, God who is the God of space, God who is the God beyond time, the God of eternity, God who is the infinitely holy God of the universe who holds all the whirling worlds, and the spinning stars in the palm of His hand. That same God cares that my physical needs are met. That same God is concerned with the fact that I have a meal to eat, clothes to wear, and a place to rest. It thrills me that that God, that infinite eternal God, has come to earth in terms of His caring love, and is concerned that the needs of my life in a physical way, and your life, be met. And He even sets certain conditions for them being met. We'll get into that next week.

But bread is all of that physical area. Martin Luther had it right when he said: "Everything necessary for the preservation of this life is bread, including food, a healthy body, good weather, house, home, wife, children, good government, peace." End quote. He saw all of the physical elements of life, the necessities, but not the luxuries of life. I don't think that we can ask God for the luxuries of life based on this verse, but for the necessities. What He chooses to give us by way of luxury is at His gracious hand. But He promises to give us the necessities. You remember back in Proverbs chapter 30? Psalm, Proverbs 30 written by Agur? And, in verses 8 and 9 he says, "Lord, don't give me so much that I forget You, and don't give me so little that I steal and dishonor Your name. Just give me food that is convenient for me." I think that's the heart of this. It isn't self-seeking, give me more and more and more and more. It's just saying, Lord give me what I need.

But you say, John, in our life we don't even have need, we don't even need to pray this. Yes, we do. Because, now I want you to get this: this petition for us while not the desperate cry of one who's starving, this petition, by the way, I believe there are promises in the Bible that indicate if a person is righteous, God will feed that person. God is not going to willfully withhold provisions of life from a righteous child, the Bible says. So, God is going to provide this for anybody, in whatever situation they are, if they're righteous, within the purview of His will. So, that anybody, really, could say, well the Lord's providing for me, I'm righteous, why do I need to pray? So that the essence of the prayer is really an affirmation that all our substance comes from God. It is saying, "God, I want to let You know that You I realize are the source of my life, my food, my shelter, my clothing."

It is that constant affirmation. It's, for example, when I ask the Lord to forgive my sin and cleanse my life of something. Well, why do I ask Him to do that? Hasn't He already promised to forgive my sin? Yes, but He also said to keep on confessing it. And when I say to the Lord, "Lord, lead me and guide me in a certain direction," doesn't the Bible say He will be my guide, and He will be my leader, and He will guide me in this way and in that way? Yes, but He wants me to affirm that I recognize that leadership in my life. And sometimes when I call out to the Lord I say, "Lord, hear my prayer and answer," and don't I know that He will and always has? Yes, but He wants me to affirm that confidence because that exalts Him. I may not have to say, "Oh God, I don't have any food for my family, where is it going to come from?" But, I will ever and always say, "God everything I have and all that I share with those I love comes from Your good and gracious hand."

And so for us it is an affirmation of the source of everything. A precious thing it is to know that our God cares about our physical needs. So, bread is the staple of life. And though we may not always be on the edge of hunger we are always to be thankful for all of it comes from Him.

Now that takes us to the second thought, the second feature of this verse. First, the substance is bread; and secondly the source is God. And I just want to talk about that for a minute because I think it's important. You know, we tend to think that we provide everything for ourselves. I make my living, I earn my wages, I buy my bread, you know, what do I owe God? Right? I'm carrying my own load, frankly. If we don't say that, that's kind of the way we operate. For example, when is the last time you said, "Lord, for my daily bread I thank You, for the fact that I have food to eat and clothes to wear and a shelter over my head, I thank You. That I have a bed to rest in, that I have enough physical strength to know You, to perceive You, to live life, in a way that is rich and meaningful." Well, that's what He's after here. God cares about the little things. God is involved. God knows when a sparrow hops. God knows the number of hairs on your head. And everything there is in this world, He knows and controls, and orders, for us, so that we are always to be thankful.

You know, we live in a day, it's interesting that it's almost paranoid. People are so fearful that they're going to lose their existence because of the pollution of the resources, right? We're afraid of nuclear

reactors messing up our environment. We're afraid of polluting our seas with sewage, and our rivers and lakes. We're afraid of overcrowding population. We're afraid of smog and air pollution. We're afraid of breaking up the ozone around the earth. We're afraid of polluting space with all of the garbage and metal that's floating around. We're afraid of polluting our bodies with chemicals. We are afraid of all of this. And with all the money we have, and all the resources we have. Man knows that he is always on the brink of devastating his environment to the point where he has no resources, which ought to drive him to the recognition that God upholds the whole thing. You know, there's going to come a day in the Book of Revelation when God turns out the lights in the heavens, when God turns the rivers to blood, when God has the whole world go crazy, when the sea swallows up all of the ships, and kills all the fish, when literal devastation sweeps the world. The sun goes black and the moon doesn't give its light, and all the resources are gone. And in Revelation 18, the whole economic system collapses, and music stops because there's no song to sing, and then it won't matter what you have. It won't be worth a nickel because none of it'll buy anything, cause there won't be anything to purchase to preserve life. And man knows the potentiation of that. But, man never makes the jump to the fact that if it weren't for the fact that God upholds all things by the word of His power, everything would fall apart.

You know that scientists realize that when all their calculations are done, and all of their examinations are done, there is an unknown element in the universe that makes it all hang together in constancy? And science doesn't even have a name for it. And it's God. Everything we have is from God. It is God who brings the rain to make things grow. It is God who cycles the seasons. It is God who produces the minerals in the soil to make the earth fertile. It is God who gives us the natural resources to propel ourselves around. It is God who provides for us the animals from which we make our clothing, and the synthetics that come from petroleum, et cetera, et cetera, that once came from animals. It's God, who made it all.

And so, my daily bread, the necessities of physical life, are all from God. And so, part of my prayer should ever and always be, "Give us this day our daily bread." God, we recognize You as the giver of all physical necessity.

You know, just think about it from the food standpoint. We don't have time to go into everything, but just think from the food standpoint. Go back to Genesis chapter 1 for a minute and look how God has given us food. Genesis 1:29: "And God said, Behold, I have given you every herb bearing seed, which is upon the face of all the earth. And every tree, in which is the fruit of a tree yielding seed, to you it shall be for food. And to every beast of the earth and to every fowl of the air, and to everything that creeps on the earth, wherein there is life, I have given every green herb for food, and it was so. And God saw everything that he had made, and behold, it was very good." Now listen here, God could have designed that we all just eat mud. Mud for breakfast, mud for lunch, and mud for dinner, all our lives and that everything was grey. But God is a God of marvelous variety, isn't He? I mean look around you. There's none two of us alike. And the colors. And you go outside, and the world of

color is almost unending. And why would there not be the same variety in food? And so He says in 29, and here is the key: "I have given you every herb bearing seed, every tree, every beast, every fowl, everything that creepeth, every green herb. And God saw everything, and said it's good." Good for food, good for man's physical life. God is a God who put into His world such an incalculable world of wonder and variety that, and of course man corrupts this, doesn't he? And it becomes a fetish for him to eat in a variety of ways. But it's, nonetheless, the good gift of God to give us an incredible amount of variety in life, and it's all there, and God has wonderfully and graciously provided for us.

Now, go from there over to 1 Timothy chapter 4, and I'll show you a comparative Scripture and tie the two together. In spite of what God has given, and by the way, God did give special dietary laws to Israel but set them aside in Acts chapter 10 so they're no longer in existence, but God did give them special dietary laws for a while, in order to keep them on a certain diet so they couldn't easily intermingle with the pagan nations and corrupt their purity. That was His design. But, when Israel stopped obeying and was set aside for the cause of the church, then the dietary laws were also set aside according to Acts 10. Colossians also says the same thing: "Let no man judge you in those matters." But there are still people who come along, and they want to draw lines and tell you you can't have this, or you can't have that. And you have that in 1 Timothy 4: some who gave seducing spirits, and the doctrines of demons, come along. And they say you shouldn't get married, and you shouldn't eat certain foods. And we know there are some who believe that it's more holy to be unmarried and not to eat meat on certain days and that, and there are many ways that that has been illustrated in history. But it says, "God has created these foods, to be received with thanksgiving by them who believe and know the truth." God has provided this incredible world of food for us to express our thanks to Him, we who believe and know the truth. The rest of the world just indulges itself without a gratitude at all.

Now, look at verse 4, "For every creature of God is good, and nothing is to be refused, if it is received with thanksgiving." Now watch. "For it is sanctified by the word of God and prayer." Now, what does that mean? First of all, how are all these foods sanctified by the Word of God? Very clearly, in Genesis 1:29 to 31, God's Word said it is all good. That sanctified it. Here the Word of God says, verse 4, "Every creature of God is good." And again the Word of God sanctifies it. So, it is sanctified by the Word of God. Now, how is it sanctified by prayer? When it is received, verse 3, with thanksgiving. Verse 4, "When it is received with thanksgiving." The Word of God sanctifies it, and you sanctify it when you thank God for it. Do you really thank God for your food? You say, listen, we wouldn't have a meal without a prayer. You know, those little quick things that are rather unconscious and indifferent, and you just rattle them off to make sure the duty's done? Are you really thankful? Do you really see God as the source, of everything?

Listen, God has given us a marvelous variety of foods. We should be so thankful. The foods have been sanctified already by the Word of God, and they are doubly sanctified when you say thanks to God. When you are saying thanks to God for your provision on a daily basis to meet your physical

need, you are fulfilling the spirit of, "Give us this day our daily bread." Realizing that God is the source of all of that; and beloved, that isn't selfish is it? Because that gives Him glory, doesn't it?

Have you ever stopped to think about everything God's given us to eat? Just, let me talk about that for a minute. Food is close to all of us, and we're all into that. Obviously, every generation has been; it's an absolute necessity. But, do you know the variety is amazing, even in the Bible. I was just going through some verses to try to put together a little biblical menu for you, so here it comes. First of all, God has provided plant food. Now under the plant food there are several categories. First, grains. And if you study the Bible, you'll find the fields of Palestine, for example, produced wheat, barley, millet, spelt. Those are just different kind of grains. And then there's a term corn, and corn doesn't mean the Indian maize that we call corn. It is simply a general term for all of that kind of grain that was used, because that kind of corn that we have today wasn't even known in those days. It refers to cereal grains. So, they had all these grains. Now, according to Isaiah 3:1 and many other passages, they would take the grain, they would crush the grain, and when it was crushed, they would then make it into a flour. They would make it into bread, and they made it into all kinds of different breads. This was very much a part of their life.

Another thing I found interesting was that they would take the kernels of the grains, and they would leave them in the sun on a stone to dry, and get them real parched, and then they would salt them and that's what they had for snacks. Kind of like you go in the health food store, you know, and they have all those little bags of that salted grains. You can buy soy beans or whatever. I don't know all that stuff but, it's similar. They had their snack foods, their little crunchy stuff. They also had nuts. According to Genesis 43:11, God provided nuts. Also, vegetables. I found as I looked through the Scripture, cucumbers, leeks. That's some kind of like an onion. Melons, onions, garlicks, beans, lentils, bitter herbs, mint, dill, cumin. And then in Jeremiah 6:20, it talk about sweet cane which is probably sugar cane. And, you know how much sugar means to all of us, to flavor everything we eat. That was made by the Lord, you have to remember that, in its natural state.

Fruits also are a part of God's plant foods. We have in the Bible grapes, raisins, olives, figs, pomegranates, apples and then what Jeremiah and Amos call "summer fruit." We're not just too sure what it is, and those may only be family names, and there may be endless varieties of those.

Then you come to animal foods that the Lord provided. And I'm just talking here about the land of Israel, to say nothing of going all around the world. But in the animal foods, you have, first of all, the flesh of animals that's provided for us to eat. There's nothing wrong with eating meat, folks. It's not spiritual to be vegetarian. If you're a vegetarian and you prefer that, that's wonderful, that's fine. If you're a meatatarian and you just want to eat that all the time, that's okay too. It's not a biblical issue. You're not more spiritual if you don't eat meat. But God has provided oxen, sheep, goats, for Israel. And pork has even been provided, though they were restricted from eating it, and that restriction has been removed in Acts 10, as I said. They preferred lamb if they had their choice. The Bible talks

about the stalled ox. That was the ox they put in the stall, and they didn't let them run around to get tough muscle. They just wanted them fat and juicy. And that's kind of like the fatted calf, too. And they also had, by the way, in Deuteronomy 14:5, there's a list of seven animals that could be hunted for food. Interesting. Fish, and they had four types of insects, according to Leviticus 11, that they enjoyed.

Now, I don't know how they served those insects. I've seen chocolate covered ants in a store or something, but I don't know, maybe they had those real crunchy too, and just threw them in with their nuts and stuff. I don't know. But there was also, you know, whatever turns you on, right? They also had fowl, different kinds of fowl that they ate, and you can study the Scripture and you'll find in 1 Samuel 26 they ate partridge. In Exodus 16 they ate quail. In Leviticus 12 they ate pigeons. In Genesis 15 they ate turtledoves. And in Matthew, you find chickens running around crowing from time to time, and I'm sure they had a purpose for them as well. And so, there were fowl provided by the Lord in an abundant array. And then you go from animal products in flesh to the animal products that come through the dairy process, and you have milk.

They actually ate they actually ate byproducts of the milk; they had what was called curds, in Genesis 18:8, which is butter. They had cheese, Job tells us. They had eggs from chickens. They had honey. They had milk from the cows, from the goats, from the sheep, and they even drank camel milk, which doesn't sound too interesting, but they did. I was in Egypt once, and I know I got a camel burger. That wasn't what they said it was but I know that's what it was. And the Lord also provided a tremendous amount of condiments to flavor their food. There was, as I said, the sugar that came from the cane. There was salt, mint, anise, all kinds of seeds, mustards, cumin, and all of these kinds of herbs and things that were used to flavor the food.

Now, it is thrilling to me to see that God has provided such an incredible abundance of all of this for us. In fact, when God said to the children of Israel, "You're going to go to a certain land," God put his finger on one characteristic of that land and set it apart as a land of what? Milk and honey. And what God was saying is: it is a land where there will be a physical bounty. And by the way folks, when you go to Israel today, you'll be amazed to see that that is true. Israel is fertile. It is one of the most fertile lands in all the world. And God knew that when He sent His people there. God provides an incredible abundant variety of those things needed to meet our physical life requirements.

You know, I was thinking of illustrating, I don't have time to illustrate a whole lot of this, but you just should study some of the incidents in the Old Testament where they were eating and see all of the stuff they had. It is amazing. Abigail made haste. Just get this. How'd you like to cook this up, wives? She took two hundred loaves. That's a good start. Now, those are probably smaller. Two skins of wine. Animal skins, big huge things. Five sheep, dressed. I mean, how'd you like to cook five sheep? Five measures of parched grain, a whole bunch of those little crunchy grain things. A hundred clusters of raisins, and two hundred cakes of figs. Packed them on her animals and took off. Now,

that's kind of exciting. Boy, I don't know what all was going to happen, but I know the folks would enjoy all of that. And you can go into 2 Samuel, 1 Kings and all, and you can find all these things that were provided for food.

Now where did it all come from? God made everything, didn't He? Everything. Every single thing. It's fun when you try to tell your kids that, you know, and they don't understand. Well, God didn't make hamburgers, or God didn't make hot dogs. They don't understand that all the things are made up of the component parts of what God made. Even our clothing; we are dependent on the animals for our clothing. We're dependent on the plants for our clothing. And people say, well, I have a polyester dress, you know. There's no animal or plant. Ah, but that's made from, I think, a petroleum product which comes from the earth, and God made that too. You don't have anything. Nothing. You don't eat anything, you don't wear anything, and you don't live in anything that didn't come from this earth, and every element of it was coming from the creative hand of God.

And, it is the height of indifference and ingratitude not to be daily recognizing that, and affirming that God is a God who is active daily in upholding His world so that it supports our physical needs. How grateful we should be for God's gracious daily loving provision. Did you know that God even, this is amazing, God has set up a network that's so incredible. God has to have in His whole system food for man, but in order to have food for man, He has to feed the food that feeds man, do you realize that? And so, God has to feed the animals, and the plants, and there has to be minerals, and other animals, and other plants, and the whole cycle is just to provide for man. The Bible says for the plant eaters there's herbage, for the ox there's grass and straw, for the horses there's barley, for the birds there are seeds, for the locusts there are plants, and God keeps the whole cycle going.

And by the way, rain is a gift from God, did you know that? And if God shut off the heavens, nothing would grow. And if the grass didn't grow and the plants didn't grow, the animals wouldn't eat. And if the animals didn't eat, you wouldn't either, and we'd all be dead. So if it doesn't rain, the whole thing goes down. But God upholds the world and keeps the rain falling. All we have is from God's hand. You say, now, wait a minute, I earn my money. If you have the ability to bend your back, if you have the ability to open your mouth and talk and make a living, if you have the ability to think and make a living, it's God who gave you that capacity and that facility. And by the way, the money you got from the bank was made out of stuff that God created. The paper came from trees, and the coins came from minerals. You don't have, there isn't anything. There is nothing in the world that God didn't create. Talk about dependence, folks. We are dependent on God.

First Chronicles 29:14 says, "All things come of thee, and of thine own have we given thee." Anything you ever give God back is something He gave you to start with. Thomas Watson, that great Puritan with a heart for God, wrote this: "If all is a gift from God, do you see the odious ingratitude of men who sin against their giver. God feeds them and they fight against Him. He gives them bread and they give Him affront. How unworthy is this? Should we not cry shame on him who had a friend always feeding

him with money, and yet he should betray and injure that friend? Thus ungratefully do sinners deal with God; they not only forget His mercies but they abuse them. As Jeremiah 5:7 has said, 'When I had fed them to the full, then they committed adultery.' Oh, how horrid is it to sin against a bountiful God, to strike the hand that gives."

In Deuteronomy 32:15 it says, "Jeshurun became fat, and rebelled." You know something? The more you have, the less grateful you are, true? We need to be careful in our society. You say this verse doesn't apply to us? Maybe it applies to us more than it applies to people who have very little, because they tend to express this gratitude and petition. We don't. We don't. Because we have too much. We are dependent on God, beloved, for every single thing we have. It is God who gives us our physical supply. Next time you pray, remember to affirm that all your physical needs are met by God, and ask Him humbly to continue to do it that His name may be glorified in your prayer of thanksgiving.

Well, I wanted to get a little further, but we'll do that next time. Let's pray. Father, we've just really introduced the beginning of this wonderful and significant statement, but we've certainly touched the most important part: that it is from Your hand that we receive everything. Oh Lord, may we be ever thankful. May all that we possess of the physical be sanctified not only by the Word of God, but by thanksgiving in our prayers, as Paul said to Timothy. Lord, make us thankful. Lord, may we know that we do not do anything of our own selves, that we have absolutely no resources unless You give them to us. May we know that You made everything, You uphold everything. That every good and perfect gift comes down from you. And Lord, may we be the kind of people who stand in the place to receive the promise, and may we return Your gift each day with our gratitude. For Your glory, may the world hear us giving thanks and know that we take no credit for ourselves for anything, but give You all the praise. Be glorified, Father, in Your abundant supply of our physical need. We pray in Christ's blessed name. Amen.

Well, there's some exciting things for you to learn about practical things in regard to this as we study next Lord's Day, and I'll be looking forward to that. I hope you will too.

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