The Constitution of the Kingdom

A 33-Session Journey through the Sermon on the Mount & the Sermon on the Plain

SESSION TWENTY-ONE — Give Us, Forgive Us, Deliver Us

Part Four: The Practices of Piety · Texts: Matthew 6:11–15; Luke 11:3–4

The Texts

> **Matthew 6:11–13** *Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. And do not bring us to the time of trial, but rescue us from the evil one.*
>
> **Matthew 6:14–15** *For if you forgive others their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you; but if you do not forgive others… neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.*

Turning to Our Needs — Still "Us"

Last session, God came first: your name, your kingdom, your will. Having let that holy order re-set our hearts, we now turn, at last, to our own needs. And Jesus gives us three — and between them, they cover the whole of human need in three short lines. Bread: what we need to live. Forgiveness: what we need to be free. Deliverance: what we need to be safe. Provision, pardon, protection — body, soul, and spirit, in three plain requests.

But notice something before we begin. Even now that we have turned to ourselves, Jesus will not let us say "me." It is give us, forgive us, deliver us — plural, every one. In the Kingdom, you cannot even pray for your own bread without praying, in the same breath, for your neighbor's.

Let's search the Scriptures together.

Still "Us," Not "Me"

Hold onto that plural, because it runs through the whole second half of the prayer and quietly transforms it. Three great human needs — provision, pardon, and protection — and Jesus teaches us to bring every one of them to God not as isolated individuals but as a family, bound to one another. There is no private version of this prayer. When I pray it, I am praying for you; when you pray it, you are praying for me. Even our deepest personal needs are lifted to God in solidarity, never in isolation.[1]

Give Us This Day Our Daily Bread

The first request is almost shocking in its ordinariness. After "your kingdom come, your will be done," the very first thing Jesus teaches us to ask for ourselves is… bread. Not enlightenment. Not success, or victory, or a mountaintop experience. Bread — the plainest, most bodily thing there is. And that tells us something enormous about God: he cares about

[1]Unless noted, Scripture is quoted from the New Revised Standard Version, Updated Edition (NRSVue), the base translation for this course. This session completes the Lord's Prayer—the "us"-petitions of Matthew 6:11–13 and Jesus' follow-up on forgiveness (6:14–15); Luke's shorter version is 11:3–4.

our stomachs. The Kingdom is not too spiritual to concern itself with lunch. The God of this prayer is the same God who fed the hungry crowds on the hillside, the God who "blessed are you who are hungry now" — a God who takes our bodies, and our daily needs, with complete seriousness.[2]

And notice "daily." Not "give us a year's supply so we never have to depend on you again," but "give us today's bread, today." It is the manna in the wilderness all over again — gathered fresh each morning, never hoarded, and if you tried to store it up, it spoiled. This petition trains us in daily trust, one day at a time, rather than anxious self-sufficiency. It keeps us in living, dependent relationship with the Father instead of trying to stockpile our way out of ever needing him.

And there it is again — our bread. Not "give me mine." And that little word is quietly revolutionary, because you cannot honestly pray "give us our daily bread" — asking God to feed everyone — while you hoard a full table and your neighbor goes hungry. To pray this prayer is to be enlisted in answering it. The Kingdom person who prays "give us bread" cannot then step over the empty plate next door. This is the pantry, the shared meal, the open table — the prayer with its sleeves rolled up.

Forgive Us Our Debts

The second request turns from the body to the conscience: "forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors." Matthew calls sin a debt — something owed, an account we cannot settle, a moral obligation we have failed and can never repay. We are all, every one of us, in debt to God past any hope of paying it off. And the gospel in this petition is breathtaking: we ask God simply to cancel it — to release the debt, tear up the bill, forgive what we could never make right. And he does.[3]

But this is the one petition that comes with something attached — "as we also have forgiven our debtors" — and it is the one petition Jesus stops to underline. Right after the prayer, he circles back to this single line alone: "if you forgive others, your Father will forgive you; but if you do not forgive, neither will he." Of all seven petitions, this is the one he reinforces. Why?

Not — hear this carefully — because you earn God's forgiveness by forgiving first. That would unravel grace, and we settled it back in the mercy session: mercy is a current, not a coin. It is something deeper. Forgiveness is one indivisible thing — you cannot receive it with a closed fist. The person who clamps their hand shut against a neighbor has, by that very act, closed their hand around the mercy being poured into them, and cannot feel it flow. It is not that God

[2] "Daily bread": the Greek epiousios is rare and its meaning uncertain—likely "for the coming day" or "sufficient for existence." Either way it asks enough for today, not a stockpile, echoing the wilderness manna gathered fresh each day (Exodus 16). "Our" bread is communal: to pray it honestly is to be enlisted in feeding the hungry. See Gustavo Gutiérrez on the subversive plainness of this petition.

[3] "Debts" (Matthew, opheilēmata) / "sins" (Luke): sin as a debt owed and unpayable, which God cancels. "As we also have forgiven" is not earning God's forgiveness (see Session Six: mercy is a current, not a coin) but recognizing it is indivisible—a closed, unforgiving hand cannot receive the mercy it refuses to pass on (cf. the unforgiving servant, Matthew 18:23–35). Jesus underscores this one petition alone in 6:14–15. Note, pastorally: forgiveness is not the condoning of harm or a return to danger, and for deep wounds it is the slow work of grace, a direction of the heart rather than a demand met on the spot (see Sessions Six and Fourteen).

grows stingy toward the unforgiving; it is that a heart sealed shut against another cannot hold the very forgiveness it is sealed against. You cannot carry grace in a clenched hand. To pray "forgive us as we forgive" is to admit that the mercy we receive and the mercy we give are one single stream — and to step out of the one is to step out of the other.

And a gentle, necessary word, the same one we have said before: forgiveness is not pretending the wound never happened, and it is not calling evil good, and it is never a command to return to someone who is harming you. For the deepest wounds it is the slow work of years and grace, not a switch you flip on demand. It is a direction the heart is set toward — the releasing of the debt so that bitterness does not get to own you — not a performance owed to anyone on the spot. Take the honest step you can take, and trust God with the pace.

Do Not Bring Us to the Time of Trial

The third request is a cry for protection, and it comes in two parts. First: "do not bring us to the time of trial" — or, as we long prayed it, "lead us not into temptation." And that old wording raises an honest question: does God tempt us into sin? No — Scripture is plain, "God tempts no one." So this is not "please stop luring me toward evil." It is something humbler and more self-aware: spare us the testing that would overwhelm us. It is the prayer of a person who has learned they are weaker than they think — who knows their own fragility, and asks God not to let them face the crucible that would break them.[4]

And then the prayer ends not on a triumphant spiritual high but on a plain cry for rescue: "but deliver us from the evil one." Deliver us. It is an admission that we are in a struggle bigger than ourselves — that evil is real, personal and structural, stronger than our willpower — and that we cannot save ourselves. The Lord's Prayer, remarkably, ends exactly where human beings actually live: needing to be rescued. Not "look how strong I have become," but "deliver us." There is deep honesty, and deep grace, in ending there.

A Word on the Ending

You will notice your Bible may not include the line so many of us learned by heart: "for thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever. Amen." That beloved ending — the doxology — was added by the early church as it prayed this prayer in worship; it is not found in the oldest manuscripts, which is why some Bibles set it in a footnote. It is not a mistake or a falsehood; it is a faithful burst of praise the church could not help but add, and it is beautifully fitting — it returns the prayer, at its very close, to God's kingdom and power and glory, mirroring the God-ward way it began. And "Amen" — that small, great word means "so be it," "let it be so," "yes." It is the word that makes the prayer our own — our assent, our signature, our whole heart saying: let it be.[5]

[4] "Do not bring us to the time of trial" (peirasmos): not a request that God stop tempting us—"God tempts no one" (James 1:13)—but a humble plea to be spared testing that would overwhelm us, and to be rescued "from the evil one" (or "from evil"). The prayer ends in dependence, not triumph.

[5] The doxology ("for thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever") is a later liturgical addition, absent from the earliest manuscripts—a faithful burst of praise the church added, returning the prayer's close to God's kingdom, power, and glory, mirroring its God-ward opening. "Amen" ("so be it") makes the prayer the pray-er's own assent.

The Whole Shape

Now step back and see the finished prayer whole. It moves God, then us, then — in the church's Amen — back to God. It begins with his name, his kingdom, his will; it turns to our bread, our forgiveness, our rescue; and it returns everything to his glory. It covers all of it: God's honor and our hunger, our sin and our safety, body and soul and spirit — honest about our weakness from beginning to end, and communal from the first word to the last. In a handful of plain lines, Jesus gave us everything a human being will ever need to pray, for a whole lifetime. And every time we pray it in its order, it does its quiet work on us — making us God-centered, neighbor-bound, dependent, forgiving, and humble. It is not only the prayer we pray; it is the prayer that prays us into Kingdom people.

Freedom for Others

Put it to our thread, and see how thoroughly Jesus has woven freedom-for-others into even our most basic requests. "Give us our bread" ties my own provision to my neighbor's hunger — I cannot pray it and hoard. "Forgive us as we forgive" ties my own pardon to the neighbor, and the enemy, I must release. Even my prayer for daily survival, even my hope of being forgiven, cannot be prayed selfishly — the plural will not let me. So ask with me: when I pray for my bread, do I remember the hungry at my door? And is my hope of being forgiven bound up, honestly, with my willingness to forgive? *Freedom for others may cost us the private, hoarding, unforgiving prayer — what can we lay down?*

Around the Table — For Discussion

- The first thing Jesus teaches us to ask for ourselves is bread — not something "spiritual." What does that say about how God regards your ordinary, bodily needs?
- "Give us OUR daily bread." How does it change the prayer to know you cannot pray it while ignoring your neighbor's empty table?
- "Forgive us as we forgive." Why do you think this is the one petition Jesus stops to underline — and how do you hear it without hearing "earn it"?
- The prayer ends "deliver us" — a cry for rescue, not a boast of strength. Why might it matter that Jesus ends there?
- Freedom for others may cost us something. Is there a debt you are being invited to release — gently, at grace's pace?

This Week — A Practice

Two movements. First, mean the "our." When you pray "give us this day our daily bread," deliberately widen the "our" to include someone hungry in our corridor — and then do one concrete thing this week to be part of that daily bread for them. Let the prayer leave your lips and land on someone's table. Second, release one debt. Name one "debtor" — someone who owes you an apology, a wrong left unpaid — and take one honest step, by grace, toward letting it go. And hold the guardrail gently: for a deep wound this is a direction, not a deadline, and

never a return to harm. Then bring back what you found. This Kingdom, like all the rest, is learned in the doing.

Looking Ahead

Next session, the third and last of the practices of piety — fasting. "Whenever you fast, do not look dismal, like the hypocrites… so that your fasting may be seen not by others but by your Father who is in secret." The same warning, one final time, aimed now at the oldest and most bodily of the disciplines — and then the Sermon will turn a corner, from how we practice our devotion to where we keep our treasure, and the question that will run underneath everything: what, and whom, do we actually serve?

Benediction

So go this week and pray the whole prayer — both halves now — slowly enough to be re-made by it. Ask boldly for your daily bread, and remember your neighbor's in the same breath. Receive the forgiveness you could never earn, and let it loosen your grip on the ones who owe you. Admit your weakness, and cry "deliver us," and mean it. And end where the church has always ended — with "Amen," your whole heart saying yes to a God who was leaning toward you before you spoke a word. Blessed are those who learn to pray "give us, forgive us, deliver us," for they have learned to carry the whole family to the Father — which is very nearly to love the way he loves.

Love, practiced — not just professed — reveals the Kingdom among us.

Blessings,
Pastor Mick Finch

SESSION TWENTY-ONE

Introduction Video Script

Single presenter, to camera · target 5–6 minutes · warm, steady, unhurried

[Begin still.]

Welcome back to the table. Last session, God came first — your name, your kingdom, your will. Having let that holy order re-set our hearts, we turn now, at last, to our own needs. And Jesus gives us three, and between them they cover the whole of being human in three short lines. Bread: what we need to live. Forgiveness: what we need to be free. Deliverance: what we need to be safe. Provision, pardon, protection — body, soul, and spirit.

But notice — even now that we've turned to ourselves, Jesus won't let us say "me." It's give us, forgive us, deliver us — plural, every one. In the Kingdom, you can't even pray for your own bread without praying, in the same breath, for your neighbor's.

[Daily bread.]

The first request is almost shocking in its ordinariness. After "your kingdom come, your will be done," the very first thing Jesus teaches us to ask for ourselves is… bread. Not enlightenment, not success — bread. The plainest, most bodily thing there is. And that tells us something huge about God: he cares about our stomachs. The Kingdom isn't too spiritual to care about lunch. This is the God who fed the hungry crowds, who said "blessed are you who are hungry now."

And notice "daily." Not "give us a year's supply so we never have to depend on you again," but "give us today's bread, today." It's the manna in the wilderness — gathered fresh each morning, never hoarded; if you tried to store it, it spoiled. It trains us in daily trust, one day at a time. And there it is again — our bread. Not "give me mine." And that little word is revolutionary, because you can't honestly pray "give us our daily bread" while you hoard a full table and your neighbor goes hungry. To pray it is to be enlisted in answering it. That's the pantry, the shared meal, the open table — the prayer with its sleeves rolled up.

[Forgive us.]

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But this is the one petition with a condition — "as we also have forgiven" — and it's the one Jesus stops to underline. Right after the prayer he circles back to this line alone: "if you forgive others, your Father will forgive you; if you don't, neither will he." Why this one? Not because you earn God's forgiveness by forgiving first — that unravels grace, and we settled it in the mercy session: mercy is a current, not a coin. It's deeper. Forgiveness is one indivisible thing — you can't receive it with a closed fist. The person who clamps their hand shut against a neighbor has closed it around the very mercy being poured into them, and can't feel it flow. You can't carry grace in a clenched hand.

And the same gentle word we've said before: forgiveness isn't pretending the wound never happened, it's not calling evil good, and it's never a command to go back to someone harming you. For the deepest wounds it's the slow work of years and grace — a direction the heart is set toward, not a switch you flip on demand. Take the honest step you can, and trust God with the pace.

[Deliver us.]

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[The ending.]

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[The shape, thread, and practice.]

Now step back and see it whole: God, then us, then — in the Amen — back to God. His name, kingdom, will; our bread, forgiveness, rescue; and everything returned to his glory. It covers all of it — God's honor and our hunger, our sin and our safety — honest about our weakness, communal from first word to last. In a handful of lines, Jesus gave us everything we'll ever need to pray. And it isn't only the prayer we pray — it's the prayer that prays us into Kingdom people.

So here's our question this week — freedom for others: when I pray for my bread, do I remember the hungry at my door? Is my hope of being forgiven bound up, honestly, with my willingness to forgive? Two things to practice. First, mean the "our" — widen "give us our daily bread" to include someone hungry in the corridor, then do one concrete thing to be part of that bread for them. Second, release one debt — name one person who owes you, and take one honest step, by grace, toward letting it go; gently, at grace's pace, and never back into harm.

Next time, the third practice — fasting, and the same old warning one last time. And then the Sermon turns a corner, from how we practice our devotion to where we keep our treasure, and the question underneath everything: what, and whom, do we really serve?

[Slow. Land it.]

For now, go and pray the whole prayer — both halves — slowly enough to be re-made by it. Ask boldly for your bread, and remember your neighbor's in the same breath. Receive the forgiveness you could never earn, and let it loosen your grip on the ones who owe you. Admit

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