

Bible Study #1

Bread in the Desert and on the Mountain

Opening Prayer

Blessed are you, Lord our God, ruler of the universe, you bring forth bread from the earth. Help us to listen to your word and so partake of the bread that truly satisfies. In the name of Christ our Lord. Amen.

(This is an adaptation of a traditional Jewish Table Grace)

Luther's Small Catechism

"Give us today our daily bread."

"What is this?"

In fact, God gives daily bread without our prayer, even to all evil people, but we ask in this prayer that God cause us to recognize what our daily bread is and to receive it with thanksgiving.

"What then does 'daily bread' mean?"

Everything included in the necessities and nourishment for our bodies, such as food, drink, clothing, shoes, house, farm, fields, livestock, money, property, an upright spouse, upright children, upright members of the household, upright and faithful rulers, good government, good weather, peace, health, decency, honor, good friends, faithful neighbors, and the like.

– Martin Luther, *The Fourth Petition of The Lord's Prayer, Small Catechism*

Show Video

"Bread in the Desert and on the Mountain"

Bible Study and Discussion

This video remind us of the vast beauty in the Rocky Mountain Synod. Most likely there is NOT a lot of primary food production in either, Alamogordo, NM, or Gypsum, CO.

Luther's Large Catechism causes us to expand *"give us this day our daily bread* beyond the oven or the flour bin to the broad fields and the whole land.

(LC, 449-450, 72)



- *How might we pray and live as a people mindful of the interconnectedness of the gifts of land, water, and food producers in our area and in the wider world?*

Read Deuteronomy 8:11-18

(Moses reminds God's people of their history of enslavement and their precarious journey in the desert.)

Pastor Freeman's congregation "sees" the homeless and transient who live in the desert or sleep in cars.

- *How might we "not forget" that our houses, food, and ability to seek prosperity all come as a gift from God?*

Read 2 Corinthians 9:9-12

(Paul encourages the assembly at Corinth to catch the vision of an abundant God, and to respond with their own gifts for the poor)

At Our Savior's Lutheran Church, what started out as a pastor's handout grew into an abundance of "helping hands." As a result, new people with a heart for helping others are being attracted to this congregation.

- *Our daily bread is generously provided through "God's work." How are we partners with God through "Our hands?"*

- *What are examples of generosity that have been energized by our gratitude to God?*

Pastor Freeman ties together the theme of ministry to the homeless with Eucharistic hospitality. Marty Haugen’s paraphrase of the ancient Communion prayer says: *“As the grains of wheat, once scattered on the hill, were gathered into one to become our bread, so may all your people, from all the ends of earth, be gathered into one in you.”*

- *How have you experienced this connection between sharing bread with the hungry and gathering new people to the communion table?*

First Lutheran Church, Gypsum, is described as a small church in a transient community. Pastor Reiquam says that this has led to discussions on how they shall be “church” in their unique time and place.

What about our own congregation?

- *What does it mean to be the church in our setting?*
- *Is ministry such as the “brown bag” in Gypsum incidental or essential to who we are?*

Read Isaiah 58:9b-11

Pastor Reiquam describes a people who demonstrate “grit and resilience” in a tough economy. (Eagle County has huge disparities in wealth and education level.)

- *How might the hard-working people of Gypsum hear these words of promise?*

The teacher in the video has a sense of vocation (God’s call) in her daily work of teaching.

- *How does she articulate her conviction that God’s call to ministry extends even into her classroom?*

- *How does our prayer for daily bread open our eyes to needs beyond our church?*

In the Large Catechism, Luther says that one of the most important dimensions of praying for daily bread is to pray for the work of civil authorities and government (LC, 450-451, 74-75). He argues that the “coat of arms” (or, in our case, the flag) should feature a “loaf of bread” because of the government’s role in providing the necessities of life.

- *How might we as church foster both “private charity” and support for those who serve in the realm of public, civil life?*

Read Matthew 6:31-34

One man explained that he lost his job, but then began delivering “brown bags” to others.

- *Relate these well-known words of Jesus to this man who is guided by “the miracle of the moment.” Share a story of a “miracle of the moment” in your own life.*

Closing Prayer

Read Psalm 146:5-10

Join in prayer together:

Maker of all, thank you for being a Lord who executes justice, who gives food to the hungry, who lifts up the lowly, and who watches over the stranger. Thank you for our partnership in ministry across the Rocky Mountain Synod. As we pray for daily bread, fill us also with your Spirit of compassion and justice. As we pray for daily bread in this place, so help us to be mindful of the need for bread among all those who live in the desert and on the mountain. We ask this in the name of Christ our Lord. Amen.

**Written by Pastor Steven Berke,
First Lutheran, Longmont, CO**

Learn more on how you can help fight hunger by contacting your local food bank or ELCA World Hunger at www.elca.org/hunger.