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Matthew 6:11 - 6:12 (Part 5)



Gospel of Matthew - Steve Gregg

In this segment, Steve Gregg discusses the line "Give us this day our daily bread" from The Lord's Prayer, emphasizing that it encourages us to trust in God for our basic needs. He goes on to explain that we should not accumulate earthly treasures, but instead trust that God will provide for us on a daily basis. When the prayer asks for forgiveness of debts, Gregg suggests that it refers figuratively to our sins, and highlights the importance of confessing them to be forgiven before facing judgement. He notes that forgiveness from God is not always unconditional and may require us to forgive others as well.

Transcript

Last time we were talking about that line in The Lord's Prayer where Jesus taught us to pray, give us this day our daily bread. And we had to end rather abruptly, we ran out of time. And I was just saying that we have a modest request here that we are told to make, and that is that God will provide for our current needs, our daily bread.

It does not indicate that God's norm is to give us so much that we can store up for the extended future. And then of course if we did, we would not have to ask Him again for a very long time, and of course we would become very possibly overtaken by a sense of independence from God. Whereas if we have to ask on a daily basis, because that's how much He provides, just what we need each day, then we keep a very close account with God, and it's necessary for us to trust Him every day.

Now, as we closed last time, I was pointing out that it is not necessarily wrong, if God gives you a surplus, that you lay some of it aside in certain situations where you do know that a need is coming up. In the book of Proverbs we're told that the ant is a good model of wisdom in this. The ant foresees the winter coming.

It doesn't really foresee it in the sense that we do, but instinctively it acts as if it does. And because the winter is coming, it lays aside enough food for its community that it can have enough through the winter, because it won't be able to gather as much food in the wintertime. And people have done that, of course, for centuries too.

I mean, farmers know that winter is coming, and they have their harvest in the summer, or in the fall, or whenever it is, and they put their surplus away so that they'll have something to eat during the wintertime. Women can fruits and things like that because they're not going to be able to pick any off the trees for another year. So there's nothing really wrong with putting something aside when you know that there's going to be a dearth, and when God has provided in advance for you to do so.

That is advised in Scripture. Of course, one should not be selfish with this. Jesus, in chapter 6 later on of Matthew, tells us we should not lay up for ourselves treasures on earth.

And I believe that if we lay up for ourselves treasures on earth, then we are being too self-centered, and that if we have surplus, that we should be prepared to help others with current needs, even if it cuts into what we think we need for the future. It's much more important to help a person who is in need now than to lay up for the future. If somebody comes to you, and you know their need, and you have what it takes to minister to them, John said, if you don't minister to them, how does the love of God dwell in you? And obviously, the love of God motivates us to help people with current needs.

And if that means that all that we would have laid up for the future ends up being given away to people with current needs, what then will happen to us? Well, we will ask again tomorrow, give us this day our daily bread, and the next day, and the next day. The point I wanted to make before we move along here is that God is alive today. He hears our prayers today, and if we are His servants, He cares about us having what we need today.

He wants us to have adequate clothing, and shelter, and food, and whatever other equipment is necessary for doing the will of God, that is, whatever task He has for us to do. These we could call genuine needs, and we need them day by day. And Jesus said, you should pray this, give us this day our daily allotment, our daily bread.

And if God gives us no more, that's not a problem, because tomorrow He'll be alive again, or still, I should say, and the next day, and until we are old and decrepit, God will not even be old and decrepit. He will be the one who will provide for us, even in our old age. God said as much in Isaiah chapter 46, in verse 3, He said, Listen to me, O house of Jacob, and all the remnant of the house of Israel.

By the way, if you're a believer in Jesus, you're part of that remnant. It says, who have been upheld by me from birth, who have been carried from the womb, even to your old age I am He, and even to gray hairs I will carry you. I have made you, and I will bear you, even I will carry and will deliver you.

So God says, I'm the one who's carried you from the time you were born. Certainly, I will carry you until the time you die. Even to your gray hairs, even into your old age, I'm the

same God, He said.

And therefore, it raises questions about the need to lay up for retirement, and things like that. Maybe we don't need to do that. Certainly, there's nothing in the Bible that encourages us to lay up for retirement.

There is stuff in the Bible that tells us to lay up for immediate needs, if necessary. But, as I said last time, if I have to pay my rent or my mortgage payment at the end of each month, and here it is the middle of the month, and God gives me enough money to pay that mortgage payment, there's nothing wrong in my understanding of things that I put that aside and pay the mortgage payment at the end of the month. Even though I don't need that money today, I know I will need it in two weeks.

And if God has provided it, and it is a known need that's coming up in the immediate future, then I can't see any violation of biblical principle to put that aside for that. But, at the same time, of course, people's immediate needs are the most important thing for us. And if we know of Christians or poor people who are in desperate need, and we have the resources to give to them, the Bible teaches us where we should be able to do so.

And if that means we're left with nothing laid up for our future, then we're going to have to trust God again, tomorrow and the next day and forever. And that's okay. But what's interesting about this is that the first request that Jesus authorizes us to pray for ourselves is for physical things, not spiritual.

When Jesus taught us the Lord's Prayer, He said the first thing in the prayer to be concerned about is God's will and God's kingdom. But when we start praying about our own things, the first thing He says to pray for is our daily bread. After that comes spiritual needs, forgiveness and deliverance from temptation and so forth.

Now, what that tells us, of course, is that there is nothing wrong with being concerned about our physical needs. Now, when I say being concerned, I mean concerned enough to pray about it. I don't mean being worried about it, because praying for something is the opposite of worrying about it.

If you are praying and worrying, there's something really going wrong, because prayer is supposed to be done in faith. And where there is faith, there's no worry. The way Paul put it in Philipians 4, in verse 6, he said, Be anxious for nothing.

Now, anxiety is, of course, worry. He says, don't be worried for anything. He said, be anxious about nothing.

But in everything, by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God, and the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds through Christ Jesus. So, there's nothing to be worried about if you're praying. If you're praying and trusting God.

If you're not praying and trusting God, then you've got a lot to worry about. So, worrying is not what I'm talking about when I talk about being concerned about a thing. Concern does not have to have the element of worry.

Concern simply means you're not apathetic. If a person has no concern about anything, then they're apathetic about everything. And to be concerned about such things as my daily bread, paying the rent, meeting current obligations, having my current needs, those are legitimate concerns.

Those are legitimate subjects for prayer. And Jesus even puts the prayer for physical food at the top of the list of things that I ask for myself. And although that does not mean that that is more important than the other things, like forgiveness of sins and deliverance from temptation, food is not more important than those things.

It means that it's at least not less important. It means that God is as concerned about my physical needs, in terms of real needs, the need to survive and go on as long as He wants me active in this world, as He is about the spiritual side. Now, of course, spiritual things are eternal, and that makes a big difference.

But so long as God has something for me to do, my physical existence has spiritual value. And so to pray for God to sustain my life by giving me my daily bread is certainly not an unspiritual approach to things. Now, to pray that He'll give me a Cadillac, or to pray that He'll give me a mansion, or to pray that He'll give me an indoor swimming pool or something like that, I would say that doesn't sound very spiritual to me, because it's not anything anyone needs.

And we're talking here about needs, when He says, Give us this day our daily bread, He means the food I need today, would you please give it to me today, because this is the day I need it. And as God gave the Israelites manna day by day, but did not let them store it up beyond a certain day, but it would rot if they did, that was sort of teaching them the same lesson, that God is there today, trust Him today for your needs. He'll be there tomorrow, since you can't save up from yesterday, you'll have to trust Him tomorrow also.

That was, of course, what the Jews had to learn in the wilderness. That apparently is what He had in mind for His disciples to learn, in teaching them to pray thus. Now, after having prayed for our daily bread, which would, I think, represent all of our basic physical needs of the day, He also says this, this is in Matthew 6.12, And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors.

Now, our debts, literally, is a word that means something owed. I mean, the Greek word is that way too, not only the English word. He says, forgive us what we owe, as we forgive those who owe us.

Now, it is conceivable, of course, that He's talking about actual debts of finances. I was asked about that recently. Someone asked, you know, do you think that this could be referenced to financial debts, and asking God to forgive us for going into debt.

I don't think that is what He really meant here, although there's no reason why He couldn't address that. It just doesn't seem likely that it would be part of this brief and generic prayer, for the simple reason that most of His disciples probably didn't have any debt. We live in a society where almost everybody is in debt.

They have credit card debt, they have mortgages, they have car debts. They have all kinds of debt. But even a generation ago, there was much less of that debt, even here in the United States.

But back in Biblical times, nobody really had debt, unless they were extremely poor, and had to borrow for their survival. And so, in the Old Testament, the Bible, the law, actually told the Jewish people who had substance, to lend to these poor people, and not to charge any interest to them, because, you know, that was for their survival. Now, the average person who didn't need to beg and borrow for survival, didn't usually have debt, in general.

And for that reason, it's not likely that Jesus was addressing a crowd of Jewish people of His day, and saying, you guys are all in debt, you need to ask God to forgive you for that. The debt He's talking about is the debt that is owed to God, and which has not been paid. Now, we have to also be willing to forgive other people the debt that is owed to them, to us, by them, and that they have not paid.

Now, this is a sense in which the word debt is being used figuratively. I mean, we literally do owe God something. And that is, of course, full obedience.

If God has bought us with a price, we are His servants. If we are His servants, then He deserves to be obeyed by His servants. He deserves to be honored by His children.

And to the extent that we have not honored Him, to the extent that we have not obeyed Him, we have defaulted on a debt. Now, this defaulting on a debt like this is essentially what we call sin. Because the Bible says sin is the transgression of the law, over in 1 John 3, verse 6. And so, if sin is the transgression of the law, that means sin is disobedience to God.

And if God is owed obedience by us, and we don't obey Him, that's a debt that we owe, which we default upon. And therefore, we either have to pay it back or get forgiven that debt. Jesus told a story, over in Matthew chapter 18, about a man who owed an enormous debt.

In terms of the biblical currency, it's hard to be exact in the amount it was, but it was a huge amount. It was 10,000 talents, which some scholars would say that amounts to

millions of dollars. And Jesus said that there was this king who had someone who owed him 10,000 talents, and the man couldn't pay it.

And so the king said, okay, you'll be sold into slavery, and your wife and children too. And the man got down on his face and begged Him to forgive him this debt. And the master did.

He had compassion on him and forgave him the whole debt. Now, this was a debt this man could never have repaid. And in the parable, which is Matthew 18, 21 through 35, in the parable, this debt represents our debt to God that we can't repay.

It's as if we owed Him millions of dollars, and we have defaulted on it. And, you know, there's two things you can do. Well, there's three.

You can go to jail. And in this case, it'd be go to hell, because you have defaulted on a debt to God, and you can't pay it. So you're going to have to go pay by going to prison, as it were, to hell.

Or else, you have to pay it, which is impossible, or you have to be forgiven it. Really, that's the only three things. You owe a debt.

You either have to pay the debt, go to prison for the debt, or be forgiven the debt. In this parable, the man was forgiven the debt, initially. Then he found somebody who owed him money, and it was really a small amount.

And the man begged him for mercy and time, and he had no mercy. He didn't forgive the debt to his fellow servant. And so when the king heard about this, he canceled the forgiveness of the earlier debt, and put this man into prison, and said he has to stay there until he's paid the whole amount.

Now, the point Jesus made from this story is that if God has forgiven us a great debt, and if we expect to live under his mercy, then we need to extend mercy to others. If we are recipients of mercy, then we should have it to give. If God has given us grace, we should have some grace to give to others.

And if we don't forgive others, then we can't be forgiven ourselves. Thus, when Jesus tells us to pray about this matter of our debt to God, he says, say this, in Matthew 6.12, forgive us our debts as we forgive those who are indebted to us. That is, just as we forgive people who sin against us, so we want God to forgive us.

Now, let me tell you something. Every one of us is going to stand before God on the day of judgment. All of us have defaulted on our debt.

Unless you can say, I have obeyed God every moment of every day. I have never disobeyed any of his commandments ever, not even once. Then, if you can't say that,

then you have a debt to him that you cannot repay.

You can't go back and undo the violation. You can't change the past. And the great commandment, according to Jesus, is you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and all your soul and all your mind.

Now, have you, every moment of every day of your life, loved God with all your heart, soul, and mind? Has there never been a day that you put yourself ahead of God? Where you were more concerned about what pleases you than what pleases God? Has there never been a time when you've been more concerned about carnal things than about pleasing God? Obviously, the answer is suggested by the question itself. Of course, you have violated this. Everyone has.

Therefore, you have a debt to God, and you can't go back and undo that. You can't just start loving God with all your heart now and pretend that those violations never occurred, because they did occur. You need forgiveness.

You need God to forgive you that debt. The wonderful thing is that the Bible says that God is willing to do that. It says in 1 John 1, in verse 9, if we confess our sins to God, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

That is, of course, if we come to Him on His terms, if we confess them because of what Jesus has done. If we are trusting in what Jesus has done, then we can confess our sins, and God will forgive us our sins. You might say, well, aren't you adding some stuff to that passage? No.

In the context, John is very clearly writing to Christian people. He's writing to people who have already given their lives to Christ. In fact, he says it very plainly in 1 John 1, verse 7. He says, if we walk in the light as He is in the light, then we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ, His Son, cleanses us from all sin.

It's only two verses later, he says, if we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. So, confession of sin is absolutely essential if we are going to stand before God on the day of judgment with all of our accounts cleared and without having to pay a penalty that we can't pay. So, how do we do that? Well, fortunately, God desires to forgive us.

Jesus has died and shed His blood to cover the cost that we could not pay of our violation of God's laws. The wages of sin is death. Jesus paid that death penalty on our behalf so that we don't have to if we will come to Him.

And if we will confess our sins and surrender our lives to Him in what He wants us to do. But the point here is, we can only plead for forgiveness if we are willing to forgive others just as much as we want God to forgive us. Forgive us our debts as we forgive those who forgive us means just as much, not more, not less.

I am not entitled, according to Jesus, to ask God to forgive me more generously than I forgive others. And in case that was not clear enough just from the prayer itself, at the close of the prayer in Matthew 6, as soon as the word Amen is given, Jesus gives this little addendum, this little commentary in Matthew 6, 14 and 15. For if you forgive men their trespasses, your Heavenly Father will also forgive you.

But if you do not forgive men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses. This fact that God will not forgive you if you do not forgive others is plainly taught many places in the Scriptures. In fact, it came up earlier in the Beatitudes in Matthew 5 where Jesus said, Blessed are the merciful, verse 7, for they shall obtain mercy.

That is, those who are merciful to others, those who will forgive others, will obtain mercy from God, will be forgiven by God. And Jesus plainly tells us in Matthew 6, 14 and 15 that if we do not forgive others, it's not going to happen. We will not be forgiven by God either.

So part of our praying certainly must be to get our accounts clear before God. We need to ask God to forgive us for our sins. But we have to also at the same time be able to say, as I have forgiven those who have hurt me.

Everyone who has hurt me, I have forgiven them. And therefore, God, I am asking you to show the same mercy to me. Now, we don't earn God's forgiveness by being forgiving persons.

That forgiveness was earned by Jesus, by another, by his dine on the cross. But we qualify to obtain it by forgiving others. There's a difference between earning something and qualifying to obtain a gift.

A gift is not always unconditional. But it is still a gift if it is free. To meet conditions to qualify for a gift, for example, I mean, my grandmother may want to leave a fortune to somebody.

But to qualify, I have to be her son or her grandson. She's not going to leave it to a stranger. So it's a free gift, but you still have to qualify.

You have to be the right person to receive it. God's forgiveness is free. Jesus has purchased it.

But you must qualify to be in line to receive it. And that qualification, according to Jesus Christ, is you must forgive others. And so we can come to God and say, God, forgive me for my sins just like I forgive others who have sinned against me.

That is what Jesus tells us to pray. We cannot ask for forgiveness, you know, on any other basis than the way we forgive others. Now, do we have to list all of our sins? Not

necessarily.

Jesus didn't tell us that we have to list all of our sins. Just to acknowledge that we have sinned and we desire forgiveness seems to be all that he's told us we need to do. Though, of course, if we feel particularly convicted by God's Spirit about some particular sin, it certainly would be wise to confess that sin because God seems to be leaning on you about that one.

But in terms of a daily prayer ritual, you know, to ask for forgiveness of sins generally seems to be all that is required. We're out of time for today's broadcast. We'll continue and probably conclude our discussion of the Lord's Prayer next time.

I hope that you'll be able to join us at that time as we go on through the Sermon on the Mount.