

Harvest Thanksgiving C 06 March 2022
John 6:25-35; Matthew 7:7-11; Matthew 6:11
St Peter's Lutheran Church Elizabeth
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Grace and peace to you from our Heavenly Bread: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

Jesus said to them, "I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me will never be hungry, and whoever believes in me will never be thirsty." Let's pray: . . .

From the lengthiest passage of Holy Scripture to the shortest verse, there's a dynamic relationship between God the Giver, and we the receivers of his bounty and goodness. All things - great, small, spiritual, material, inward and outward – indeed, everything is included in Jesus' gracious invitation, succinctly summarised and presented to us in one short petition of the Lord's Prayer, "Give us this day our daily bread" (Matthew 6:11). We can pray this and expect God to hear because Jesus has taught us to pray it, because Jesus has promised that, "Whoever comes to me will never be hungry, and whoever believes in me will never be thirsty", and, because without God's desire to share his love and creativity, nothing would even exist. And today, we particularly focus on saying, "Thank you, Lord."

I wonder though, how often we take stock of or think about the relative value of things so far as our vital needs are concerned? Maybe you do it regularly, maybe it doesn't cross your mind at all. I can assure you that if you do this, you'll discover that it's the "little things" including our "daily bread," that feature prominently and are no less important to God than the big-ticket items in life.

For me, Pachelbel's Kanon in D comes close to divine succour, but it would be altogether different listening to it while shivering with cold and yearning for a woollen jumper. I also really enjoy visiting art galleries. A trip to see the *Italian Masterpieces* exhibition at the Art Gallery of Victoria some years ago, transported me into a realm of delight. Yet, if you dragged me there on an empty stomach, you'd find out how cranky I get when I'm hangry. And it's lovely to be able to drive around in a fine motor car, whizzing from A to B in air-conditioned luxury, but try driving your family for a holiday to Far North Queensland in the middle of summer with the A/C on the blink.

This might sound “materialistic” but that would be to misunderstand the importance that the “trivialities”, our daily bread – play in life. The little things that make a difference in our daily life begin with a struggle against the Old Adam the moment we contemplate rising in the morning – the hunger, the weariness, how we’re going to chase up a replacement part to fix the lawn mower, approach that difficult letter we have to write, or face the rattle-and-hum of our daily commute.

Don’t these little things occupy and tax our minds far more often than the weighty and lofty questions and world events that also demand our attention? Now, imagine that Jesus had forbidden us to talk about all these things to our Father in heaven; simply forbidden it because they’re too trivial for him, even though they mean so much to us. Imagine that Jesus had commanded us to speak to him only about the big things, like the kingdom of God, the world-dominion of Christ, the resurrection of the dead, and perhaps a few of those world events that trouble our minds. Wouldn’t we feel terribly isolated? Wouldn’t we feel fatherless? If that were the case, God would be ruled out of the majority of our everyday life and only a handful of concerns considered worthy for God to contemplate. We’d all be orphans. We wouldn’t be able to share our joys and our sorrows; only the little things, before finding ourselves again flung out into the maelstrom of everyday life.

What a blessing that this isn’t the case. We don’t have a “Sunday-stepfather.” Thankfully, we have the Father of our Lord and Brother, Jesus Christ. Our Father is so compassionate and genuinely concerned that he cares about the little things in each of our lives just as much as we do. We thank God that he knows our every need and accepts us equally as people with great dreams, great ideas and aspirations, just as much as the little desires and fears, hunger and weariness, and the thousand and one pinpricks of life that affect even the greatest on this earth.

If you still find it difficult to believe that God is so intimately interested in every aspect of your life, no matter how great or small, look at Jesus himself. He doesn’t maintain a comfortable distance from us, drifting high above us among the angels and the broad expanse of heaven. Nay, he comes down into the thick of our everyday life on this earth, rolls up his sleeves and gets stuck into the rough and tumble of our greatest joys and our deepest fears.

This Jesus, whose purview extends way beyond the first day of creation and the last hour of judgement; he whose outstretched arms encompass the oceans and continents; he whose hand flung stars into space; occupies himself with the trivialities of humankind.

Think about his compassion for the grieving widow at Nain whose only son died and he raised him to life (Luke 7:11-15), the weariness of his disciples, "Come, rest a while." (Mark 6:31), even his concern about the wine at a wedding at Cana (John 2:1-11). And he notices the seemingly worthless existences of the so-called invisible: the lepers, the lame, and the mentally ill, and pours out his special love upon them.

Jesus knows and comes from the "kingdom of God", but he also knows the people to whom he reveals his kingdom. He doesn't demand that we only approach him from some mythical level of holiness elevated above the everyday things of life. No! Jesus knows us. He knows our little desires and hungers, our cares, pains, and the myriad trifles that dampen our spirit; our scratches, our bumps, our bruises. And he also knows the numerous little joys by which we secretly live. So, he comes to meet us right here, in the midst of daily life, even coming down to the world of "little things," like the lack of suitable shelter and a comfortable bed at his birth; like a handful of crude nails and a tree at his death.

God's greatness lies in the fact that he condescends so low. He comes into the world just as it is. His omnipotence is surpassed only by one thing: his love. That love comes down to those who cry out for it, and his love is there to listen to everything for which we pray.

So, let's not say the 'Amen' at the end of our table grace in a humdrum fashion that sounds more like, 'Let's eat!' Let's also remember and give thanks for our spiritual food too: water mysteriously transformed by God's Word in Holy Baptism, the Body and Blood of Christ in with and under bread and wine together with God's Word in Holy Communion, and God's Word itself, read, heard, preached, and meditated on, that we need every day – a lamp to our feet and a light to our path (Psalm 119:105).

Let's remember and give thanks for these little meals, our small and insignificant bestowal of daily bread, for what they really are – little openings in the door through which we are permitted a glimpse of the festal hall in the Father's house, one day to be our eternal home.

Thank God, that we can tell him the way we feel and come to him just as we are. We can cast all our cares on him, not only our greatest tribulations, but the tiniest of our concerns also. He will always make something out of our troubled consciences and dance with us when we celebrate our joys. But we must really cast ourselves upon *him*. Before we speak of daily bread and many other things, we must say from the depths of our heart: "Our Father!" The Father must always come before the things, then whatever there is to bring may follow. Because he has given us the greatest thing, we can come to him with the smallest of things. Thank you, Father, for our daily bread, and thank you, Father, that you care about even the smallest crumb of our lives. Amen.

And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. Amen.