

Proper 14

Home Up

August 10, 2003

Prayer of the Day

Almighty and everlasting God, you are always more ready to hear than we are to pray, and to give more than we either desire or deserve. Pour upon us the abundance of your mercy, forgiving us those things of which our conscience is afraid, and giving us those good things for which we are not worthy to ask, except through the merit of your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

1 Kings 19:4-8

{4} But he himself went a day's journey into the wilderness, and came and sat down under a solitary broom tree. He asked that he might die: "It is enough; now, O LORD, take away my life, for I am no better than my ancestors." {5} Then he lay down under the broom tree and fell asleep. Suddenly an angel touched him and said to him, "Get up and eat." {6} He looked, and there at his head was a cake baked on hot stones, and a jar of water. He ate and drank, and lay down again. {7} The angel of the LORD came a second time, touched him, and said, "Get up and eat, otherwise the journey will be too much for you." {8} He got up, and ate and drank; then he went in the strength of that food forty days and forty nights to Horeb the mount of God.

4. *he*: Elijah had defeated the prophets of Baal and Asherah in the contest on Mt. Carmel, and had them all killed. Ahab told his wife what Elijah had done and she swore an oath to find and kill Elijah. So, he ran away and hid himself in the wilderness near Beershebah.

a solitary broom tree: It "grows principally in desert, hill, and rocky areas in Israel and the neighboring lands. There it is often the only source of shade. Usually it is a bush 4 to 12 feet height with a linear shape; the twigs bear small leaves and white, pea-like fragrant flowers in spring." [1]

He asked that he might die: Jonah (Jonah 4:8) lost his confidence in Yahweh's purposes and asked to die since that was the only way he could be freed from his service to Yahweh. Elijah had lost his confidence in Yahweh's ability to protect him, and asked to die. "He requested his life to die' indicates the Semitic conception that life (*nepheš*, lit. 'life breath') proceeded directly from, and belonged properly to, God, so that, though a man might wish to die, he was not at liberty to commit suicide, which was quite exceptional among primitive Semites." [2]

I am no better than my ancestors: The idea of the present generation doing "worse than their ancestors," meaning that they have engaged in apostasy, is advanced in Judges 2:19, Jeremiah 7:26, and 16:12. This is also the idea behind Psalm 106:6: "Both we and our ancestors have sinned; we have committed iniquity, have done wickedly." Here the meaning seems to be that Elijah was no more confident of the power of God than his ancestors had been.

5. *an angel touched him*: A messenger from God. "The 'angel' (*mala'ak*), lit. 'messenger') as the divine intermediary is a marked feature of the E source of the Pentateuch, which was crystallizing at this time." [3]

6. *a cake baked on hot stones and a jar of water*: The provisions supplied by the angel are cooked and containerized. A strange touch.

7-8: He ate and drank twice at the command of the angel.

he went in the strength of that food forty days and forty nights: Jesus was fed by angels after

he had spent forty days and forty nights in the wilderness tempted by Satan (Matthew 4:11; Mark 1:13).

to Horeb the mount of God: "Horeb" is used to describe the mountain when Moses received the commandments in E and D, while "Sinai" is used by J and P. Elijah went to the mount of God to receive his instructions from Yahweh. They are given in verses 11-18.

Psalm 34:1-8

{1} I will bless the LORD at all times; his praise shall continually be in my mouth. {2} My soul makes its boast in the LORD; let the humble hear and be glad. {3} O magnify the LORD with me, and let us exalt his name together. {4} I sought the LORD, and he answered me, and delivered me from all my fears. {5} Look to him, and be radiant; so your faces shall never be ashamed. {6} This poor soul cried, and was heard by the LORD, and was saved from every trouble. {7} The angel of the LORD encamps around those who fear him, and delivers them. {8} O taste and see that the LORD is good; happy are those who take refuge in him.

Psalm 34 is an acrostic Psalm with each verse beginning with a successive letter of the Hebrew alphabet. The Psalm is a song of thanksgiving of one who "was heard by the Lord, and was saved from every trouble" (verse 6).

6. *This poor soul:* "...the poor in the Psalms represent that group of people who not only find themselves in acute legal need (persecution, indictment) but in general are without legal standing and without influence (Ps. 82:3f) like widows and orphans.... The poor are those who are underprivileged and helpless in the struggle for existence. No one helps them. For that very reason they find only recognition and aid but also a change in their fortune with Yahweh—this is the certainty that pervades the Psalms." [4]

Ephesians 4:25-5:2

{25} So then, putting away falsehood, let all of us speak the truth to our neighbors, for we are members of one another. {26} Be angry but do not sin; do not let the sun go down on your anger, {27} and do not make room for the devil. {28} Thieves must give up stealing; rather let them labor and work honestly with their own hands, so as to have something to share with the needy. {29} Let no evil talk come out of your mouths, but only what is useful for building up, as there is need, so that your words may give grace to those who hear. {30} And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, with which you were marked with a seal for the day of redemption. {31} Put away from you all bitterness and wrath and anger and wrangling and slander, together with all malice, {32} and be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ has forgiven you.... {5:1} Therefore be imitators of God, as beloved children, {2} and live in love, as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us, a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God.

25. *our neighbors...members of one another:* To speak the truth to one's neighbor is to speak the truth to one's self, since we are members of one another, that is, "'fellow members' in the one body whose head is Christ." [5]

26-32: "In what follows Paul presents examples to show what specific deeds and attitudes are rejected when the 'Old Man' [verse 22] is cast away." [6] Anger, theft, evil talk, grieving the Holy Spirit, bitterness, wrath, anger, wrangling, slander, malice have no place in the Christian life. Honest work, sharing, kindness, tenderheartedness, and forgiveness, like the forgiveness of God in Christ are behaviors that are appropriate.

5:1. *be imitators of God:* The Christian life is summed up as one in which God is reflected in the behavior of his children. Human beings were created in the image of God; Paul admonishes them to express that image in their lives.

2. *live in love:* Such living is illustrated by Christ who, for love of us, gave himself up for us as an offering and sacrifice.

John 6:35, 41-51

{35} 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.... {41} Then the Jews began to complain about him because he said, "I am the bread that came down from heaven." {42} They were saying, "Is not this Jesus, the son of Joseph, whose father and mother we know? How can he now say, 'I have come down from heaven?'" {43} Jesus answered them, "Do not complain among yourselves. {44} No one can come to me unless drawn by the Father who sent me; and I will raise that person up on the last day. {45} It is written in the prophets, 'And they shall all be taught by God.' Everyone who has heard and learned from the Father comes to me. {46} Not that anyone has seen the Father except the one who is from God; he has seen the Father. {47} Very truly, I tell you, whoever believes has eternal life. {48} I am the bread of life. {49} Your ancestors ate the manna in the wilderness, and they died. {50} This is the bread that comes down from heaven, so that one may eat of it and not die. {51} I am the living bread that came down from heaven. Whoever eats of this bread will live forever; and the bread that I will give for the life of the world is my flesh."

35: Verse 35 was the last verse of the Gospel last Sunday.

whoever comes to me will never be hungry and whoever believes in me will never be thirsty: In the antilanguage of John, hunger and thirst represent a life separated from God.

[36-40]: Verse 36 refers back to verse 26. Verses 37-40 deal with the question of God's will as the goal of Jesus' actions. It includes the first of the seven "I am" statements in the Gospel of John.

41. *the Jews:* "...this term shows up wherever Jesus' auditors are hostile...." [7] They murmur (remember the "murmuring of Israel in the Exodus against Moses) against Jesus because he claimed to be "the bread that came down from heaven" (verse 35).

42. *Is not this Jesus, the son of Joseph, whose father and mother we know?* "Since the honor ascribed to persons depended on family lineage, where they were from determined who they were and what honor standing they had in the eyes of the community." [8]

44. *No one can come to me unless drawn by the Father who sent me:* In John 14:6 Jesus says, "No one comes to the Father except through me." Perhaps the two expressions cover somewhat the same territory as the declaration by Jesus in 10:30: "The Father and I are one." In any case there is an intimate and reciprocal relationship in John's Gospel between Jesus, the word become flesh and the Father whose word became flesh.

45: The reference is to Jeremiah 31:34 and Isaiah 54:13 in the Septuagint. God's teaching leads to Jesus.

Everyone who has heard and learned from the Father comes to me: It is not Jesus' lineage or earthly honor that draws people to him. Rather it is God, himself, that does that.

46. To see God is an intimacy permitted only to Jesus. Jesus. Job was confident that he was righteous before God, and that in the end "I shall see God" (Job 19:26).

47. *Very truly:* The phrase appears 25 times in the Gospel of John. "The formula means something like, 'I give you my word of honor.' In effect it is an oath, explicitly and publicly giving one's word of honor concerning the veracity of what one is saying." [9]

whoever believes has eternal life: Eternal life is a present reality to the believer, not a future state.

48-50: "The arguments of vv.32-5 are repeated. The manna, marvelous as it was, was like ordinary bread in that those who ate it hungered again, and eventually died. The heavenly bread which Jesus gives, or rather is, is such that those who eat of it enjoy eternal life and sufficient for every spiritual need and therefore never die." [10]

51: Verse 51 is repeated as the opening verse in the gospel next Sunday. Those who belong to Jesus will have a new life. This event presumably took place in or near Capernaum, so these would not be Jesus' childhood neighbors.

Whoever eats of this bread will live forever: See verse 35 for a similar claim. The assertion is repeated in 6:58.

the bread that I will give for the life of the world is my flesh: "To those outside the antisociety, Jesus urges cannibalism. Yet in terms of antilanguage, to eat Jesus' flesh and drink his blood is synonymous with the words *to welcome, accept, receive, believe into,* and

the like." [11]

Reflection

God is always more ready to hear than we are to ask. He is merciful and forgiving, and gives us those things for which we are not worthy to ask, except through Christ. In commenting on "Our Father," Luther says that , "God would encourage us to believe that he is truly our Father and we are truly his children in order that we may approach him boldly and confidently in prayer, even as beloved children approach their dear father." [12] So we seek the Lord and he delivers us. We have eaten Christ; his death has given us life. We live a new kind of life, eternal life, and we live it now!

Because our lives have been changed by God's grace, we live our lives in love toward our brothers and sisters, as beloved children. We speak the truth *in love*. We say only what is useful *for building up*. We are kind and tenderhearted, loving one another as Christ has loved us, putting away malice and anger and wrath and slander. And so we show that we have been sealed by the Holy Spirit.

Hymns [13]

With One Voice (e.g. 762v), *Hymnal Supplement* 1991 (e.g. 725s) and *LBW* (e.g. 32).

E=Entrance; D=Hymn of the Day; I=First Lesson, P=Psalm; II=Second Lesson; G=Gospel

207 --E--We Who Once	709v --G--Eat the Bread
356 --D--O Jesus, Joy	702v --G--I Am the Bread
711s --P--Psalm 130: Out	(762s)
487 --II--Let Us Ever	700v --G--I Received (761s)
492 --II--O Master, Let	701v --G--What Feast of Love
222 --G--O Bread of	224, 197

Prayers of the People [14]

Like a grieving parent, O God, you seek out all people. You have given us bread from heaven, even Jesus himself. You call us to put away the old ways and start fresh with the new, the ways you give. They are so clearly spoken of in Scripture but so hard to follow. Equip us by your Holy Spirit to know and confess our shortcomings and sins. We trust in you alone to raise us up and make us followers. God of David and our Ephesian sisters and brothers in Christ hear our prayer.

Bless those who gather this next week in Worship conference at Augustana College in Camrose. Be with them that they may learn the new song and sing each day of life with heart, soul and service a song of praise to you. God of David and our Ephesian sisters and brothers in Christ hear our prayer.

Or [15]

Presider or deacon

For all the hungry and thirsty of the world, let us pray to the Lord whose angel gave bread to Elijah.

Deacon or other leader

For this holy gathering, and for the people of God in every place.

For all nations and their leaders, and for mercy, justice, and peace in the world.

For all who grow and harvest food, for travelers and those on vacation, and for safety from violent storms.

For the sick and the dying, the poor and the oppressed, prisoners and their families, and victims of violence and abuse.

For those who rest in Christ and for all the dead. For our city and every community, and for our families, companions, and all we love.

Lifting our voices with all creation, let us offer ourselves and one another to the living God through Christ. **To you, O Lord.**

Presider

Father in heaven, giver of the bread of life, hear the prayers we offer this day for all those in danger and need and bring your beloved children to your eternal banquet; through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Notes

[1] Irene and Walter Jacob, "Flora," *The Anchor Bible Dictionary*, Doubleday, 1992, vol. 2:805.

[2] John Gray, *I & II Kings: A Commentary*. Second, Fully Revised, Edition. Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1970, p. 408.

[3] *Loc. cit.*

[4] Hans-Joachim Kraus, *Psalms 1-59: A Commentary*. Augsburg Publishing House, 1988, p. 94.

[5] Marcus Barth, *Ephesians: Translation and Commentary on Chapters 4-6*. Garden City, New York: Doubleday & Co., Inc., 1974, p. 513.

[6] *Ibid.*, p. 511.

[7] Ernst Haenchen, *John 1: A Commentary on the Gospel of John Chapters 1-6*. Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1984, p. 292.

[8] Bruce J. Malina and Richard L. Rohrbaugh, *Social-Science Commentary on the Gospel of John*, Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1998, p. 134.

[9] Bruce J. Malina and Richard L. Rohrbaugh, *Social-Science Commentary on the Gospel of John*, Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1998, p. 57.

[10] C.K. Barrett, *The Gospel According to St. John: An Introduction with Commentary and Notes on the Greek Text*. London: S.P.C.K., 1962, p. 246.

[11] Malina, *Op. cit.*, p. 134.

[12] *The Book of Concord* (translated and edited by Theodore G. Tappert). Philadelphia: Muhlenberg Press, 1959, p. 346.

[13] <http://www.worship.on.ca/text/rclb9900.txt>

[14] http://www.worship.on.ca/text/pray_b2.txt

[15] <http://members.cox.net/oplater/prayer.htm>