

We read as follows in Jesus' name:

Then Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. And after fasting forty days and forty nights, He was hungry. And the tempter came and said to Him, "If You are the Son of God, command these stones to become loaves of bread."

But He answered, "It is written, '*Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God.*'"

...Then Jesus said to him, "Be gone, Satan! For it is written, 'You shall worship the Lord your God and Him only shall you serve.'"

Then the devil left Him, and behold, angels came and were ministering to Him. (ESV)

This is Your Word, heavenly Father; sanctify us in the truth, Your Word is Truth. Amen. (John 17:17)

In Jesus' name. **Amen.**

Dearly Beloved, In the beginning God gave man the rule over this earth, to work it and subdue it.

Into His creation the Lord implanted the constant need to receive from the Lord's hand.

In keeping with that, the Lord ordained that food would be a necessity of our lives.

We must eat and take in nourishment regularly and often to maintain this earthly life.

Most people would die between 8 and 21 days if they were to go without food.

This need for physical food is a great reminder of the nature of our spiritual life, as well.

That we constantly need to eat should remind us that we constantly need spiritual nourishment, too.

That's why for many, fasting is such a valuable spiritual exercise.

When the pangs of hunger kick in, they are reminded of their constant need to receive from God.

It is also a reason that Christians are accustomed to praying at meal times.

One appropriate table prayer is hymn #600

*1. Great God, we praise Thy gracious care,
Which does our daily bread prepare;
O bless the earthly food we take,
And feed our souls for Jesus' sake.*

But it is not always easy to remember this correlation.

After all, when we don't eat, we get hungry,

but when we don't receive God's Word or sacraments for a while,

there isn't an immediate physical hunger pang.

In fact, the longer we are away from God's Word, often the easier it seems not to hunger for it at all.

But let's not be deceived by our corrupted sinful nature, which we inherited from Adam,

nor by the sly and deceitful temptations of the devil,

for Jesus, Himself starving, overcomes the devil's temptation to make bread for Himself, quoting,

'Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God.'

While the Lord established and ordered the laws of nature and thus our regular need of food,

He desires that we know that it is not food that is the most necessary for us, but God's Word.

We heard last week in Bible class from Hebrews 1[:3],

He upholds the universe by the Word of His power.

And if the universe, then certainly little o' you and me as well.

Later, when Jesus was at Jacob's well, speaking to the Samaritan woman there,
His disciples urged Him to eat, but instead Jesus replied with this curious statement,

"I have food to eat that you do not know about. ...

My food is to do the will of Him who sent Me and to accomplish His work.^{John4:32,34}

So, from what or from Whom was Jesus trusting on getting His strength/nourishment those 40 days?
It was God's Word, from the Lord Himself.

Now this does not mean that Jesus never ate food again.

When the temptations were over, the **angels ministered to Him**, no doubt bringing Him food.

But what His heavenly Father had not provided for Him for 40 days, Jesus knew He did not need.

Of course, there is also this realization that not all foods is good for you.

For example: you want to be careful about what mushrooms and berries you eat.

And so while food usually is eaten to give health and vitality,
certain foods can bring sickness and even death.

And truly, not all spiritual words and promises are good for you either.

You are to be careful and discerning whose words you consume, whose words you trust and believe.

We learn this lesson the hard way from Genesis 3, the OT lesson.

When the devil spoke to Eve, she recalled the Lord's Word, **The day you eat of it, you shall surely die.**

Surprisingly, those words of the Lord were not the lethal ones. Those gave and sustained life.

So long as she trusted them and did not disobey them, she would live in perfection forever.

Instead, the lethal words, came from the mouth of the devil, the deceiver: **"You will not surely die.**

For God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened,

and you will be like God, knowing good and evil."^{Genesis3:4-5}

...Note that it wasn't a natural poison in the fruit of the tree that caused Adam and Eve to die.

The lethal poison was trusting the devil's lying words...and not trusting the Lord's Word.

...

I wonder, if Israel had not complained before God provided them with manna,

how long would they have survived in the wilderness without food, only 8 to 21 days? ... 40 days?

Of course, we will never know, because like us, Israel had trust issues.

They trusted the laws of nature rather than nature's God.

They trusted their grumbling bellies rather than the One who had been feeding them up till then.

But this was precisely why the Lord had brought them into the wilderness, to teach them to trust Him.
It is worth hearing the context of those Words Jesus quoted against the devil.

Moses was reminding the Israelites about their wandering in the wilderness for 40 years and said,

And you shall remember the whole way that the Lord your God has led you these forty years in the wilderness, that He might humble you, testing you to know what was in your heart, whether you would keep His commandments or not. ³ And He humbled you and let you hunger and fed

you with manna, which you did not know, nor did your fathers know, that He might make you know that man does not live by bread alone, but man lives by every word that comes from the mouth of the Lord.^{Deuteronomy8:2-3}

You see, just the presence of hunger or of other felt needs in your life doesn't mean that the Lord is neglecting you, or not providing for you, as the devil would like you to believe. It doesn't mean that you need to look somewhere else for your needs or resources.

The devil loves to use those things that you know, or think, you need in this life to distrust God.

Do you need more money? To get out of debt, or to get ahead, or to plan your retirement?

Do you desire a stronger immune system? More pain relief?

Who or what do you trust to provide those things for you?

Your job? Your investments? Your skills? Your mind? The government? Vaccines? Doctors?

The devil is even satisfied when you mistrust God, that is, trusting Him for things He hasn't promised. Like getting you to believe that God would never let you suffer, **"if you are [a child] of God."**

Remember: **After fasting forty days and forty nights, [Jesus] was hungry.** He suffered too.

Now this isn't to say that you shouldn't work, or invest, or hone your skills and knowledge or seek medical care.

Like with food and other necessities of life, God provides these things, usually through natural means.

But these are only the tools and resources that He provides.

They are not to be the object of your trust. To trust in these is as useful as trusting in a golden calf.

It may look valuable, but it is useless, especially if you lose your eternal life because of it.

It should not be any wonder, and would be helpful for us to meditate on the fact that Jesus carefully places the 4th Petition of the Lord's Prayer, ***"Give us this day our daily bread,"*** just before the 5th, 6th, and 7th: ***"And forgive us our trespasses... And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil."***

and after the 1st, 2nd, and 3rd: ***"Hallowed be Thy name, Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done..."***

Here we learn where Jesus Himself put His trust.

As Luther explains, *God's name is hallowed when we believe His Word and live according to it*,^{S.Cat. 1st Pet.} that is, trusting our heavenly Father for all our good and protection.^{L.Cat. 1st. Comm.}

Jesus sought **first the kingdom of God and His righteousness**,^{Matthew6:33} not His own luxury or avoidance of pain and suffering.

In fact, He knew that in order that God's kingdom might come to you

He would have to suffer, to suffer all the temptations and trials and pains that you do

as a result of the original corruption from Adam, as well as the actual sins that you commit,

and the good that you omit, and the distrust or mistrust you have in your heavenly Father.

And He would not only suffer, but also to taste the bitter fruit of death as the wages for your sin.

Remember how He prayed in the garden that the cup of God's wrath might pass from Him?

His human will would have been content not to suffer and die,

and yet, He perfectly submitted His will to His Father's so that you would be redeemed,

and your sins atoned for.

Only after Jesus sought God's kingdom and righteousness first,
did He then concern Himself with "**all these things**" of His daily bread and other necessities of life.
And even in this, He knows the danger and the allurements of the devil and the world,
and the incredible weakness of our flesh.
And so He teaches us to pray for forgiveness for our mistrust and distrust,
for our discontentment and avoidance of pain or inconvenience at almost any cost.

Now gives you His powerful upholding Word once again for you to hear, believe, and trust:
He says to you, "By the holy innocent bitter sufferings and death of Jesus Christ,
I forgive you all your sins."
And then goes so far as to put His hallowed name on you,
"in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit."

And here is the real wonder, that having washed you clean of your sins in Holy Baptism,
in the washing of regeneration, and giving you a clean conscience & clothed us in His righteousness,
He then strengthens your weak flesh with another food, with the Bread of Life, Himself.
He gives you a Manna, a bread that our OT fathers did not know.
And He bids us to listen to and believe once again the Word and promises of God
as He attaches them to real bread and real wine, just as He once attached them to a real fruit.
When we ask, "Manna," "What is it?" What is this bread that we did not know?
He says, **This is My body. This is My blood. Given and shed for your for the remission of your sins.**
& Just as surely as the fruit of the tree brought death, so this food gives life to those who believe Him.
And while before He had commanded us not to eat of the fruit which brought death,
now He commands and invites you to "**Take, eat. Drink of it all of you,**" and "**Do this.**"

This is the fruit of the new Tree of Life, **which if a man eats of it, He will live forever.** John6:51
And **all these things** of "*our daily bread*" **will be added to you as well.**
Your heavenly Father knows that you need them. Matthew6:32

And so we can appropriately pray our prayer of return thanks (ELH #600):

*2. We thank Thee, Lord, for this our food,
For life and health, and ev'ry good:
May manna to our souls be giv'n,
The Bread of Life, sent down from heav'n.*

Soli Deo Gloria