

## The Exodus and TLP Part 1

### Exodus 16: 15-20, Matt 4: 1-11, SPC, 7/23/2023

TLP has some confusing statements in it. Is it “Forgive us our debts” or “Forgive us our trespasses?” And what sort of daily bread are we praying for? Whole wheat to nurture our physical body or spiritual bread to nurture our faith? And what’s with “Lead us not into temptation?” God gives us commandments but then tempts us to disobey? Comedian Flip Wilson’s character Geraldine made more sense. “The devil made me do it!”

Confusing to us, perhaps, these statements made perfectly good sense to the first persons to whom Jesus taught this prayer, and I think the reason why is that his hearers knew well the Exodus Story, the central story of their faith. Remember how God sends Moses to free the Israelites from slavery? And how they wander then for forty years in the Wilderness on their way to the Promised Land? Using the help of the Exodus Story, this morning let’s look at two of the six petitions in TLP, the other four petitions in the next two weeks.

In Petition one 1, *Hallow your name*, we lament the reality that God our Heavenly Parent is not known by so many. We pray for God to reveal Godself, demonstrate that God is the mightiest force in the world, the name above all other names, so that others have the opportunity to believe. And

although most people say *Hallowed be thy name*, “*Hallowed be*, in English, is in the indicative verb mood, which is wrong. In NT Greek, all the statements in TLP are in the imperative mood, the mood of command, support, or encouragement. We’re not just saying that God’s name is hallowed or holy or sacred to us, we’re praying that God will confront one and all with the reality that God is holy, Most Powerful. *Hallow your name, God, shake things up!* We’re with you and we’re for you!

There are some who believe that God’s name is Andy, which is the result of singing the old song, “Andy walks with me, Andy talks with me.” And you’re going to call God by whatever name you choose but let me mention what’s at stake here. In TLP, Jesus prays, “Our Father, in heaven, hallow your name.” Father doesn’t work for everyone nowadays, and so it is helpful that 17 verses later, Jesus clarifies the essence of Father, which is also the essence of Mother today, when he says, “Look at the birds of the air; they do not sow or reap or store away in barns, and yet your heavenly Father **feeds** them. Are you not much more **valuable** than they?”

The good news is that the God of Jesus is the One who values each and every human being and provides for Our needs; **values** and **provides**, just as the best of parents value and provide for their children. In the gospels Jesus makes clear that God has a whole world full of children, each of which God

treats like an only child. And because we want this understanding of Our God to be available to all others, we pray *Hallow your Name. Reveal your power.* Go for it, God! And one way in which we are supportive of God in this revealing of power is by being content with what God provides.

If we believe that the God of Jesus Christ is THE most powerful force in our world and lives, we also trust that God **values** us and **provides** strength sufficient for the day. And our task is to set this example of trust before all others. Why would anyone else be interested in God based upon my lack of trust in God? What sort of witness to Our Heavenly Parent's power would I be if I behave as though God doesn't provide enough? As though I don't have the strength to be faithful? Thus, I also pray Petition 4, *Give us daily bread*, and do so in the sense that *I need no more*. I pray this as an affirmation of trust. I trust that day by day God provides enough. *Sustain our faith daily.*

God provides what we need to live fully as God's children, persons who reflect Our Heavenly Parent's nature and help carry out God's work. Too often, though, we do not take next steps of faith out of fear that we need more than God provides – more courage, more endurance, more support than we have. But we don't. God gives us enough, not in one fell swoop, but daily. And we're not right with God when we expect or demand more.

In NT Greek, Matthew records Jesus as saying, specifically *Give us our bread for tomorrow today*. Stated this way, the reader is pointed to Exodus 16, our first reading, that portion of the Exodus story in which the Israelites do not trust that God will provide enough for them to continue their journey thru the wilderness. They're going to starve. Yet, at this point the people have witnessed God's power, namely, the hallowing of God's name to Pharaoh.

Remember how Moses goes to Pharaoh and says, "Thus says the Lord, the God of Israel, 'Let my people go'"? Pharaoh says, "Who is the Lord that I should pay attention and let Israel go? I don't know the Lord, and I will not let Israel go." To the end that Pharaoh learns the power of the Lord's name and releases the Israelites, God then hallows God's name, reveals the power behind it. And how does God do this? Unfortunately for the Egyptians, God is forced to use tough love, not just one plague but ten. Ten Plagues finally prove to Pharaoh that the Lord's power greatly exceeds his.

After this hallowing, the Israelites leave slavery behind and are headed for life under God's rule in Canaan. They have witnessed God do the seemingly impossible, free them from bondage. Still, they don't quite trust God's care and complain to Moses: "*If only we had died by the hand of the*

*Lord in the land of Egypt, when we ... ate our fill of bread; for you have brought us out into this wilderness to kill us... with hunger.”*

Yet what happens? God rains bread (manna) in the morning that the people cook for their evening meal. Day by day, as opposed to supply wagons, the people gather enough on the ground to sustain them on their journey. And since they measure their days from sundown to sundown, God provides bread for tomorrow (eaten after sundown), but bread that one gathers today (in the morning), exactly as it is stated in the TLP, *Give us our bread for tomorrow today*. Even then, some did not trust God to provide enough. *Moses said to them, “This is what the Lord has commanded: Each one is to gather as much as he/she needs.... No one is to keep any of it until morning.” Some paid him no attention and kept part of it until morning, but it was full of maggots and began to smell.*

Just as the Lord gave the Israelites manna daily so they could take the next steps of faith, God provides us daily bread, enough to fuel faith, inner strength, for the day. Exodus 16 teaches us that demanding more smells to high heaven. And Jesus teaches us that if we pray for God to reveal God's power, *Hallow your name*, our lives must reflect God's power. We are to live as though we're valued and our needs provided. And we commit to this

lifestyle by affirming *Give us this day our daily bread*. It's enough. We need no more. All we need do is tap into this strength through worship or prayer.

Why I'm confident that Jesus is talking about spiritual bread and inner strength, as opposed to whole wheat and physical strength, is that in this same chapter of Matthew Jesus says that our food, water, and clothing will be provided, period. We don't need to ask for it. Can't live without it. Also, the rest of TLP has to do with faith not survival. Hallow your name, Your kingdom come, Your will be done, Forgive us our sins, tempt not. Such are the issues of faith, not survival. In fact, Jesus clarifies the sort of daily bread that is most needed in the first of his three temptations, our Matthew reading. *Then Jesus was led by the Spirit into the desert to be tempted by the devil. After fasting forty days & forty nights, he was hungry. The tempter came to him and said, "If you are the Son of God, tell these stones to become bread." ... Jesus answered, "It is written: Man does not live on bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God.*

Life as God's children, persons made in God's image, is sustained by more than whole wheat. It is fueled by the commandments and promises of God. The proof that Jesus is God's Son is not that he can turn stones into loaves of bread, but that he relies first and foremost on inner strength, spiritual daily bread, *every word that comes from the mouth of God*. Paul

speaks of this inner strength using the word grace. He begins his letters with, “Grace to you, and peace from God our Heavenly Parent and the Lord Jesus Christ.” With Paul, it’s God’s grace that keeps us going, but guess what? Jesus never uses the word grace. It’s not in his vocabulary. It seems to me that what Paul means by grace is similar to what Jesus means by “daily bread.”

Again, in the original Greek of TLP the verb mood of all six petitions is imperative, encouraging, supportive. I’m not begging God to act contrary to God’s nature. In the first three petitions I am supportive of God continuing what God has been doing, is doing, and will be doing yet. “Go for it, God! I’m with you and I’m for you!” *Hallow your name, Bring your rule or kingdom to fulfillment, Your will be done, none other..*

In the second three petitions, 4-6, I join with Jesus’ church, the *Us* in the prayer, in confidently asking for what I need to be put right with God as God moves this world toward the new world coming. In the next two weeks we will look at how *Your kingdom come* requires that we respond, *Forgive us our debts as we forgive others*. And how *Your will be done* requires that we respond, *Don’t let us tempt you with our ways*. Today, we have looked at how *Hallow your name* requires us to pray, *Give us daily bread*. E.G. if we pray for God to reveal that God is Most Powerful force in the world, the

name above all names, ours is to trust that God's power is sufficient in our lives. Give us bread day by day. It's enough. Amen