

March 25, 2018 – Soli Deo Gloria  
By Wayne J. Schneider

## **To Pray, to Forgive, and to Eat.**

St. Luke 9:10-17

*“Give us this day our daily bread and forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us.”* The pairing of forgiveness and nutrition in the Lord’s Prayer is fascinating. Why would Jesus do this?

God is not one dimensional and created us with a soul and a physical body. God is both capable and eager to sustain and restore our bodies and souls. Hale and hearty bodies and soaring souls go together.

The mercy and justice of God demand adequate food for all people. Hunger is a present and growing problem in our world. Starvation and malnutrition are indiscriminating. As unbelievable as it sounds, children are starving due to malnutrition in the land of plenty known as the US of A. It is a worldwide problem that needs the best determination of every country and everyone, to ensure that everyone may eat enough.

Is this the reason Jesus uses the pronoun *us* in the Lord’s Prayer, instead of me? God’s inclusive love is for all. The world is composed of sisters and brothers and neighborhoods. This prayer is the superlative model of a prayer, who knows that God’s compassion is for everyone.

. I have never understood why there are fights over having the “Ten Commandments” placed in schools, when the Lord’s Prayer is a better example of living with and for God. This prayer needs to be published in restaurants, advertisements for food, fast food joints and five-star eateries. We do in part, our part, by our “Tin Cup” offerings on the last Sundays of the month (and others); yet more can be done.

Additionally, God’s mercy and justice is for all people to be forgiven. This is the other side of the coin of eliminating poverty and hunger. Jesus understood that

those who were listening to him would forget their responsibility to the hungry. St. Luke explains that while Jesus was teaching the crowds grew and the Disciples became anxious, thinking the crowd was becoming hungry and thirsty.

So they asked Jesus to send the crowd to a nearby village to buy food. Jesus did as he always did: he asked them a question: "*What did you bring?*" The Disciples are ready to deny any responsibility for the lack of available food, but they do find a few small fish and a biscuit.

Again, what does Jesus do? He prays to the One who is willing and able to solve the dilemma. He asks for a blessing, appealing to God's gracious presence among them, instead of reacting to the situation in frustration over this great challenge. Instead of scolding or judging the people for not sharing their food, he prayed in a way that changed their reluctance into willing enthusiastic participation. As a result, everyone ate and were satisfied, with leftovers for a midnight snack. (St. Luke 9:10-17)

When we become aware that we are forgiven for our failure to help others, who have the same rights to daily meals as do we, we become ready to take responsibility for accepting roles in restoring people's lives. Forgiveness feeds the body and the soul. And, it moves us to help God feed hungry sisters and brothers wherever they may be.

Is it any wonder that Jesus dovetailed forgiveness and nutrition, as two daily needs for human existence? There is a myth from ancient Egypt that says, when you get to the gate of Heaven you will be asked two questions: "Did you find joy in your life?" And, "Has your life brought joy to others?"

Eating and forgiving are bookends that make a life worth living. Alleluia. Amen.