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January 29th, 2029
Scripture: Matthew 6: 7-13
Sermon Title: Our Daily Bread

Prayer...

Introduction:

Today we are continuing our sermon series on the Spirituality of Jesus as we look at the Lord's Prayer. Last week we talked about the first part of the prayer, "Our Father Who Art in Heaven, hallowed be thy name, thy kingdom come thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven." We highlighted the intimacy that Jesus has with his father and Jesus' call to bring the mission of the kingdom of God to earth, with its focus on caring for social justice and issues related to peace and unity. This morning, I want to reflect on a simple sentence from the Lord's prayer about bread. "Give us this day our daily bread."

This sentence may make us reflect on thanking God for food, but the implications of this part of the prayer are even more significant when

we think about the spirituality of Jesus. Jesus invited us to include in our prayers an understanding that God cares for our bodies.

Embodied Spirituality is a common focus in the field of Christians spirituality today, largely because it was often neglected in the history of Christianity. This last week I read an article from the Religion for Her website that our very own Dr. Melissa Ramos, Professor of Old Testament from Portland Seminary helps run. It was an article by her colleague, Jennifer Metten Pantoja. Jennifer writes,

“Why is it difficult for many of us to recognize and embrace both our bodily sensations and our deepest truths? Because for thousands of years philosophers have argued that the soul and body are two separate entities, often sparring with one another. Embodiment asks us to remember that our bodies and souls are not separate, but, instead, interconnected.”

This article mentions the impact of both a philosopher named Plato and a theologian named Augustine. Plato lived in 400 BCE and he saw the soul as immaterial and thus able to function without the body. The soul was imprisoned in the body and the body can contaminate the soul.

This tension between the body and soul, where the soul is viewed as good and the body as bad creates a mind-body dualism.

The theologian Augustine in 400 CE also talked about the difference between the body and soul. He also believed in a dualism between the body and the soul and taught that the body was dangerous with all sorts of sinful passions.

Both Plato and Augustine also spoke negatively of women, which raises questions about their negative views of the body.

Many Christian Spirituality writers, theologians, Bible Scholars, ministers, psychologists, and medical professionals are waking up to the problem of dualistic thought. Instead of viewing the soul as good and the body as bad, we are learning that the soul and body are

interconnected and in a beautiful relationship with one another as we walk in a spirit of love and kindness with our bodies.

What I like about the Spirituality of Jesus is that he interested in the classic spiritual things we think about like prayer and what happens to us when we die, but he is also interested in our physical bodies. He reminds us to ask for our daily bread, which symbolizes to me that Jesus does not believe in a dualism between the body and spirit.

Instead Jesus sees soul and body or spirit and body interconnected.

In Christian Spirituality circles we like to say that everything is spiritual.

What this means is that both physical matter, like human bodies or other parts of nature, and the mystery of the soul or spirit that exists beyond our life on earth are spiritual. Everything is spiritual because everything, including the physical earth and our created bodies are part of the creation of God and the Spirit of God is alive and active in God's creation.

My question for us to ponder then is how might our view of our bodies change if we stopped thinking in terms of a tension between the mind and body or the soul and body? What if we viewed the body in a positive way, not as a thing that is at war with our soul, but instead a key part of our spiritual lives? Our bodies are deeply loved by God, which is why God want us to love our bodies and take care of them and to also take care of our sisters and brothers who are hungry, or lack clothing and shelter.

So with this positive perspective of our bodies, we realize that caring for our bodies and for the environment is an important aspect of our Christian faith.

- Food and Drink- nutrition is a focus because we want to be good stewards of our bodies. Ideally, we can eat more organic foods, vegetables, fruits, etc. I tried Noom last year. New habit to listen to my body before I eat.
- Exercise is a spiritual practice. I grew up playing sports...

- Rest and sabbath help us care for our bodies. Do you think of sleep as a spiritual practice?

- Belief that all bodies are beautiful inside and out.

- Embracing human sexuality is important to our spiritual lives.

Sexuality is not a dirty or forbidden topic. We have to learn to talk about it in a positive way, while highlighting how boundaries can enhance sexual health and healthy relationships. Story of middle school student youth group conversation about healthy sexuality.

- Mental Health is important. The mind and emotions are part of our bodies. On Tuesday of last week, I heard a wonderful talk about mental health and Christian faith by Cobe Campbell. Story... She gave us permission to bring our depression and anxiety to Jesus and to remember that Jesus struggled with his own mental health when he was in Gethsemane. Cobe Campbell even reminded us that both Moses and Elijah, two of the most famous prophets in the Bible both experienced suicidal ideation. Both asked God to take their lives when they were feeling deeply alone

and fearful. If you doubt that, check out the story of Elijah and Moses and you will see that it really is in the Bible that these men were in so much pain that they wanted to die. I think it is powerful that God cares for us in our emotional pain and is our comforter and guide in those times. I am grateful that Cobe Campbell brought that message to George Fox students last week.

Everything is spiritual, including our bodies, including our mental health.

I know in the Lord's prayer, Jesus saying, Give us this day our daily bread does not reflect all of the ideas I am sharing with you today, but it does show that Jesus cared about the basic physical needs of humanity and he understood that we should ask God for provision for our physical bodies.

My encouragement to us in this new season of Christian Spirituality and as we look at the Spirituality of Jesus is to embrace that the body and

spirit are interconnected. This is also why Christians normally teach that when we die, just like Jesus we will have resurrected bodies in heaven.

The body is good and not bad. Let us embrace embodied spirituality and recognize that Jesus celebrates meeting our physical, emotional, and spiritual needs. Everything is spiritual including our bodies, so let us care for our bodies and all of God's creation.

Please pray with me...