

## Wendy's August Prayer Thoughts

I was shocked to read early on Monday morning on the 14th of July that the Israeli Defence Force (IDF) had released a statement saying that a missile had malfunctioned. Its target had been a Hamas leader. Instead, it had killed 17 innocent people, 8 of whom were children. One of the dead was a hospital Consultant... They were collecting water at the refugee camp. Hours later 12 children were killed in a market in Gaza City. - making the total of 131 dead, in just one day. Sadly, we have also seen and heard repeated horrific incidents of the exhausted and starving queuing for bread, and the army has opened fire indiscriminately. Instead of sacks for sustenance, sacks of dead bodies have been carried back for burial. Water and food are basic for life and health, and no human should be denied its availability...

These incidents made me think of the words of Jesus which we repeat each time we say the Lord's Prayer, "Give us today our daily bread." Matthew 6:11... What comes to mind as we do? Some translations give a slightly different emphasis. Smith's Literal translation and The Catholic Domain Version, both published in 2010, stress the necessity of bread for life. "Give us this day our bread sufficient for sustenance." and "Give us this day our life sustaining bread." When Jesus taught His disciples he was speaking in Aramaic, his native tongue. It was a descendant of Hebrew, and was widely spoken throughout the Middle East. However, when Matthew, Mark, Luke and John compiled their Gospels they wrote in Greek, in a dialect called Kone, which means "common." It was a second language which had caught on after Alexander the Great had conquered Judea in 330 BC. Kone was far less sophisticated than the Greek spoken in the cities of Athens and Sparta.

Not only the Gospels, but the whole of the New Testament was written in Greek. The first translation made from the Greek was the Latin Vulgate, sometime in the 4th century. This was what John Wycliffe used to give us the first translation of the Bible into English in 1382. He could not have used the original tongues of Hebrew for the Old testament, and Greek for the New Testament, because neither were available in the West. When they were, scholars were challenged to work on them, but they found that meanings in the originals were not always straightforward. This is precisely so with the phrase "Give us today our daily bread." The Greek has just four words: *ton* - 'the'; *arton* - 'bread'; *hemon* - 'our,' and *epiousion*? '*Epiousion* is a mysterious word because it does not occur in any of the extant hundreds and thousands of Greek documents.....

.....No one knows exactly what Jesus said in Aramaic which was later written in the Greek as *epiousion*,

This left future Biblical scholars with nothing to work on. William Tyndale's Bible of 1526 was a translation into English from the Hebrew and Greek and it gave us the traditional words for the Lord's Prayer: "Give us **today** our daily bread." Much of his work, including 83% of the New Testament, influenced the writers of the King James Bible 1611. However, it is possible for *epiousion* to have other meanings, which can enrich our thoughts as we pray the phrase. I quote several examples

Darby Bible Translation 1898. "Give us today our needed bread." God knows our every need, and will cater for them, especially the pressing needs of the moment. As we repeat the words, are we taking time to tell and thank Him? Young's Literal Translation 1890. "Give us today our appointed bread." God is the Giver...The Israelites, while wandering in the wilderness, learnt the lesson for themselves when God supplied manna for that day only. Exodus 16: God's timing is precise. As we pray the words Jesus taught, let us commit ourselves to wait on Him with expectation and hope.

Nicholas King's Bible 2013. "Each day give us bread for the coming day." As we repeat the petition for sustenance let us renew our trust in God, whose goodness and mercy will not fail us on the morrow.

Early 4th Century theologians, like Jerome and Augustine, thought *epiousion* meant something more spiritual. They used the word super-substantial, linking the prayer of Jesus with the Eucharist. Bread this is the belief of the Roman Catholic and Orthodox Churches. It is backed by the words Jesus quoted: "One does not live by bread alone but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God." Matthew 4:4. He used bread as a symbol for what sustains the spiritual life, claiming "I am the bread of Life." John 6:35. He had told the crowds, after The Feeding of the 5,000, "Do not work for the food that perishes, but for the food that endures to eternal life which the Son of man will give you, for it is on him that God has set his seal." John 6:27.

The Greek Orthodox Cathedral of St Andrew in London teaches that the Greek word rendered "daily" in the Lord's Prayer literally translates to "super-essential." They state 'We are asking for the Bread which is Christ Himself and that is why in the Liturgy the Lord's Prayer is recited just before receiving the Holy Communion. "I am the bread of life; He who comes to Me will never hunger, and he who believes in Me will never thirst"' John 6:35. When we say The Lord's Prayer may we remember the sacrifice of Christ's broken body for our salvation, sacrificed for us that He may live in us and we in Him. May each of us pray, "Feed me now and evermore." Amen