**The Lord’s prayer and the Lord’s supper**

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We have gathered this morning as a small group of Christians, gathered to share our lives and concerns with one another, not unlike that small group of disciples that gathered around Jesus. And we gather with questions and doubts, but also with some confidence that it matters that we are together, and that other groups of Christians throughout the world are doing the same.

And we have gathered this morning to observe the Lord’s supper, which our church tries to do every month. In doing so, we are re-presenting that time when our Lord Jesus gathered his beloved disciples one last time to celebrate a meal together, the last of many meals they had had together. To “observe the Lord’s supper” is a slightly strange saying. But perhaps it reminds us that what we will do in a little bit is to see in our imaginations that gathering of Jesus and his beloved, and remembering that we are Jesus’s beloved now, and looking forward to being together with all of Jesus’s beloved some day.

On another occasion, Jesus was gathered with his disciples, who asked him specifically how they should pray. I wouldn’t be surprised if this happened over a meal. It certainly happened with all those meals together in the background, and all the times that the disciples got along together, or did not get along together, as they were, in a way, bringing forth the very kingdom of God.

I’d like to look at the Lord’s supper this morning with an eye on the Lord’s prayer as given to us by Luke. Luke’s version is much shorter than the one we have in Matthew’s version. Everything that Luke reports, Matthew reports, so it’s not as if we need to worry about contradictions. As it happens, I think Luke’s version brings out some points that help us understand the Lord’s supper better, so I’m glad it’s worked out this way. I’ll warn you that I’m going to jump about a little bit, but it’s a very short prayer, so I don’t think you need worry.

Because the first prayer of the several sub-prayers of the Lord’s prayer that Luke gives that I want to talk about is, “Give us each day our daily bread.” Honestly, it’s very hard to ignore that word *bread* when we are about to celebrate the Lord’s supper together, when one of the two signs are bread and wine. I have always taking “our daily bread” to mean something like “everything that we need to keep us alive.” And bread is something we can touch, and it reminds us to ask God for the very basic things we need to live: food, shelter, clothing, health, relationships. But we also remember that life is more than this things: we have spiritual needs: we need spiritual food and drink, and we need it often. In the bread and wine of the Lord’s supper, we find some of the spiritual food and drink we need. As I said, this bread and wine are signs. They are what they are, but they point to something else, too. The bread and wine are symbols of the body and blood of Jesus: his body broken for us, his blood spilt for us. And Jesus’s body and blood are what they are, but they point to something else, too. In some way that we don’t understand (even if we think we understand) his broken body and spilt blood bring about a reconciliation with God. This bread and wine represent Jesus’s death; his death represents God’s making peace with us.

When we pray, “forgive us our sins,” or *debts* or *trespasses* or whatever your translation and tradition has, we can pray that confidently, knowing that in the reconciling death of Jesus Christ, our sins are forgiven.

Of course, we don’t just pray, “forgive us our sins,” but “forgive us our sins, as we forgive those who sin against us.” And this is a very real reminder that we are in the midst of a community, and that we can hurt one another, and do hurt one another. Paul warns us against celebrating the Lord’s supper together if we are not reconciled to one another (and, for Paul, that meant, among other things, ensuring that we made sure that each person got enough to eat at the love feasts). And our Lord tells us if we are in the midst of worship, we need to run off and be reconciled to another if we suddenly remember that someone has some kind of anger at us. We should be, we need to be, people who are extending grace, forgiveness, and understanding to one another if we are going to pray the Lord’s prayer correctly, and observe the Lord’s supper correctly.

We also pray that God would not “lead us to temptation,” or, in Luke’s version, “to the time of trial.” We seek and pray for that which allows us to gather together in peace. These days, at least, so many of our trials are ones we bring on ourselves! And a large dollop of forgiveness and compassion for one another seems key here. In addition, though, I am reminded that theologians call the Lord’s supper a *means of grace*. Probably not a lot of Anabaptist theologians, but that’s ok. By “means of grace,” we simply mean a way (or means) that God operates in our lives to bring about the transformation of our lives, which, when complete, will bring us into that totality of health and peace and live we are made for. Since it is unlikely that we are going to do this on our own, we hope and pray that God will give us what we need, that is, God’s grace, God’s good gift, or in Greek, God’s *eukarist*, or Eucharist, another name for the Lord’s supper. So, my prayer is that your stance will be towards receiving this good gift God has for you, and that your spirit will not be filled with turmoil, trial, and temptation that would cause you to avoid partaking.

So, should you take communion this morning? In our church, and according to our confession, we say this:

All are invited to the Lord’s table who have been baptized into the community of faith, are living at peace with God and with their brothers and sisters in the faith, and are willing to be accountable in their congregation.

So, being baptized is important (we’re Anabaptists, after all), and so we reserve this practice to baptized, Christian adults. Being at peace with God is important, but remembering that Christ himself is our peace, the very thing we are commemorating. Being at peace with one another is important, and if there is any work you need to be reconciled with others “in the church,” you should get to it as soon as you can. And being accountable is important, remembering that we need to provide soul care for one another in addition to physical care.

Having said that, I also want to remind you that taking part in the Lord’s supper is a completely voluntary thing! In some traditions, and this is a tradition I like, you can signal that you don’t want to participate by crossing yourself with your arms across your chest.

Finally, I want to remind you that the Lord’s prayer asks God to hallow God’s own name, and to bring about God’s own kingdom. As we celebrate the Lord’s supper together, we become, in miniature, God’s kingdom. Rich and poor eat together; people of all races and kinds; women and men join together in a place where barriers are broken down, and we are united in a practice that honors God.

I believe that as we celebrate the Lord’s supper together, we are receiving answers to the prayers we pray:

1. God is honored as we join together to remember the death of the Son, and the coming hope of our union with God
2. The kingdom comes as the people of God join together. As the *Didache* states,“Even as this broken bread was scattered over the hills, and was gathered together and became the church is gathered together from the ends of the earth into God’s kingdom.”
3. We receive some of the spiritual food we need in using the means of grace God has provided us in the bread and wine
4. We actively forgive and receive forgiveness from one another, allowing us to receive the full forgiveness of God.

Are there any comments? Questions or thoughts?

Explanation of communion:

I will bring the elements to you. Again, if you don’t want to participate, please signify by crossing your arms, or just shaking your head, as I come around. I will give you the bread and say, “the body of Christ, broken for you.” You say, “Thanks be to God” and eat at your leisure.

Later, CarolSue will come around with the cup and say, “the blood of Christ, shed for you.” You say “Thanks be to God” and drink at your leisure. Either drink from the common cup, or if you are sick or just want to not drink from the cup, reserve at least some of the bread for dipping.

The bread

For I received from the Lord what I also handed on to you, that the Lord Jesus on the night when he was betrayed took a loaf of bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and said, ‘This is my body that is for you. Do this in remembrance of me.’

Prayer: We thank you, our Father, for the life and knowledge which you made known to us through Jesus your servant. To you be the glory forever. Even as this broken bread was scattered over the hills, and was gathered together and became one, so let your church be gathered together from the ends of the earth into your kingdom. To you is the glory and the power through Jesus Christ forever.

In the same way he took the cup also, after supper, saying, ‘This cup is the new covenant in my blood. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me.’ For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord’s death until he comes.

Prayer: We thank you, our Father, for the holy vine of David your servant, which you made known to us through Jesus your servant. To you be the glory forever.

Prayer after communion:

We thank you, holy Father, for your holy name which you enshrined in our hearts, and for the knowledge and faith and immortality that you made known to us through Jesus your servant. To you be the glory forever.

You, Master Almighty, have created all things for your name's sake. You gave food and drink to all people for enjoyment, that they might give thanks to you; but to us you freely give spiritual food and drink and life eternal through Jesus, your servant.

Before all things we thank you because you are mighty. To you be the glory forever.

Remember, Lord, your church. Deliver it from all evil and make it perfect in your love, and gather it from the four winds sanctified for your kingdom which you have prepared for it. For Yours is the power and the glory forever.

Let grace come, and let this world pass away!

Hosanna to the Son of David! If anyone is holy, let him come; if anyone is not holy, let him repent. May the Lord come quickly! Amen.