

All Saints Lutheran Church
Lilburn, Georgia
Upon the 25th Anniversary Celebration of her father's Ordination

Grace to you and peace, from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

I'll never forget the day I showed up to computer science camp, expecting to get my hands on state of the art technology right off the bat... but being asked, instead, to teach our instructor, using hand-written instructions, how to make a peanut butter and jelly sandwich. We were to pretend that he'd never even *seen* a peanut butter and jelly sandwich—or any sandwich for that matter, so our instructions were to be *very* specific.

And after we'd all written our instructions, our teacher asked us to read them, one by one, and he would try to follow them. There on the table in front of us was an unwrapped loaf of bread, an unopened jar of peanut butter, an unopened jar of jelly and a knife ready to go. And as the first volunteer began, it was clear we'd missed the mark. She started simply saying, "put some peanut butter on the bread" and he picked up the **WHOLE** jar of peanut butter and placed it on top of the bag of bread.

From there, we tweaked our instructions and kept trying and trying until we eventually got our instructor to successfully make what we knew to be, a peanut butter and jelly sandwich. And while this was at the time an activity about computer programming, I think it is a good framework for starting to understand our scriptures for this morning as well.

You see, Jesus entered a world where humanity had been wrestling with **BIG** questions about who God is and who we are in relation to God for centuries...and bit by bit, the Hebrew scriptures began to take shape, compiling and capturing our human experiences of God, offering the people of God guidelines—step by step instructions for living in God's Kingdom—and they *needed* these instructions, after all, they'd never *seen* God or God's Kingdom in its fullness...and so it took these specifics to begin to understand who God was, and who they were called to be.

And even after thousands of years of this teaching, humanity was still missing the mark. We could **still** not comprehend the big picture of God's Kingdom of healing and wholeness and love.

We needed a new teacher—someone to come alongside us to make a peanut butter sandwich right there in front of us, so that we could taste and see God's Kingdom for ourselves! And so, Jesus came to do just that. To walk among us. To **teach** us what God's Kingdom looks like—in the flesh.

Which brings us to our Gospel from Luke this morning. We enter the story and find Jesus praying. And as he finishes, the disciples ask him earnestly to please, teach *them* to pray, too. They are learning from him how to preach and teach, how to heal and how to cast out demons, and it's time for them to learn how to pray, too. And so, Jesus teaches them what we now call the Lord's Prayer.

And in this prayer, Jesus is a clear and concise teacher. He gives the disciples the step by step instructions that they're looking for—every single word they are to pray. And so for thousands of

years now we've passed along the very words he used to pray...and it's incredible if you think about it, that we are so lucky to pray these same words still today – and so we, too, teach our children and our children's children this prayer, hoping to pass it along until Christ himself returns.

But we don't just pray the Lord's Prayer to copy Jesus' words. For Jesus didn't teach us this prayer so we'd know exactly what words to use. He taught it to us, I think, so that over the course of our lives, as we pray alongside our reading of Scripture and our experiences of God in in daily life, as we pray alone and as a community, we might come to understand who *God* is and who *we* are more deeply and more fully each and every day.

In other words, Jesus taught us this prayer so that we might begin to know – using my example from computer camp – what a sandwich looks like in the end – or, what the Kingdom of God looks like in the end...so that, using these words, we might begin to pattern our lives after them, after Jesus' example of life, death and resurrection...so that others might also come to experience who God is, for themselves.

Here's what I mean...at the time of my baptism, my parents made several promises, one of which was to teach me the Lord's Prayer. And while I have zero recollection of them literally teaching me the words to this prayer, I have to admit that they *taught me* the Lord's Prayer, much the same as Jesus taught it to his disciples, not in this moment in Luke's Gospel, but in their entire time together –by living it out.

I remember one afternoon when a young mother came to our home with her four children. I didn't know much about this family, but I could tell their clothes hadn't been washed nearly as often as mine had, which made me wonder what they might have to eat at home. And, right there, around our dining room table, I witnessed what it looks like for God to give us each day our daily bread... for before long, my parents had set out more than enough food for all of us to eat, together. After eating, I was asked to watch the four children so that the adults could chat a bit...and while I still don't know what they talked about that day, I do know that before long, God, through our congregation, helped to "save" these precious children of God from that particular time of trial – ensuring that these children and their mother, could safely leave an abusive home in order to find a new one, where they could truly thrive. In this encounter, I witnessed daily bread provided, a family saved from trial and temptation, and God's Kingdom drawing near...

And there were of course countless moments when my father lived out the words, "forgive us our sins..." it had to have been every Saturday for months on end when I was in middle school, that my dad would have loaves of communion bread neatly formed and rising in the oven, and without missing a beat, I would come into the kitchen and preheat the oven in hopes of making something for myself. And of course, by the time I went to put the cookies or pizza in it, the communion bread was already ruined...But you see no matter how many times I made this *same* mistake, I knew my father loved me just the same. I knew he was frustrated and disappointed with my forgetfulness, and yet week after week I experienced in real life what it felt like to be forgiven, because my actions never changed the fact that loved me just the same.

Perhaps my parents—perhaps my father, Kim, has taught you similar lessons as you've walked together, too...whether you walked as friends, or family, or with him as your pastor...Perhaps he's shown you what it looks like to live out the Lord's Prayer, as well.

Perhaps, through his ministry among you, you've glimpsed God's care and compassion for those on the margins of society...or perhaps he's shown you what it means that God promises to draw near to us in times of darkness. Or perhaps he's taught you the scriptures in a new way, or broken bread with you around this table right here. Or perhaps, through him, you've glimpsed the holiness of God's name.

But that's not all...you see, I'd be willing to bet that each of you in this sanctuary has embodied the Lord's prayer, for my dad, too... you see, it's not just the pastor's job to live Jesus' words out, it's the call to all of us in baptism...and from what I've heard, you already get that, deep down. Friends, I've heard about the moments you've opened your doors and your hearts to your neighbors in any kind of trial...I've heard stories of the ways you've shared your gifts and dreamed up what God might be calling you to. I've tasted the daily bread you share around this table and the ones that await us this afternoon.

Indeed, it seems to me, that you all are teaching your children how to pray this prayer, just like my household, growing up, just like the congregations I was raised in taught me...and much more importantly, just as Jesus taught his disciples, and just as Jesus teaches us right here and now.

And so - church - I beg you, keep on teaching this prayer, not like it's a stale memorization assignment in confirmation class, but like it's the living, breathing prayer that it is.

For when join Jesus in living out this prayer, God shows up in amazing ways. God liberates the captive from times of trial...God forgives...God loves like the best of fathers...and God begins, step by step, to transform the church into the very Bread of Christ, broken for the world.

And as God does - we along with all of creation can begin to imagine what the fullness of God's Kingdom might look like...A kingdom where there is more than enough bread for giving, bread for living, and bread to celebrate.

Thanks be to God. Amen.