



---

## THE SHEPHERD'S VOICE

---

*Daily Devotion at Zion + July 12, 2020 AD + **Pentecost Season***

## **This Week: Praying in the Evening**

God does amazing things in the dark of night.

When “darkness was over the face of the deep,” God created light and all of creation (Genesis 1:2). Later, it was “in the evening” that God sent the dove with an olive branch to tell Noah that the flood was receding, just as He delivered the people of Israel from hunger by sending them quail after sundown (Genesis 8:11, Exodus 16:6). Our Lord Jesus gave the Holy Supper in the evening, too (Matthew 26:20), and He died when “darkness covered the whole land” (Matthew 27:45). Light, creation, rescue, food, salvation, forgiveness—God did all these things at times of deep darkness.

In God’s hands, the evening is rich and full of blessing!

Christians therefore come to the evening with great expectation and comfort. Though we readily acknowledge the darkness of our own souls (the sin that tempts us, the danger that faces us daily, and the power of death that haunts us), we trust the light even more and commend ourselves into its warmth and protection. “Joyous light of glory!” we sing at vespers, greeting our saving Lord, the Light that never fades, even as the sun sets. Such prayer prepares us for the darkness of death, for even there, Christ shines. Read the next few pages to learn even more about Christian prayer in the evening-time.

### **About the Cover Art**

*Do you notice the crucifix of Jesus hanging in the far left corner of this picture? Entitled “Evening Prayer” and painted by Franz Skarbina in 1890, it depicts a room full of workers pausing in their labor to turn towards the image of Christ crucified as an older man leads them in prayer. What kind of workers are they? The larger painting (this image is just a detail of the full work) shows men and women in aprons gathered in semi-darkness around a table. Is it the kitchen of a restaurant, or something more secretive? The painting does not say, but it testifies to the power of prayer as the darkness draws near.*

## The Household Prayers: Bedtime

Just as the Biblical vision of “day” begins with sundown, so does our daily prayer begin with evening. Praying at bedtime becomes a time to commend ourselves into God’s care, not just during the darkness of the night, but within every dark time, such as the hours of death, grief, doubt, anxiety, and sorrow for sin.

The Household Prayers of the Lutheran church, written by Luther himself, include a small rite for prayer at bedtime. Luther developed it from his experience as a monk, using the basic pattern of prayer active in the monastery: 1) call upon God; 2) thank or praise Him; 3) confess sin; and 4) ask for His help. From the start of the Church’s life, Christians have also prayed for angelic protection as they sleep and for strength to serve God in the coming day.

Turn to page to see the full rite as he composed it.

### Daily Readings for the Week of July 19 (Pentecost 7)

<b>S</b> Numbers 21:4-9, 21-35 Acts 17:(12-21) 22-34 Luke 13:10-17	<b>Th</b> Numbers 23:11-26 Romans 8:1-11 Matthew 22:1-14
<b>M</b> Numbers 22:1-21 Romans 6:12-21 Matthew 21:12-22	<b>F</b> Numbers 24:1-13 Romans 8: 12-17 Matthew 22:15-22
<b>T</b> Numbers 22:21-38 Romans 7:1-12 Matthew 21:23-32	<b>Sa</b> Numbers 24:12-25 Romans 8:18-25 Matthew 22:23-40
<b>W</b> Numbers 22:41-23:12 Romans 7: 13-25 Matthew 21:33-46	

*These readings correspond to pages 225-262 in Volume IV of For All the Saints. To acquire For All the Saints or other devotionals, please contact the church office.*

## Bedtime Prayer

### I. The Name of God

*In the evening when you go to bed, make the sign of the holy cross and say:*

In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen

### II. The Creed and Lord's Prayer

*Then, kneeling or standing, repeat the Creed and the Lord's Prayer.*

### III. The Evening Prayer

*If you choose, you may also say this prayer:*

I thank you, my heavenly Father, through Jesus Christ, your dear Son, that you have graciously kept me this day; and I pray that you would forgive me all my sins where I have done wrong, and graciously keep me this night. For into your hands I commend myself, my body and soul, and all things. Let you holy angels be with me, that the evil foe may have no power over me. Amen

### IV. To Sleep

*Then go to sleep at once and in good cheer.*

### Commentary

*By starting with the Name of God in which we are baptized, Luther teaches us to begin by remembering our baptism into Christ and the secure blessings of being united to Him.*

*Repeating the Creed and Lord's Prayer roots our prayer in the Word of God as taught by Jesus and His disciples.*

*Notice how this prayer 1) thanks God for the day; 2) looks to Jesus as the means of prayer; 3) confesses our sin in the expectation of forgiveness; 4) commends the believer and all that belongs to him or her into God's hands; and 5) requests angelic protection during the night. Thanksgiving, confession, and petition, all of it offered in Jesus name!*

*Here Luther counsels not to lie awake in worry. You've just given everything to your Father! Go to sleep in peace!*