



THE SHEPHERD'S VOICE

*Daily Devotion at Zion + July 26, 2020 AD + **Pentecost Season***

This Week: Mealtime

God has destined the whole world for a feast.

Look at how He created it: light, water, and land first, followed by plants, animals, and man and woman. The first words He spoke to us included the command to eat (Genesis 1:29), and one mark of the early Church was that it received and ate every food as acceptable, with thanksgiving (Mark 7:19; Acts 10:9ff; 1 Timothy 4:4). The Lord described the promised land by calling it a “land flowing with milk and honey” (Exodus 3:17), and greatest of all, He bestowed on the Church the redemptive body and blood of His Son through bread and wine (1 Corinthians 10:16-17) and speaks of the resurrection as a great feast (Isaiah 25:6).

From creating a whole earth of food to making Himself our food to bringing us to a feast of food eternal—clearly, God cares about food!

So you might call Christians “people of the table,” and if so, then we are also people of thanksgiving. We gather to a meal, a glass, a moment of repast, with memories of the altar and the Lord’s Supper attending us. We know, as no other religion knows, that the Lord intends to feed us well, with food for eternal life, and that this feast is ultimately for the whole creation. So we fold hands, or raise hands, and give Him thanks, and in so doing, we are blessed and fed twice-over.

About the Cover Art

Vincente Manansala painted this image, familiar to him from his homeland in the Philippines. Entitled “Prayer Before Meal,” it portrays a Christian family sitting down to a simple supper of roasted fish. Manansala draws our attention to the mother by dressing her in rose, a traditional color of the Virgin Mary (often covered in a blue cloak). Look closely, and you’ll notice that she holds an infant in her arms. These classic “pointers” to Mary set holy echoes within the painting, reminding us of the sacred connection between mothers and mealtime, including that Holy Supper made possible by the Virgin’s Son.

The Household Prayers: Before and After Meals

People often long for connections to the past. Knowing the train of believers that comes before us strengthens us in our own daily walk, promising that we are not alone, but following a path well-worn before us. The mealtime prayers of the Lutheran church are one such wholesome and enduring connection.

They appear so old that their origin is nearly lost. Something similar to the before-meal prayer appears in the *Missale of Bobbio* in the 700s A.D., but earlier than that, we cannot say. The Psalm verses, of course, are nearly 3000 years old, if not older.

Praying before and after meals particularly blesses us by serving as a kind of “defense” against idolatry. Rather than dig into our food or rush back to work and play, we pause to wrap our hearts and God’s Name in thanksgiving, acknowledging the true Source and Bread of Life, whether we are hungry or full.

Daily Readings for the Week of August 2 (Pentecost 9)

S Joshua 1:1-18 Acts 21: 3-15 Mark 1:21-27	Th Joshua 3:14-4:7 Romans 12:1-18 Matthew 26:1-16
M Joshua 2:1-14 Romans 11:1-12 Matthew 25:1-13	F Joshua 4:19-5:1, 10-15 Romans 12:9-21 Matthew 26:17-25
T Joshua 2:15-24 Romans 11:13-34 Matthew 25:14-30	Sa Joshua 6:1-14 Romans 13:1-7 Matthew 26:26-35
W Joshua 3:1-13 Romans 11:25-36 Matthew 25:31-46	

These readings correspond to pages 294-327 in Volume IV of For All the Saints. To acquire For All the Saints or other devotionals, please contact the church office.

Mealtime Prayer

Before Meals *also called the “Benedicite”*

I. Psalm Verses

The children and members of the household shall go to the table reverently, fold their hands, and say:

The eyes of all look to You,
[O Lord,] and you give them
their food at the proper time.
You open Your hand and satisfy
the desires of every living
thing.

II. The Prayers

*Then shall be said the Lord’s
Prayer and the following:*
Lord God, heavenly Father,
bless us and these your gifts
which we receive from your
bountiful goodness, through
Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen

***Note:** Notice how the Psalm verses and Lord’s Prayer appear in both before-meal and after-meal prayer. With its inclusion of “daily bread,” it’s especially apt for mealtimes. Throughout history, most Lutherans have shortened and adapted these mealtime devotions.*

After Meals *also called the “Gratias”*

I. Psalm Verses

Also, after eating, they shall, in like manner, reverently and with folded hands say:

Give thanks to the Lord, for
He is good. His mercy endures
forever. He gives food to every
creature. He provides food for
cattle and for the young ravens
when they call. His pleasure is
not in the strength of the horse,
nor His delight in the legs of a
man; the Lord delights in those
who fear Him, who put their
hopes in His unfailing love.

II. The Prayers

*The shall be said the Lord’s
Prayer and the following:*
We thank You, Lord God,
heavenly Father, for all your
benefits, through Jesus Christ,
our Lord, who lives and reigns
with you and the Holy Spirit
forever and ever.
Amen