



THE SHEPHERD'S VOICE

*Daily Devotion at Zion + June 28, 2020 AD + **Pentecost Season***

This Week: The Home

Holy Scripture echoes with love of the home.

It begins in Genesis, when God fashions the whole earth as a home for man and woman. After their sin and exile from that paradise, the longing for home intensifies as God promises a homeland “flowing with milk and honey” to Israel and issues laws for how to live in the home and pass on the faith to each new generation. In many ways, the whole Old Testament is driven by God’s promise of a home.

Finally, in the New Testament, a new household is formed by the death and resurrection of Christ: the holy Church, the house of God. This gathering of believers becomes a home-away-from-home, the household in which all who trust in God find shelter and belonging. It also serves as a glimpse of the eternal home yet to come: the new creation that will be revealed when Christ comes again to liberate all the earth from its bondage to decay.

Clearly, the home matters to God! Our homes are little pictures of what God intends the whole earth to be and what it will become in the glory of Jesus. We therefore live in our homes best when we make them places for the Word of God to have its way with us, teaching us to trust, pray, and love as God teaches us. Christian devotion: it’s as necessary to a home as heat, light, and food!

About the Cover Art

Jan Henvicks Steen, a Dutch artist, painted several images of families at prayer. In this one from 1665, the man and woman of the house each close their eyes in serene devotion, the man removing his hat, as they sit for a simple meal of bread, cheese, and meat. The infant on the mother’s lap gazes directly at the viewer with a sweet smile, “catching” us as we eavesdrop on her family. The idyllic scene is interrupted by a solemn image, almost beyond view, in the upper right corner: a human skull sits on the shelf, contrasting sharply with the nourishing meal and smiling child, reminding us of the need for households to pray.

The Household Prayers

When Martin Luther, the great reformer, reflected on all of his works and writings, he commented that most of it could be thrown out, “all except my commentary on Galatians and the children’s book.” By “children’s book” he meant the Small Catechism, which the Lutheran church still uses today for teaching confirmation class. Yet while we associate that book with teaching the faith, Luther wrote it as a prayerbook.

In fact, one portion of the catechism often neglected by today’s church is the section called “Household Prayers.” Luther considered this section so essential that, when a copy of the catechism was published without those prayers, he re-issued a copy of his own! To this day, those prayers provide our homes with a basic framework for a life of prayer. More information about the household prayers appear on the back of this pamphlet.

Daily Readings for the Week of July 5 (Pentecost 5)

S Numbers 6:22-27 Acts 13:1-12 Luke 12:41-48	Th Numbers 12:1-16 Romans 2:12-24 Matthew 18:10-20
M Numbers 9:15-23; 10:29 -36 Romans 1:1-15 Matthew 17:14-21	F Numbers 13:1-3; 21-30 Romans 2:25-3:8 Matthew 18:21-35
T Numbers 11:1-23 Romans 1:16-25 Matthew 17:22-27	Sa Numbers 13:31-14:25 Romans 3:9-20 Matthew 19:1-12
W Numbers 11:24-33 (34-35) Romans 1:28-2:11 Matthew 18:1-9	

For those using the For All the Saints books, these readings correspond to pages 156-191 in Volume IV. For help acquiring For All the Saints or other devotionals, please contact the church office.

More Information about the Household Prayers of the Lutheran Church

The Household Prayers of the Lutheran Church follow a simple pattern. They designate three times for prayer:

- Going to Bed
- Waking Up
- Mealtime

Of course, we may and should pray to God throughout the day. But these three times give us a “backbone” to our prayer life, a structure to which we may return continually. They also mark the “transition” times of the day as we pass from day to night, from night to day, and from work to rest and back again.

By doing so, they introduce both discipline and comfort to our practice of the faith. First, the Household Prayers call us into conversation with God at exactly those moments where the demands of sleepiness, work, and hunger threaten to distract us from our heavenly Father. Secondly, they fill our days with the comfort of God’s promise: He is truly with us always, to the end of the age, whether waking or sleeping, working or resting.

What do the prayers look like? We will go over each of the them in future issues of **The Shepherd’s Voice** (with their full texts appearing in the **July 12, July 19, and July 26 issues**). But each set of prayers follows the same basic approach:

- Invoking the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit
- Recalling a portion of the Word of God
- Praying personally to God

You may also acquire full texts of the prayers by getting a full copy of the Small Catechism. For assistance, contact the Zion church office (715-848-7286).