



THE SHEPHERD'S VOICE

*Daily Devotion at Zion + August 30, 2020 AD + **Pentecost Season***

This Week: Psalms and Hymns

Creation doesn't keep quiet when Jesus arrives.

The angel Gabriel preached at His conception (Luke 1:26-38), and Gabriel's brother angels cried aloud at His birth (Luke 2); the shepherds told the story (Luke 2); healed and liberated people of Galilee would spread the report (Mark 1:28); the crowds hailed Him as their king with shouts of "hosanna" (Matt. 21:9); the women rushed to announce His resurrection (Luke 24:9); and then the apostles went into all the world to proclaim the Gospel of the kingdom of God (Acts 1:8). Ever since, the Church has grown, singing its alleluias, psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs to God (Ephesians 5:19).

Music and God seem to go together.

So it comes as no surprise that music and the human race go together, too. Whatever anyone else has told you, God made you for music, in some way. He created you to join in that hymn of creation: "Worthy is the Lamb who was slain!" (Revelation 5:12) The Church lives that reality even now in her hymns, which include in their repertoire the 150 psalms of Holy Scripture. Those hymns and psalms have always adorned the worship of the Church, but they also make their way into our homes. There, they form a valuable feature of our devotion, planting the Word of God deep in our souls.

About the Cover Art

Holy David, the future king of Israel, since upon the floor before King Saul, playing a harp to soothe the troubled king's soul. God's favor had already shifted from Saul to David, a fact that the artist hints by letting the light fall on David while Saul's face recedes into shadow. It's a beautiful rendering of what we read in 1 Samuel 16:14-23, painted by Julius Kronberg, a Swedish artist working in the late 1800s.

The Value of Musical Memorization

It's easier to memorize words that we sing. Just as we may not know the name of every road in our neighborhood, but we develop mental maps of landmarks, so do musical notes serve as "landmarks" in our minds. They call up words for us that we might otherwise forget. Just consider how, if I were to ask you to recite the words of "Amazing Grace" without music, you might not be able to do so, but if someone starts singing it, people can often follow along. It makes practical sense to invest time and energy in memorizing songs of our faith.

Consider it your goal for the next month: choose four Christian hymns that you love, and if you haven't already, memorize the first verse of each one. Devote one week to each verse. Singing ability isn't crucial here—remember, this is for your home and personal devotion! What matters is developing that musical map that will nourish your soul at any moment you choose.

Daily Readings for the Week of Sept. 6 (Pentecost 14)

S	Judges 16:15-31 2 Cor 13:1-11 Mark 5:25-34	Acts 8:26-40 John 6:16-27
M	Judges 17:1-13 Acts 7:44-8:1a John 5:19-29	F Job 2:1-13 Acts 9:1-9 John 6:27-40
T	Judges 18:1-15 Acts 8:1-13 John 5:30-47	Sa Job 3:1-26 Acts 9:10-19a John 6:41-51
W	Judges 18:16-31 Acts 8:14-25 John 6:1-15	
Th	Job 1:1-22	

These readings correspond to pages 470-502. To acquire For All the Saints or other devotionals, please contact the church office.

Hymns at Times of Illness and Death

One occasion when hymns become especially important in the Lutheran experience is the time of death or a funeral. Families often find comfort in selecting the hymns of their loved one's funeral, and sometimes people plan their hymns before they die. That connection between grief, comfort, and hymnody testifies to the value and power of song in personal and home devotion.

For that same reason, one valuable spiritual practice is bring song to the sick bed, either through your own singing or the song of others. Healing has many dimensions. Hymns often function as prayer, lifting our needs to God, and they soothe a soul troubled by physical affliction, anointing the ears and mind with the balm of trustworthy promises and divine consolation. Ask, then: what songs do my family and/or I know? As you prepare for a journey with food, money, and map, prepare now for the sick bed and the graveside with hymns, psalms, and spiritual songs (if you want help, just call the cantor or a pastor!).

Don't Forget the Speaking of Psalms

Not everyone cares to sing, and simply speaking poetry bears many of the same benefits and blessings as music. Its rhythm and imagery function in a similar way to melody, arranging cherished words in a memorable way that nourishes the soul. The Christian church is full of such poetry, good for recalling and speaking throughout our life, some of it right in our Bible.

The 150 psalms of the Book of Psalms (or "Psalter") have spoken to the Church's heart from the very beginning. Our Lord Jesus Himself used them in His teaching and devotion (by way of just one example, He used Psalm 31:5, "Into your hands I commend my spirit," as He died). Spend some time in these ancient hymns; let them both challenge and strengthen you. Speaking them aloud serves in much the same way as singing a hymn, accompanying the believer through life and death into the new creation.