



THE SHEPHERD'S VOICE

*Daily Devotion at Zion + October 4, 2020 AD + **Pentecost Season***

This Week: Devotion Away from Home

Now that God's gone to the grave, prayer can go anywhere, too.

What can withstand the spread of devotion? The Old Testament patriarchs like Jacob would erect an altar wherever God revealed Himself, even in the open field (Genesis 35:7), and the Lord commanded families to speak His Word not only at home but also "on the road" and "at the gate" (Deuteronomy 6:7-9). The apostle Paul teaches us to "pray without ceasing" (1 Thess. 5:16), and our Lord Himself would pray before large crowds (John 6:11), in public places (John 11:41-42), the wilderness (Mark 1:35), and even from the cross (Luke 23:34, 46). His admonition that people "go into your inner room" to pray (Matthew 6:6) was directed against making a show of private prayer for egoistic reasons, and not against public prayer as such.

Since God is everywhere, we pray everywhere.

The workplace, the school, the park, the neighborhood street—we don't make a show of it, but we do pray there, and who knows how many prayers anoint those places every day? It is God's world, and therefore, every place is sanctified by His Word. He has turned the whole world into His throne, His kingdom, and therefore, the whole world is His audience hall, where He receives the cries of His beloved saints.

About the Cover Art

This colorful piece of modern art is more meaningful the more you look at it. Entitled "Prayer at School" by Antony Falbo, it paints the elements of a traditional classroom (students, books, a clock, tiled floors—is there a teacher?) in both warm and cool colors to express the wealth of emotions that fill our prayer, from sorrow to joy to fear to peace. The students all pray in different postures, recalling the diversity of religious practice, and several different floor tiles tell us that this is not one school, but every school. The time on the clock, in the noon hour, points both to lunch time and our Lord's crucifixion. What do you see?

Unpacking Matthew 6:6 Further
Strengthening Our Consciences in the Word

People often cite our Lord's words in Matthew 6:6 ("When you pray, go to your room, close the door, and pray to your Father who is unseen") to oppose praying publicly. Non-Christians even use it to tell Christians that they can only pray in private, and not outside the home. But is this what Jesus is saying?

No. First, our Lord's own practice of public prayer and worship teaches us that He did not mean it in this way. Second, as Matthew 6:5 makes clear, He is addressing a specific problem: people who use their personal prayers for show (*"in order to be seen by others"*). In other words, don't take your bedtime devotion onto the street just so people know how super righteous you are. But at the same time, the blood of Christ sets you free to pray to God in every place and time, *simply because He promises to listen.*

Daily Readings for the Week of Oct. 11 (Pentecost 19)

S Esther 3:1-4:3
James 1:19-27
Matthew 6:1-6, 16-18

Th Esther 7:1-10
Acts 19:11-20
Luke 4:14-30

M Esther 4:4-17
Acts 18:1-11
Luke (1:1-4) 3:1-14

F Esther 8:1-8, 15-17
Acts 19:21-41
Luke 4:31-37

T Esther 5:1-14
Acts 18:12-28
Luke 3:15-22

Sa Esther 9:1-32
Acts 20:1-16
Luke 4:38-44

W Esther 6:1-14
Acts 19:1-10
Luke 4:1-13

These readings correspond to pages 327-358 in Volume IV of For All the Saints. To acquire For All the Saints or other devotionals, please contact the church office.

Devotion Away from Home: How?

So what is devotion away from home? Here are some thoughts for you:

Thanksgiving. God doesn't just provide the food in our homes or on Thanksgiving Day. All food and every gift come from Him. So you may "take thanksgiving with you" to work, school, and vacation. Pause before and/or after meals to thank God, or thank Him in your head throughout your day.

Schools and Work. Teach your children and grandchildren to pray quietly in their minds and hearts throughout the day, and do likewise at your own places of work or volunteering. Take a devotional book or Bible with you to work, or keep a religious image/reminder at your work station or in your locker.

Devotional Groups or Partners. What might happen if some coworkers or fellow students and you gathered before work/class to pray morning prayer, or at noon to read the Bible? Do you think you pastors would help you with this? (Yes!)

Travel and the Lord's Day. How do we "keep the Lord's Day?" By hearing His Word gladly! When you travel away from home, don't travel away from the Church, but seek out a faithful and orthodox Lutheran Church wherever you go, tune into a faithful radio ministry, or take a Bible with you to read and pray.

Travel, Hospitals, and Protection. Mark times of travel or illness with prayer, asking for God's angels to protect you and His Spirit to heal you. Give thanks for those who help you along the way.

"Prayer Without Ceasing." This doesn't necessarily mean "constantly pray" (though steady prayer and increasing our prayer is good!) but rather, however you may pray, don't stop! You may talk to God throughout your days and nights, and it's never a bad time or place.