



THE SHEPHERD'S VOICE

*Daily Devotion at Zion + Feb. 28, 2021 AD + **The Season of Lent***

This Week: Fasting

“Man does not live by bread alone”—and so why does he keep trying?

Our Lord, hungry and thirsty, turned back the temptation to feed Himself, set before Him by the Satanic (Matt 4:3). He reminded that old devil, “Man does not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God” (Matt. 4:4). Every since that *awesome* shutdown of our demonic foe, fasting has served as a tool for reminding ourselves wherein true life lies: the words of God, full of spirit and life (John 6:63). Fasting does not earn us anything before God, but it helps order our souls. The light pangs of a momentary hunger teach us to desire Jesus more than food, and to desire the things that He desires.

So why not try fasting, rather than feasting?

Along with giving alms and intensifying prayer, fasting is one of the traditional devotional practices of Lent (pictured in Zion’s Lenten window, close to the altar in the chancel area, in the image of a fish on a plate). God does not require such fasting of us, but in taking up the yoke of fasting, we do what Jesus did and remind our stomachs—and more importantly, our appetites—that they are not in charge. Rather, we hunger and thirst for righteousness, and we find the great satisfaction of this desire in our Lord Jesus and His feast of salvation.

About the Cover Art

A different perspective on the crucifixion may help give us a new perspective on the faith. In “I Thirst,” artist Jack Cribbs presents the cross of our Lord almost as an angel or the Father might see it. Here, he particularly captures the moment in which Jesus says, “I thirst,” and a centurion offers him sour vinegar (a common thirst quencher at the time, like switchel or kombucha today) on a sponge. Jesus thirsted and drank sour wine so that we might be satisfied and take a long, sweet draught from the cup of salvation

Fasting, Not Starving!

When contemplating the spiritual discipline of fasting, it's important to remember that *food* and *eating* are not the problem. God has created us to eat, and indeed, He has created us to feast! "On this mountain, the Lord of hosts will make for all peoples a feast of rich food, a feast of well-aged wine, of rich food full of fat" (Isaiah 25:6). Food is a gift of the Lord, and all food is to be received with thanksgiving (1 Tim. 4:3-4).

Therefore, the goal is never to starve ourselves, nor in any way to complicate our relationship with food. Eating disorders are serious and diminish the Lord's intended joy for His people. Rather, the goal of fasting is to adopt *brief, controlled* times of eating less or eating simply in order to discipline the soul more than the body. It's a *momentary* exercise in setting our desires aright, so that we might take even more joy in the both the feast of the Lord and our every day meals.

Daily Readings for the Week of March 7 (Lent 3)

S	Jeremiah 6:9-15 1 Corinthians 6:12-20 Mark 5:1-20	Romans 5:12-21 John 8:21-32
M	Jeremiah 7:1-15 Romans 4:1-12 John 7:14-36	F Jeremiah 11:1-8, 14-17 Romans 6:1-11 John 8:33-47
T	Jeremiah 7:21-34 Romans 4:13-25 John 7:37-52	Sa Jeremiah 13:1-11 Romans 6:12-23 John 8:47-59
W	Jeremiah 8:4-7, 18-9:6 Romans 5:1-11 John 8:12-20	<i>These readings correspond to pages 849-879 in Volume I of <u>For All the Saints</u>. To acquire <u>For All the Saints</u> or other devotionals, please contact the church office.</i>
Th	Jeremiah 10:11-24	

Fasting and Lent

The Lutheran church does not update fasting regulations as some churches do, but simply brings forward the longer, Christian traditions of fasting and submits it to the needs or desires of a particular parish, family, or individual. Here are the basic approaches to fasting and a few notes on its particular relationship to Lent:

1. **Ember Days.** The church has four traditional times to fast, called “Ember Days”: the Wednesday, Thursday, and Friday after a) the First Sunday in Lent; b) Pentecost Sunday; c) Holy Cross Day (Sept. 14), and St. Lucy’s day (Dec. 13)—often referred to as “Lenty, Penty, Crucy, Lucy.” Lent generally is also a time for simpler eating and increased prayer and charity.
2. **Simply Eating Less.** There’s lots of questions about what comprises fasting, but the simple answer is “eating less.” If that means no meat, or smaller portions, or fewer meals, or simply bread and water and vegetables, it’s all free and a way to help re-order the soul and increase devotion. Note: it is not recommended for children, and it should not be carried to excess or physical injury.
3. **Doing It with Heart and Mind.** Eating less is one thing; doing it in *faith* and *prayer* another. The main purpose of fasting is to reorder desires towards Jesus and His gifts. Therefore, it’s traditional to accompany fasting with increased prayer, repentance, Scripture reading, and times of meditation.
4. **Don’t Gorge Afterwards.** Simply slip back into your regular pattern of eating. This is healthy for both our body and spirit.
5. **See Fasting in All of Lent.** Giving up “Alleluia” and the “Gloria” in worship, veiling images, no Communion on Good Friday—it’s all part of the larger “fast” of Lent.