



THE SHEPHERD'S VOICE

*Daily Devotion at Zion + March 28, 2021 AD + **Holy Week/Easter***

This Week: Alleluia!

More than the body of Christ rose on Easter. Or, maybe, the body of Christ is more than we think.

Every person grows out of the culture into which he or she is born, and that culture leaves in imprint not only on our minds and emotions but also on our flesh. As much as Christ rose with the wounds of the cross still showing in his hands, feet, and side (John 20:20), He also rose a Jew, a child of Nazareth, a man who had learned the Scriptures and worked as a carpenter and rabbi. With Him rose all the *good* of that experience, and so out of the grave of Christ came not only His risen flesh but also the Scriptures that He bore in His mind, the love that He shared in His earthly ministry and labor, His faith, His promises, the people who trust in Him, and much more.

For this reason the Church sings *alleluia!*

Alleluia, or *hallelu-ja*, comes from the Scriptures and culture of our Lord. A Hebrew word-phrase that means, "Praise the Lord," it would have graced Christ's lips even as His Spirit caused it to grace the Biblical page. It rose with Him on that Easter morning, coming forth from the tomb to be sung by His people forever. It is the deathless song of God's victory and power. How might it refresh your lips and hearts in this season of joy?

About the Cover Art

In this painting of the resurrection, notice how unearthly Christ looks, and yet how profoundly human. His body almost seems still to bear the pallor of His suffering from the cross, His face drawn, and yet a heavenly and welcoming light envelopes Him. An angel stands to the side in extreme and humble reverence, and yet Christ welcomes the viewer to come forward, and sweet flowers bloom along His path. This painting, by the Russian artist Mikhail Nesterov, seems to recall the solemnity of the cross even as it proclaims the resurrection. 2

The Birth of *Alleluia*

The first appearance of the phrase “praise the Lord” in Holy Scripture is in Genesis 29:35, when Leah, the wife of Jacob, gives birth to Judah. This debut of perhaps the best known Jewish-Christian word deserves some attention.

First, it comes from the lips of a woman “hated” by her husband (Genesis 29:31), after the Lord, as a consolation and blessing to her, makes her womb fruitful. That genesis of the phrase associates *alleluia* from the beginning with God’s favor for the unlovable and the poor in spirit.

Yet it also welcomes the child, Judah. From Judah would come both the family of David and therefore the Messiah, our Lord Jesus. *Alleluia* therefore stands at the headwaters of the Savior’s lineage and hails His arrival millennia before His birth.

Daily Readings for the Week of April 4 (Easter)

S	Exodus 12:1-14 Isaiah 51:9-11 Luke 24:13-35	Acts 3:11-26 John 15:12-27
M	Jonah 2:1-10 Acts 2:14, 22-32 John 14:1-14	F Daniel 12:1-4, 13 Acts 4:1-12 John 16:1-15
T	Isaiah 30:18-26 Acts 2:36-47 John 14:15-31	Sa Isaiah 25:1-9 Acts 4:13-31 John 16:16-33
W	Micah 7:7-15 Acts 3:1-10 John 15:1-11	
Th	Ezekiel 37:1-14	

These readings correspond to pages 977-1012 in Volume I of For All the Saints. To acquire For All the Saints or other devotionals, please contact the church office.

Loving *Alleluia*

Popular entertainment has done a number on “praise the Lord” and “alleluia.” Stories from New York and Hollywood have tended to associate the cry with either wild-eyed Christian fanatics or southern “yokels.” As a result, believers tend not to use the phrase in daily parlance unless they’re being comical or extraordinary. But why shy away from a word-phrase with a 4,000-year history, a word that graces the prayer and song of millions of believers, and that our Lord Himself used?

Alleluia in Christian Usage. Christians may and do always use *alleluia* and *praise the Lord*. But it has special connections with the resurrection and Easter, as the word that “goes away” for Lent and then returns in a BIG WAY at Easter. That allows us to use *alleluia* as a simple, daily reminder that Christ is raised.

Alleluia upon Rising. Whether you say *alleluia* or *praise the Lord*, why not let it be one of the first things you say in the morning? Upon rising from sleep, recall that Christ rose from the sleep of death. The Lutheran catechism’s order for prayer upon rising says to “*go to work at once, singing a hymn of the Ten Commandments, or whatever your devotion may suggest.*” Why not let that “song” be a simple, “Praise the Lord! Alleluia!”

Alleluia with Others. You can do it: you can say it out loud in daily conversation, and if people think you’re a Christian fanatic, they just need to relax and loosen up a little. When a friend shares a blessing or when some good gift comes your way, you’re free to say it, sincerely and without the jazz-hands of a revivalist preacher: “Praise the Lord.” “Alleluia.”

Alleluia in Thanksgiving. What a simple way to end the day: a quiet (or loud?), content “Alleluia.” Or maybe you could conclude a meal that way, or meet misfortune and trouble with its sturdy promise. However you wish, it would be a simple way to bless the Lord for the gift of each moment and to confess that you belong to the company of the Lord of the empty grave. Alleluia!