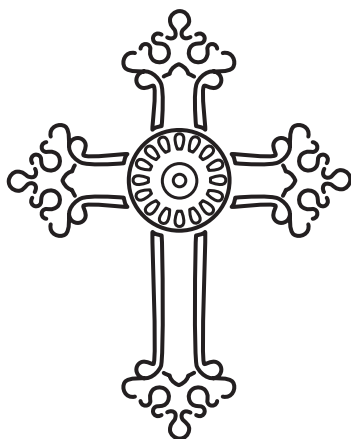




STARCK'S PRAYER BOOK

Revised Concordia Edition

From the German Edition
of Dr. F. Pieper

Translated and edited by W. H. T. Dau;
Revised by William C. Weedon



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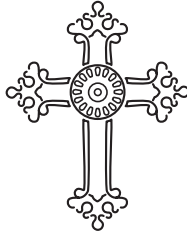
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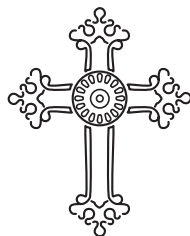
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PREFACE TO THE NEW EDITION

I didn't like it. Not at first. I do not think I am all that unusual in my opinion either. Starck's prayers are meat for the soul in an age accustomed to devotional cotton candy. They challenge the Christian on all sorts of levels. Yet the longer I lived with these prayers, the more I realized how great this work truly is. It is a treasury of prayers that ultimately will not wear out because the foundation common to all the prayers in this book is simply the Word of God, praying back to God the very things He has said to us.

The fluidity with which Starck moves in and out of scriptural language and allusion draws the person who faithfully uses this book into the eternal conversation between God and humanity. Bonhoeffer once observed that not knowing how to pray is a most painful situation. Yet that painful situation is not at all uncommon today. How does one offer petition? Thanksgiving? Confession? Adoration? How can we speak to God in a way that is pleasing and acceptable to Him?

The answer Starck gives is only in and through and with our blessed Lord Jesus Christ. He leads us in our prayers, and they are offered, then, in confidence and joy. Because we pray in and through and with our Lord Jesus Christ, Starck's prayers are brazenly Trinitarian. No "Christo-monism" here. Here is the richness of speaking to our heavenly Father, to our only Savior Jesus Christ, and to the Holy Spirit, our comforter. Starck's prayers do what all genuine prayers do: they draw the

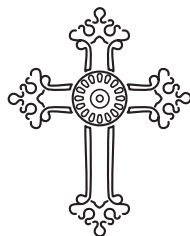
STARCK'S PRAYER BOOK

reader into the internal life of the Blessed Trinity and teach the joy of living in His presence throughout the day, throughout the week, throughout the year, throughout the good times and the bad. In the great faith that can come only by the working of the Holy Spirit through the saving Gospel, Starck pulls us in the joy of receiving from God's loving hand both adversity and joy.

This book is offered in slightly updated garb, to Christians of the twenty-first century who live in a world very different from that inhabited by a Lutheran clergyman of the seventeenth century, in the hope that those who use it will discover, in the vibrant faith that rings through and shapes these prayers from another era, the voice of the faith once delivered to the saints.

Soli Deo Gloria!
William Weedon
Editor





PREFACE TO THE 1921 EDITION

Johann Friedrich Starck, a favorite author of evangelical Germany in the era of Pietism, has more than any other writer of devotional literature maintained his hold on the hearts of practicing (not merely professing!) Christians. Even Arnd's *True Christianity*, booksellers assert, does not equal the influence that Starck still exerts on thousands of Christians by his *Prayer Book*.

The leading facts of Starck's life are these: He was born October 10, 1680, at Hildesheim in Hanover. His father had formerly been a citizen of the old imperial city of Frankfurt-on-the-Main. After completing the regular course of studies at the *Gymnasium* at Hildesheim, young Starck entered the University of Giessen, where his inner life received permanent impressions in the devotional exercises (*Erbauungsstunden*), which his theological teachers May and Lange conducted with a select company of students. After his graduation from the university, Starck had to wait a considerable time before he was called to a pastorate. This time he spent partly as assistant in the evangelical church at Geneva, where Reformed influence was dominant, partly as instructor in his ancestral home city of Frankfurt. In 1715, he was called to the pastorate of Sachsenhausen, and in 1723 he became pastor, first of the Barfuesserkirche, then of the Spitalkirche at Frankfurt. In 1742, he became a member of the Consistory, and labored with unbroken strength as preacher, pastor, and author till a great age; he died July 17, 1756.

Starck's predecessor in Frankfurt had been Philip Spener, "the father of Pietism," and it fell to Starck's lot to water what Spener had sowed. For thirty years he conducted "private" devotional exercises on Sunday afternoons. These exercises, which were attended by a number of earnest souls, were private only in as far as they were distinct from the regular public services at the church. At these exercises Starck endeavored to impress the evangelical truths of Christianity, the priceless privileges of the grace of Christ and the Christian ordinances, and the practical duties of a consistent Christian life on his individual hearers with true pastoral tact, and became to many a spiritual pedagogue and guide of great wisdom and power. Starck had a Savior's eye and heart for the lowly and forsaken, and sought them out for special instructions. For servants who could not attend the public services he wrote many an edifying tract; the poor and needy found in him not only a sympathetic advisor but also a ready, unwearied, and generous helper.

Starck loved nothing sensational, nothing that was for mere display in matters of religion. Christian life, to him, was real and earnest, to be conducted in a sober mind. He was always bent on its practical applications to every pursuit and action, and on enlisting really the whole of a person in the service of the Master. While he maintained the confessional position of the Evangelical Lutheran Church, and rejoiced to be a member of it, his teaching was tinged with the peculiarities of the Pietistic tendency. To mention only one of these, the sharp line of demarcation between justification and sanctification that is seen in the writings of the apostle—the line that divides the gracious forgiveness of sin for Christ, an act exclusively of God, from the godly life which follows wherever the absolution of the Gospel has been accepted by a penitent and believing heart—sometimes becomes faint in Starck's writings. Thus what God alone does, and what the regenerate child of God does by the prompting of the Holy Spirit, are not always kept strictly apart. However, this defect occurs only occasionally, perhaps least in the *Prayer Book*, and there are so many sections in Starck's writings that are entirely free from error that Starck himself supplies the needed correction for his occasional deviations from the straight path of the sound doctrine.

When Dr. F. Pieper, years ago, examined the *Prayer Book* with a view

PREFACE TO THE 1921 EDITION

to applying, wherever needed, this self-correction of Starck, this was done with no sacrilegious hand, but really to secure for Starck a fuller reward of his faithful labors for a sincere and zealous Christian life. The revision really helped Starck to speak his full Christian mind everywhere, and to discard what was of inferior value or even misleading in his presentation of Christian truths. The chief object, of course, was to secure the minds of less trained Christian readers against false impressions that they might receive from a misstatement in their favorite. The same reasons have prompted the present translation of the *Prayer Book* into English. It was begun ten years ago, but was interrupted for quite a number of years at the end of the First Division, partly because the translator lost the aid of his stenographer, partly because the work at Concordia Seminary grew to unusual dimensions. That he was at all enabled to complete it is due in no small measure to the help of the Seminary Board, which during the last two years has engaged a stenographer, who is at the service of members of the faculty. Grateful acknowledgment for this aid is herewith made.

The translation is made from the German edition of Dr. Pieper of 1900. Comparison was possible to the translator only with the editions published by Kohler and the German Literary Board. Each of these editions has its distinct merit, the latter excelling by its faithful adherence to the original, its apt renderings, and happy paraphrases. Both renderings have proved helpful to the translator, though he decided to prepare an entirely new translation from the original, and even at the risk of being faulted with Germanisms permitted the peculiar style and thought connection of the original to be reflected in the translation. At times, too, the exact thought of the original required a return to Luther's translation of the Bible. Nor has the use of texts from apocryphal books, which Starck has used with power, been altogether avoided. To guard against a misconception, the translator would state here that he does not regard these books as inspired, but, with Luther, considers some of the apocryphal books instructive reading matter. Nor does he feel any Puritanic qualm in such use.

The reproduction of Starck's poetry has been attempted, so far as the present translator is aware, in only one instance, and that with indiffer-

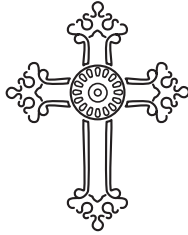
ent effect, as was to be expected. The poetry for the present edition has been gathered from many sources, not a few of them at the present time unknown to the editor; and though it lacks that direct connection with the meditational portions preceding which is seen in Starck's poetry, it is hoped that it may be found to possess value also independently of the particular sections to which it is found attached.

The four last divisions or "books" of the *Prayer Book* were prepared during the distressing years of the late European war. This work proved to the editor a great mental and spiritual relief. It was a luxury to spend many an hour in the company of a person on whom the spirit of prayer has been poured out in such abundant measure as on Starck. It was faith-confirming and inspiring work that the translator was permitted to do. He can offer no better wish to the readers of this book, now that it starts on its voyage to the increasing English homes and hearts in our church community, than this, that the light and strength, the cheer and comfort that has come to him out of the pages of this book in many a weary and despondent day may stream into the hearts of the readers, even though they be free, as the editor hopes they are, from all weariness and despondency.

W. H. T. DAU



BOOK I



FOR USE IN HEALTH

Part One: Morning, Noon, and Evening Devotions



PREPARATION FOR THE DIVINE SERVICE

EXHORTATION

One thing have I asked of the LORD, that will I seek after: that I may dwell in the house of the LORD all the days of my life, to gaze upon the beauty of the LORD and to inquire in His temple. Psalm 27:4

Immediately after the fall, God, in His wisdom, directed Adam, the first man, to offer sacrifices. Adam's children, Cain and Abel, were, in turn, directed by their father to do the same. (Their sacrifice is expressly mentioned in Genesis 4:3–4.) These sacrifices were not offered in silence! In fact, at such sacrifices they praised God for the benefits received from Him, and also proclaimed the name of the Lord. Those offering the sacrifices confessed their sins, prayed to God for forgiveness, and declared their faith in the coming Messiah, Jesus Christ, who was to shed His blood for humanity like the animals offered in sacrifice. The patriarchs retained this form of worship until in the wilderness God commanded the ark of the covenant to be erected, which afterward furnished the pattern for Solomon's temple.

Further, in the Old Testament, God singled out the seventh day as a day of rest and commanded that day to be kept holy. In its external meaning this commandment does not apply to Christians. Just like other laws in the Old Testament having to do with particular practices, persons, seasons, and locations, this, too, is an entirely external affair; in the New Testament, Christians have been given freedom by Christ regarding all such matters. Still, in the exercise of our Christian freedom, we Christians in the New Testament also keep festival days and days of rest, especially Sunday, so we have time and opportunity to attend the Divine Service, to gather with fellow Christians to hear and study God's Word, to receive the Sacraments, and to praise God with our hymns and prayers.

On the arrival of a day of this kind, a believing Christian should free the mind from earthly matters and stop working, prepare by prayer for the coming Sunday or holy day, praise God for the many blessings received during the past week, and look up in the Bible or hymnal the assigned readings for the Feast or Sunday and meditate on them, thus being prepared for reverently hearing the Word.

PRAYER

Gracious and merciful God, I come before Your holy face today with praise and thanksgiving. You have graciously kept me during the past week and bountifully blessed the work of my hands. You have preserved my going out and my coming in. You have kept me in all my ways and have shown me so much kindness in body and soul. For all of this I praise and magnify You with my whole heart! I will forget what is past, lay down the burden of all my labors and callings, turn my mind to heaven alone, to my God, that I may rejoice in You.

O gracious God, grant that I may spend the coming Sunday [or Feast] in Your fear and grace. Keep me from evil company, lest Satan by his wicked attacks keep me from attending the Divine Service. Help me refuse to follow his enticements. Guard me, lest I spend this day in idleness, wastefulness, immorality, or sinful amusements, and thus inflict great harm on my soul. Grant me Your Holy Spirit that I may gladly hear and learn Your Word this day. When Your Word is being preached, open my heart that I may listen to it and receive it within me as a precious trea-

FOR USE IN HEALTH

sure. Help me to build myself up in my Christian faith and to grow in the knowledge of the truth. Grant that the Word I hear at church may change and sanctify me. As I grow in years, grant that I may also grow inwardly, in faith and piety. Grant me grace to become a new creature and to be and remain a living member in the Body of my Lord Jesus. Grant that I may reverently close my worship and carefully treasure up what I have learned. Grant me grace to be constantly mindful of the Word that I have heard, so that I may walk, speak, live, and act according to it, and thus prove not to be a forgetful hearer, but a doer of the Word. Grant me to keep the Sabbath always in this manner until You bring me to the unending joys of heaven, to the Sabbath that never ends, through Jesus Christ, my only Redeemer and Savior. Amen.

HYMN

*Lord, open now my heart to hear,
And through Your Word to me draw near;
Let me Your Word e'er pure retain;
Let me Your child and heir remain.*

*Your Word inspires my heart within;
Your Word grants healing from my sin;
Your Word has pow'r to guide and bless;
Your Word brings peace and happiness.*

*To God the Father, God the Son,
And God the Spirit, Three in One,
Shall glory, praise, and honor be
Now and throughout eternity. LSB 908:1-3*



EXHORTATION TO MORNING PRAYER ON SUNDAY

Give ear to my words, O LORD; consider my groaning. Give attention to the sound of my cry, my King and my God, for to You do I pray. Psalm 5:1-2

Our whole life should be spent in nothing else than prayer and thanksgiving. Every day we should call upon God in prayer for His bless-

ing, aid, assistance, and grace. When we have obtained our requests, we should return heartfelt thanks. Accordingly, when you awake from sleep in the morning, first of all, raise your eyes to heaven. Do not start thinking about your business and work; do not immediately hurry after some gain. First, kneel down, return thanks to God, and commend yourself to His gracious protection. Do not fear that you lose too much time by devoting a brief half hour in the morning to prayer, to reading a chapter of the Bible or some devotional book. No. The time you spend in prayer will bring you thousandfold blessing in your work, and what you have read will be like honey in your mouth all day long.

So, when you awake and arise in good health in the morning, consider first how many good Christians, who are probably more pious than you, have spent the past night in anguish and sorrow, in pain and sickness, in terror and great unrest, while you experienced none of this. Next, consider that others during the night suffered misfortune, damage, danger, and tribulation, while you lacked nothing. Thank God for His protection! Then pray to God at the break of day to keep you in His grace during the day, that you may commit no sin either against Him or your neighbor. Pray God to be at your side during the day, to keep and bless you as you go about the callings you have received. Then, surrender yourself to God that you may remain in His love, have Him in your thoughts, and not offend Him knowingly or willingly. Finally, do not doubt that the Lord will graciously hear your groaning and your prayer, and will give and grant you whatever is profitable to the salvation of your body and soul throughout the day.

MORNING PRAYER ON SUNDAY

Lord, be pleased to hear my voice in this early hour. Early will I come into Your presence and will give heed to You, O gracious God. You are worthy to receive praise and glory and honor. Who would not fear You, O King of the nations? Who would not honor You, O loving Father? I come before You in this morning hour and give You humble thanks because during this night You have been a fortress around me and mine. You have again renewed to me Your goodness and faithfulness. Be with me and protect me this day also in all my ways. Grant that this day in par-

FOR USE IN HEALTH

ticular may be a day for building up and refreshing my soul. According to Your compassionate love, You have given to us Your precious Word, and you have ordered that it should be publicly proclaimed. Enlighten, sanctify, and instruct my soul, that I may gather treasures from Your Word that will comfort me in danger and death, in crosses and trials, and which neither moth nor rust can corrupt and no thief can break in and steal.

I am glad because I have Your promise that we shall go into the house of the Lord and that our feet will stand inside your gates, O Jerusalem. One thing have I desired of the Lord that I will seek after: that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life to behold the beauty of the Lord and to inquire in His holy temple. My God, let it be my delight today to hear Your Word, to be built up in You, to sing hymns of praise and thanks to Your glory, to pray fervently, and to make my heart an offering to You. How lovely is Your dwelling place, O Lord of hosts! My heart sings for joy to the living God.

Grant that I may not be a forgetful hearer, but may become a doer of the Word. Open my heart, as You once opened Lydia's, that I may receive the seed of Your Word with joy. Then seal my heart, that Satan may not rob me of Your Word. Grant that I may today lay a firm foundation for my Christian faith, for the knowledge of Jesus Christ, for my trust, for my charity, for my self-denial, and for my becoming dead to the world. Grant that I may ponder Your Word during the entire week, that I may live according to it and bring forth a crop of good fruits. Guard me against temptations, lest Satan attack me by his instruments and I be drawn into the sinful practice of the world, and thus bring a grievous curse upon me. Be pleased, O Lord, to accept my worship at church and at home, my praying, my hearing, my reading, and my singing. Be Yourself, O my Jesus, my teacher, that I may grow in the inner man. Yes, dwell in me by faith until I shall be inseparably united to You in heaven above.

O Holy Spirit, enter in, And in our hearts Your work begin, Your dwelling place now make us. Sun of the soul, O Light divine, Around and in us brightly shine, To joy and gladness wake us That we may be Truly living, To You giving Prayer unceasing And in love be still increasing. Amen.

LSB 913:1



BELIEVING CHRISTIANS GLADLY HEAR AND LEARN GOD'S WORD ON SUNDAYS

EXHORTATION

How lovely is Your dwelling place, O LORD of hosts! My soul longs, yes, faints for the courts of the LORD; my heart and my flesh sing for joy to the living God. Psalm 84:1-2

The Word of God is the greatest treasure that He has given to us, for His Word is to lost sinners the Word of life! It brings us out of sin into righteousness, out of death into life. Besides, God has shown us a special favor in establishing the holy preaching office so His Word may be proclaimed and explained publicly to all who gather to hear it. God has promised to give a special blessing to the public preaching of His Word. All those who reverently hear the Word will share in this blessing.

When the day arrives that the Christian Church has appointed for the public preaching of the Word, Christians should not just stop work and be idle. People who are not Christians do that well enough! No, Christians should let this be the chief concern: to hear and learn God's Word. Whenever people are busy hearing and learning the Word of God, a true Sabbath is being observed. Without this happening, the day cannot be considered a Sabbath in any Christian sense.

Because of these things, a true Christian should be careful not to waste the day in laziness and idleness. Nor should the day be spent in partying and eating and getting drunk. Nor should the true Christian miss hearing God's Word because of greed or frivolous activity. Rest assured that much depends on the proper manner of keeping Sunday. A great blessing is attached to it. Who knows the reason why so many people live under a curse, devoid of God's blessing? Our ancestors used to say: "As the Word of God *you* treat, so *God* will treat your bread and meat." In conclusion, having heard God's Word, we should keep it in a good and honest heart; we should live according to it; we should at once

FOR USE IN HEALTH

reduce its rules of life to practice. At the same time, we should gather a supply of comforting, instructive, and powerful Scripture passages to use in times of tribulation and death.

PRAYER

This is the day that the Lord has made, let us rejoice and be glad in it! I thank You, O God, for the countless blessings You have showered on me today. On a Sunday, Jesus, my Savior, rose from the grave. On a Sunday, the Holy Spirit was poured out on the apostles. So it is proper that on this day I call to mind my redemption through Jesus Christ and the gift of the Holy Spirit, who was poured on me abundantly in Holy Baptism.

I thank You for Your holy and pure Word, which was preached to me this day as You have ordained for the salvation of my soul. I thank You for all the bodily and spiritual blessings received from Your fatherly hand throughout my life. I thank You because You have guided, led, preserved me from my youth, and shown me so many favors in body and soul. Who could ever recount all Your blessings?

However, this day will be not only a day of thanksgiving but also a day of prayer. I beg You, my God and Father, grant me to spend this day in Your fear. Keep me from temptations, vain thoughts, and evil company. How I wish that every artery in me were a tongue and every drop of blood a voice to praise and glorify You, O Blessed Trinity, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit! I pray that not a single hour would go by in which I do not show forth Your praise!

Seal the Word that I have heard in my heart. Grant that I may diligently ponder it, let it govern my life, and that I may walk accordingly. As I have now grown to be a week older, grant that I may increase in Your knowledge, in love and piety, and that I may grow in the inward self. I pray for the gift of Your Holy Spirit. May He put me in mind of Your Word during this week and throughout my life. May He guide, govern, and lead me. Bless my labor and employment, and grant me to continue to live in Your grace for the rest of my days and years, until at last I reach heaven, where I may, with thanksgiving, keep the eternal Sabbath.

This is the day the Lord has made; He calls the hours His own. Let heav'n rejoice, let earth be glad And praise surround the throne. Amen.

LSB 903:1

SUNDAY HYMN

*O day of rest and gladness,
O day of joy and light,
O balm of care and sadness,
Most beautiful, most bright;
This day the high and lowly,
Through ages joined to bless,
Sing "Holy, holy, holy,"
The triune God confess.*

*This day at earth's creation
The light first had its birth;
This day for our salvation
Christ rose from depths of earth;
This day our Lord victorious
The Spirit sent from heav'n,
And thus this day most glorious
A threefold light was giv'n. LSB 906:1-2*



BELIEVING CHRISTIANS CONSIDER THE DAILY AND ETERNAL SABBATH

EXHORTATION

*So, then, there remains a Sabbath rest for the people of
God. . . . Let us therefore strive to enter that rest. Hebrews 4:9, 11*

God had strictly prohibited the Jews from doing any work on the Sabbath day. So strictly and rigidly did God maintain the Sabbath in the Old Testament that He caused a person who was gathering wood on the Sabbath to be stoned, as we read in Numbers 15. This commandment does not concern us Christians in the New Testament, as St. Paul shows in Colossians 2.

However, the Sabbath of the Jews was a shadow, a type, of the true, spiritual Sabbath that Christians keep every day. It does not consist in ceasing from work and giving one's self over to idleness, but it is rather

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a person's ceasing from sin. This means that, as the Jews by God's commandment rested from their manual labor, so a Christian by God's command ceases every day from impiety and malice. A Christian is careful not to speak evil against God or neighbor, not to do evil either alone or in others' company, not to be misled by others, but to keep the soul unspotted from the world.

While, on the one hand, Christians avoid these things, Christians are also zealous, on the other hand, to remember God frequently as they go about their vocations. They earnestly beg God to grant them His Holy Spirit to govern and comfort them. That is the spiritual and daily Sabbath the children of God keep all the time.

Those who are eager to keep this daily Sabbath can rest assured that they will keep the eternal Sabbath in the life everlasting, which consists in this: that the believers and the chosen children of God are delivered from all bodily labor, from all crosses, tribulations, and from all sins; that they behold God face-to-face, are occupied with Him and praise and worship Him without end. Oh, what a holy and glorious Sabbath! This Sabbath will never be disturbed. However, it will only be obtained by those who continue in faith and in the love of Jesus unto death.

PRAYER

Holy and merciful God, I hear Your Holy Word, by which You made me Your beloved child and delivered me from the dominion of the devil. Therefore, I remember on this day the spiritual Sabbath. I call to mind that I must cease from sin and consecrate my body and soul, indeed, my whole life to You. From now on, my God, my daily labor will by grace consist in doing Your will, not mine. It will consist in expelling, by Your power, evil desires and thoughts, so that You alone may rest in me, enlighten me, and sanctify me more and more. O God, grant that this spiritual Sabbath celebrated in my heart may never be disturbed. You, O Lord, pray within my heart, sing within my heart, and teach within my heart. In that way my heart will be a temple consecrated to You. And when I have finished the days of my life according to Your counsel, and at the same time have finished the spiritual Sabbath, O God, then let me enter the heavenly, unending Sabbath. There Your saints in everlasting

rest and blessed heavenly joy praise You in the temple of glory. There I shall join with angels and cherubim in singing to You: Holy, holy, holy. O my God, grant that I may obtain such happiness. Amen.

HYMN

*Oh, what their joy and their glory must be,
Those endless Sabbaths the blessed ones see!
Crowns for the valiant, to weary ones rest;
God shall be all, and in all ever blest.*

*In new Jerusalem joy shall be found,
Blessings of peace shall forever abound;
Wish and fulfillment are not severed there,
Nor the things prayed for come short of the prayer.*

*We, where no trouble distraction can bring,
Safely the anthems of Zion shall sing;
While for Your grace, Lord, their voices of praise
Your blessed people shall evermore raise.*

*Now let us worship our Lord and our King,
Joyfully raising our voices to sing:
Praise to the Father, and praise to the Son,
Praise to the Spirit, to God, Three in One. LSB 675:1–4*

EVENING PRAYER FOR SUNDAY

Lord, abide with me; for it is toward evening and the day is now far spent. O living and almighty God, Your works are past knowing, and the goodness You show our human race is beyond all telling! I will tell of Your grace and truth, of Your love and mercy, for You have me shown me today much kindness in body and soul. You have fed my soul with the bread of life. You have let me drink from the living fountain. Your Word has been sweeter than honey to my mouth. Let Your Word always be a light to my way all my days, that I may order my walk according to it; then I will not stumble or fall from Your grace.

You have also been my deliverer, my comforter. In temporal matters, You have allowed me to live in good health until this evening. I am not worthy of all the mercies Your love has showered on me. Come to my side, O protector, now that my weary limbs lie down to rest. Guard me and embrace me in Your sheltering arms. Let me always be a light in the Lord, and let me never have fellowship with the unfruitful works of dark-

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ness. Grant that Your Word I have heard and learned may in the future spring up within me as a holy seed. Grant that its fruits may be perceived in my life by godliness, by fear of You, by being dead to the world and dedicated to You alone. Be my protection and my shade against the heat of affliction and the fiery darts of Satan. The Lord is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear? The Lord is the stronghold of my life; of whom shall I be afraid? Turn from me and from my family fires, floods, and every misfortune, and let all who are in sorrow, sickness, or on the point of death enjoy Your rich grace. Then our mouth will be filled with Your praise at the break of day, and we will tell of Your goodness, which You have shown us in body and soul.

If I have not heard Your Word with the zeal I ought to, forgive me; do not on that account withdraw Your grace from me. During the coming week, cause me to be entirely renewed. Give me new love and desire for You, and new eagerness to serve and obey You. Grant that I may avoid and flee the sins that I have committed during the past week, in order that everyone will see that I have not heard Your Word in vain. Help me to ponder diligently that I have an immortal soul, in order that I may be more concerned about my soul than my body. O my God, I am turning my eyes to Your resting place; in doing so I remember my grave, where I shall rest until You raise me up on the Last Day with joy to the life that never ends. Go, then, my body, into your chamber and rest; but you, O my soul, enter into the wounds of Jesus. Amen.

HYMN

*O Christ, who art the light and day,
Thou drivest night and gloom away;
O Light of Light, whose Word doth show
The light of heav'n to us below.*

*All-holy Lord, in humble prayer
We ask tonight Thy watchful care.
O grant us calm repose in Thee,
A quiet night, from perils free.*

*Our sleep be pure from sinful stain;
Let not the tempter vantage gain
Or our unguarded flesh surprise
And make us guilty in Thine eyes.*

*Asleep though wearied eyes may be,
Still keep the heart awake to Thee;
Let Thy right hand outstretched above
Guard those who serve the Lord they love. LSB 882:1–4*



BELIEVING CHRISTIANS GIVE THANKS TO GOD AFTER HEARING THE DIVINE WORD

EXHORTATION

But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves. James 1:22

All divine blessings are misused by the children of the world. This applies also to the hearing of the divine Word. There is a big difference in this respect between the children of the world and the true children of God: The children of the world imagine that they may devote Sunday to their customary immorality and pleasures. They hold the view—utterly false—that, being at leisure, they may indulge their flesh. The children of the world, at best, go to church in the morning to observe a religious ritual, but in the afternoon they head out for sinful pleasures and come home late, filled with vain thoughts, sinful passions, and worldly follies, yes, maybe even drunk.

The children of the world do not heed the Word that was preached to them. When you ask them on Monday what they learned in church the day before—what they heard, what they remember—they can tell you nothing. Right away the devil has taken the Word out of their hearts, so that they should not believe it and be saved (Luke 8:12). And even when they still do remember a few things, they do not put them into practice. In the Old Testament, the Lord chose for the sacrifice animals that chewed the cud; He loves those most who chew on and ponder the Word they have heard or read, meditating on it and drawing from it new nourishment, strength, and vitality. That is how people are built up in their faith to eternal life.

PRAYER

O God, rich in grace, You have granted me time to celebrate Your praises this Sunday. But how can I ever thank You enough? How can I ever praise and glorify You adequately? You have permitted me to hear Your Holy Word today so that I should believe rightly, live piously, and finally die saved. You have revealed to me Your gracious will. You have taught me what things to shun and what to do. You have not left Yourself without witness, so that no one has an excuse. You give us Your Holy Word and Sacraments, that we should use them as Means of Grace for our salvation. Your Holy Spirit wants to employ these means to teach, enlighten, sanctify, strengthen, and confirm us in the faith.

O merciful God, keep me from being a forgetful hearer and make me a doer of Your Word. What good is all hearing to me, if I do not act accordingly? And so, O God, seal to my heart what I have heard and read. Make Your Word in me living, powerful, and energetic. O Keeper of the door, close my heart as soon as the Word of life has entered in for my edification, lest Satan rob me of it and I go home empty. Grant that I may take warning, O God, at the example of the thousands who hear Your Word but are not converted, do not become more godly or put away their wickedness, their evil doings, and their sinful habits, but instead grow more wicked and bold and never change. What good does their church attendance, their singing, their hearing, and their praying do for such people? Will not the Word condemn them the more because they have heard the Word of the Lord, have known it, and yet have not lived according to it?

O God, grant that I may become more pious and godly this week. Grant that I may daily ponder the Word that I have heard, and that I may talk about it with my family, that I may rejoice in it and always live according to it. I have heard from Your Holy Word that I am to be meek, humble, and merciful—grant me grace always to remember this! Keep me from lapsing into anger or from seeking revenge or from being proud and unmerciful. Grant me to love my enemies, deny myself, do good to the poor, and show kindness to the afflicted. I have been told that I must fight against my evil desires and thoughts, put off the old self and put on the new self, and live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present

world. Grant me the strength and ability to daily practice these virtues and become proficient in them. Although I may at the start discover in myself a great deal of weakness, grant me to follow after holiness, so that I may more and more purify myself from all contaminations of flesh and spirit.

Lord, let me do with Your Word what the children of this world do with their earthly treasures: let me lock it away safe and secure in my heart. Grant me strength to keep in my heart, as precious and cherished treasures, Your holy truths, Your precious doctrines of faith, Your powerful exhortations to holiness of life. Yes, Lord, grant that I may daily increase my hoard of them, in order that in all difficult situations, in crosses, afflictions, sickness, and, above all, when the hour of my death arrives, that I may again and again take from them suitable texts for my comfort. Yes, grant me, O my God, that I may daily increase in stature, wisdom, and piety, in the fear of God, in the knowledge of Your will, and in favor with You and with all people.

Almighty God, Your Word is cast Like seed into the ground; Now let the dew of heaven descend And righteous fruits abound. Let not the sly satanic foe This holy seed remove, But give it root in every heart To bring forth fruits of love. Let not the world's deceitful cares The rising plant destroy, But let it yield a hundredfold The fruits of peace and joy. So when the precious seed is sown, Life-giving grace bestow That all whose souls the truth receive Its saving pow'r may know. Amen. LSB 577:1-4

HYMN

*God's Word is our great heritage
And shall be ours forever;
To spread its light from age to age
Shall be our chief endeavor.
Through life it guides our way,
In death it is our stay.
Lord, grant, while worlds endure,
We keep its teachings pure
Throughout all generations. LSB 582*