

Bible Study #4

Two Roofs – One Family

Opening Prayer

Gracious God, open our eyes with your greatness, inspire our imaginations with your Spirit, move us to be the Body of Christ in ever new and faithful ways. In Jesus Christ, our Lord we pray. Amen.

Luther's Small Catechism

"Give us today our daily bread."

"What is this?"

In fact, God gives daily bread without our prayer, even to all evil people, but we ask in this prayer that God cause us to recognize what our daily bread is and to receive it with thanksgiving.

"What then does 'daily bread' mean?"

Everything included in the necessities and nourishment for our bodies, such as food, drink, clothing, shoes, house, farm, fields, livestock, money, property, an upright spouse, upright children, upright members of the household, upright and faithful rulers, good government, good weather, peace, health, decency, honor, good friends, faithful neighbors, and the like.

– Martin Luther, *The Fourth Petition of The Lord's Prayer, Small Catechism*

Begin Thinking

- *What is our culture's attitude about advancing age and disability and where do we learn it?*
- *Have you ever suffered illness or disability that led you to a sense of fear? Loss of self-worth?*

Show Video

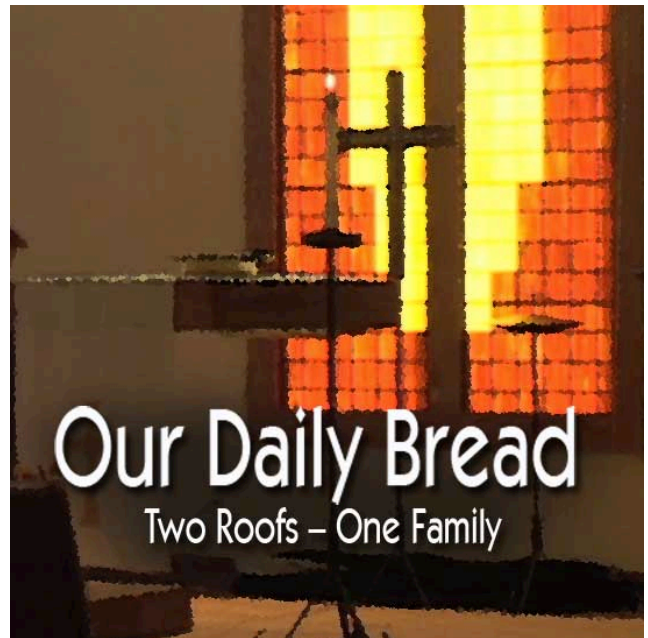
"Two Roofs – One Family"

Bible Study and Discussion

Read 1 Corinthians 12: 18 – 23a, 26

The Body of Christ often gathers in a specific place, like a church building. Because of our differences, some people may not be as easily included in that community.

- *What practical accommodations can you see Good Shepherd Lutheran Church and Shepherd of the Valley Care Center making for the elderly and disabled?*
- *One member likens the relationships to that of family. How is this nurturing dynamic dependent on our differences?*



The apostle Paul says in I Corinthians, *"The members of the body that seem to be weaker are indispensable,"* and *"If one member suffers, all suffer together with it; if one member is honored, all rejoice together with it."*

- *According to the video, how do you see this as being true?*

Oneness

Read John 10: 14 - 16

Pastor Jack Damien says, *"Without the elders, we are not Good Shepherd."*

- *How do you think it would be different without the elders?*
- *How do we act when we think in terms of "them and us" and how does Jesus foil this thinking as the Good Shepherd?*

Baptism is a sign and bestowal of God's adoption; new life and forgiveness of sin; and is the entrance rite into the Christian Church.

- *Were you surprised that elderly people would want/ need to be baptized?*
- *What does it say to one resident that 80 people were present at her baptism?*
- *How does Good Shepherd's "passing of the peace" express their oneness?*

Thirst

Read Psalm 63: 1 – 5

Pastor Damien says in the video, *“I know the young ones have a lot of vitality and life, but I have found that the elders in our church are the ones that are most alive. When they come to our worship, they come hungry. They want more of God. And they come thirsty. And that... inspires us”...*

- *What makes the elders come hungry and thirsty? What can we learn from this?*

The care center resident with M.S. is transformed from three years of anger to acceptance and joy. Her longing found substance in a worshipping community.

- *What caused this transformation?*
- *In your setting, how do you see hungry and thirsty people being filled?*

Martin Luther wisely identified the *“Daily Bread”* for which we pray to include intangibles like relationships. Studies show that aging people do better when they have social connections and religious beliefs. We can be a part of God’s provision!

- *Conversely, what is one life-giving encounter that you have had with an older or disabled person, inside or outside of church? What is uniquely nourishing for you about that relationship?*

Hope

Read Romans 8: 38 – 39

Pastor Damien says, *“We have a whole new way of thinking and looking at aging.”*

- *How might a closer experience of aging benefit you, personally? Your church? Society as a whole?*

As one member said about the residents: *“It doesn’t matter what the day brings, those people have a smile every day.”*

- *In a culture where we might expect the opposite, how would you explain the disposition of these care center residents?*

Wrapping Up

Pastor Damien says that, in 30 years of ministry, he has *“never had a happier, more loving, kinder, more giving church.”*

- *Re-visit the reasons that this is true!*

- *Since you likely don’t have a hallway to a care center in your church, you face challenges bringing people of different abilities and ages together. Given your context, how might you get people to your community space or how might you bring community to them?*

Closing Prayer

Join in prayer together:

Loving God, you provide the true bread from heaven, Jesus Christ our Lord and Shepherd, in whom we are one. Awaken in us compassion, patience and wisdom as we share our differences and learn from one another. Care especially for the elderly and disabled among us, that your strength sustain them and through them, teach us your ever-widening love for all. In Jesus name we pray, Amen.

**Bible Study written by Pastor Julie Brooks,
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To learn more about *Good Shepherd Lutheran Church* please contact Pastor Jack Damien at **gslcofcasper@qwestoffice.net**

To learn more about the ministry of *Shepherd of the Valley Care Center* visit **www.svccwyo.org**

Learn more about how you can share *“daily bread”* by contacting your local care facility.