



ABOUT THE PROPERs

An Explanation of the Variable Parts of the Divine Service



Sixth Sunday after Epiphany

February 12, 2023



The Savior's Sermon: The Christian's holy life in Christ

Jesus came to free us *from* sin. He did not come to free us *to* sin. The commands in the lessons today remind us just how holy our God is, and their dire warnings remind us just how holy he wants us to be. After examining our lives, we can only despair over our lack of holiness. So, the Gospel Acclamation reminds us to flee to Christ who loves us despite our failures and who sacrificed himself for unholy people. Secure in his grace and empowered by the Holy Spirit, each day we strive to live the holy lives to which we have been called.

The Propers

The Propers are those portions of the service that change (i.e. are "proper" to) each Sunday or season of the church year. The Propers differ from the Ordinary (from the Latin ordo, which means "regular order") portions of the liturgy, which do not change (e.g. the Lord's Prayer). The Propers offer the variety to the worship service and emphasize particular worship themes throughout the liturgical calendar.

First Lesson¹

2 Samuel 11:1-17,26,27

Our Savior's call to holy living leads us to have a healthy fear of sin. What a warning God provides us in David! When the king was at the height of his power and full of God's blessing, his great fall began. Why? Because he toyed with sin. He let lust fester and morph into adultery. He spoke lies until deception ruled his heart. He let selfishness metastasize into a godless disregard for any life but his own. He thought he could toy with sin, but in the end it was sin and Satan that toyed with him. Jesus' call to live a holy life is like a mother warning her child to beware a hot stove. It is a call motivated by love and meant for our safety.

Second Lesson¹

1 Thessalonians 4:1-12

Paul's encouragement to live a holy life serves as a great model for preaching sanctification to a congregation. He does not speak to them as heathens, but as people who are in fact living in order to please God. Paul's words, then, instruct and admonish them to do this more and more. The authority behind his preaching of sanctification did not come from Paul's life but from the authority of Christ himself. This is what Christ wants! The Thessalonians faced the same problem we do: we know what God wants; we understand it; we just don't do it consistently. Paul applies the warning of God's Law and the calling of God's Gospel. Paul repeatedly emphasizes this: You know it, so now we urge you to do it more and more.

Gospel of the Day¹

Matthew 5:21-27

Jesus commands us to be holy in our relationships with our brothers, our adversaries, our bodies, our spouse, and our God. Hearing his instructions for the Christian life, we see that God is far holier than we can imagine! How high Jesus sets the bar here: not just acts, but thoughts—not just words, but attitudes, are judged by our God! In the place of a pharisaical form of godliness, Jesus calls for true spiritual righteousness. God's demands of holiness only highlight the depravity of our sinful nature. Let the preacher bring God's Law in all its severity and preach his hearers down to hell, until the flesh despairs of itself and can only cry, "Lord, have mercy on me, a sinner!" Then let the preacher boldly proclaim that the Savior who preaches the holy life is the Savior who lived the holy life as our Substitute. Let him proclaim forgiveness that is greater than our depravity and mercy that far outweighs our wickedness.

Psalm of the Day

Psalm 119 G

“Your Word Is a Lamp to My Feet.” The children of God “seek him with all their heart” by hearing and obeying his Word.

Gospel Acclamation

Ephesians 5:2

“Christ loved us and gave himself up for us as a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God.”

Prayer of the Day

Lord God, in mercy receive the prayers of your people. Grant them the wisdom to know the things that please you and the grace and power always to accomplish them; through your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

Hymn of the Day

695 “Take My Life and Let It Be” (Frances R. Havergal, 1836-1879)

Church Year Season ¹

Epiphany

The twelve days of Christmas culminate at the celebration of the Epiphany of our Lord on January 6th. The season of Epiphany highlights the appearance of the Son of God as the Savior of the whole world—both Jew and Gentile. God revealed the mystery of his person and his mission through the words and works of the Father, through the anointing and empowering of the Spirit, and through the preaching and miracles of Christ. This season of the Savior’s appearance is bracketed by two white Sundays: The Baptism of Our Lord and Transfiguration of Our Lord. Since he had come hidden in flesh, recognizing Jesus of Nazareth as the Son of God required revelation. From John’s Baptism to the Father’s booming voice, God revealed the truth about Jesus to the world: this son of Mary is the Son of God, come as the Christ. The Father’s testimony about Jesus bookends the season. From the glory of his baptism at the beginning of his ministry to the glory of his transfiguration at its culmination, the voice of the Father declares what flesh had hidden from the world: This is my Son!

Colors & Symbolism

Season of Epiphany: Green

Green is the color of vegetation; therefore it symbolizes life. It represents the new life that Christ gives us in baptism, as well as the spiritual growth we experience during the season as we study the Lord’s ministry.

Nain Paraments

Epiphany

Superfrontal: The Greek symbol at the center of the superfrontal is the *Chi-Rho*. Chi (X) and Rho (P) are the first two letters in the Greek word for Christ (Χριστός). This ancient symbol represents Jesus and his office as the Messiah, the anointed King of kings and Savior of the world (Matthew 16:16)..... Next to the *Chi-Rho* are the letters *Alpha* (A) and *Omega* (Ω), the first and last letters of the Greek alphabet. These two letters symbolize Jesus Christ, our eternal Lord and Savior, who is the first and the last, the beginning and the end (Revelation 22:13)..... The vines and vegetation branching out from the *Chi-Rho* represent the spiritual life that Jesus, the vine brings to God’s children, the branches (John 15:5)..... The blue wave at the bottom of the symbol represents both Holy Baptism (1 Peter 3:21) and the living water of the Word of Christ (John 7:37-38). The blue wave is intertwined with a vine of thorns, reminding us of Christ’s sacrifice on the cross to pay the price for our sins (John 19:2;30) and that believers are baptized into Christ’s death and resurrection for their forgiveness and eternal salvation (Romans 6:3-4).

Lectern antependium: The circle surrounding the center of the Latin cross (†) symbolizes the eternal nature of Christ and the gift of eternal life to all who believe in him. The Greek letters ΙΧΘΥΣ (pronounced: *Ichthus*) form both the word for fish and an acronym for the phrase, “Jesus Christ, Son of God, Savior.” A simple drawing of a fish was used in the ancient Church in days of persecution. It symbolized Jesus Christ and also served as a code by which Christians identified themselves to one another as Christ’s followers. It also recalls Holy Baptism and is thus a symbol of Christian regeneration (John 3:5).

Pulpit antependium: The Anchor Cross symbolizes the sure and steadfast hope Christians have in Jesus (Hebrews 6:19). The two fish remind us that Christians are followers of Jesus (see the description above), those who are brought into the ship of God’s church through the efforts of those who proclaim Gospel (cf. “fishers of men” in Matthew 4:19). During Epiphany the Church celebrates the many ways that Christ made himself known as true God to the world. One of these ways was his miracles. The two fish thus also remind us of Jesus miraculously feeding the 5,000 with five loaves of bread and two small fish (Matthew 14:13-21).

¹ Courtesy of “Planning Christian Worship: Year A”. Jonathan E. Schroeder, Author.

² Courtesy of “Planning Christian Worship: Year B”. Daniel M. Deutschlander, Author.

³ Courtesy of “Planning Christian Worship: Year C”. Joel J. Gawrisch, Author.

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