



# ABOUT THE PROPERS

*An Explanation of the Variable Parts of the Divine Service*



## Eleventh Sunday after Pentecost

Proper 14

August 13, 2023



### The Christian Answers Doubt with Faith

Wherever faith clings to the promises of God, doubt is always lingering in the back of our mind, constantly asking the serpent's garden question, "Did God really say?" How striking to think that one must have faith in God before it is even possible to doubt him! It is not uncommon that, in times of adversity, doubt rears its ugly head—doubts about God's care, God's promises, God's providence. In those times, the true answer to doubt is not found in some great miracle that removes adversity, but in the still small voice of our Savior God whispering to us in his Word. Through that Word Christ reaches out to us with nail-scarred hands, proof of his great love. Jesus gently says, "Why did you doubt?" Our faith is restored. The Christian answers doubt with faith because Jesus makes it so.

### 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 Reading**<sup>1</sup>                      1 Kings 19:9-18

God answered his prophet not with great acts of power, but rather with quiet words of promise. God displayed all of his power, so that his display of grace might be all the more astounding. He would not come in judgment, but in grace for his elect. The still small voice of his message would accomplish all that he desired. It would tear down kingdoms and establish dynasties. It would bring judgment on his enemies and reserve a people for himself. Elijah heard the Word of God and had to wonder, "Why did I doubt?"

#### **Second Reading**<sup>1</sup>                      Romans 8:28-39

Though we suffer much in this world, the Christian trusts that nothing can separate him from the love of God. In his providence, God provides for us; in his love, God protects us. Though we are considered sheep for the slaughter by the world, we know that in the hand of our God we are more than conquerors, inseparable from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord. No earthly powers, no spiritual forces, nothing in our past or in our future has the power to remove us from the care of our God.

#### **Gospel**<sup>1</sup>                                      Matthew 14:22-33

Doubt and faith rose and fell like the waves of the sea that dark night. Then Jesus came—and note the way he came! He walked on the water. The very thing they had been fighting, the water that threatened to take their life, Jesus walked on it like it was dry ground. What a Savior we have that walks on the waters of all our greatest fears! See the faith in the disciples grow! See Peter show it in his own miraculous walk. But, all too often, doubt is the unfortunate companion of faith. Though Jesus was standing on the water, Peter feared it. What pulls our eyes of faith away from Jesus? What are the waves and wind in our lives that make us doubt him? To Peter, Jesus asked, "Why did you doubt?" He gave no answer. What could he say? With Jesus there is never any need to doubt. How sad that we so often do! Rather, let us focus on the Savior and watch our faith swell as the disciples' did when their doubts vanished, and they gave the greatest evidence of faith: they worshipped that man from Nazareth for what he truly was, the Son of God.

**Psalm of the Day**                      Psalm 73 A

“God Is the Strength of My Heart.” God is our stronghold and sure defense who will take us to eternal life when our life on this earth comes to an end.

**Gospel Acclamation**                      Hebrews 11:1

“Now faith is confidence in what we hope for and assurance about what we do not see.” Hebrews 11 lists more than a dozen Old Testament examples of those who held to the one, true faith. The common thread: these people couldn’t see the fulfillment of the promises, like we can, but they still took God at his word in the certainty of saving faith.

**Prayer of the Day**

Almighty and most merciful God, preserve us from all harm and danger that we, being ready in both body and soul, may cheerfully accomplish what you want done; 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**                      847 “Be Still, My Soul” (Catharina A. von Schlegel, 1697-1752)

**Church Year Season**<sup>3</sup>                      Sundays after Pentecost

After reliving the great events of the life of Christ, the worshipping Church spends half a year focusing on the teachings of Christ. The Church wears green during the season of Pentecost as the Spirit uses those teachings of Jesus to grow the faith of believers. The appointed lessons cover a great body of doctrine for faith and life.

**Colors & Symbolism**                      Sundays after Pentecost: Green

Green is the color of life, refreshment, growth, and regeneration. Whereas the first half of the Church Year (the “Festival Half” or the “Half Year of Our Lord”) focused on the life of Christ during his earthly ministry, the emphasis for the second half (the “Non-Festival half” or the “Half Year of the Church”) shifts to the result of Christ’s work through the Word: the work of defining and creating faith, and inspiring its fruits. The theme of the Christian’s growth in faith (like healthy green plants) fills the season.

**Minor Festivals**                      St. Mary, Mother of Our Lord (August 15)

**Nain Paraments**                      Sundays after Pentecost

**Superfrontal:** When Isaiah was called to be a prophet of the LORD, two seraphs (a class of angels) appeared and called out to one another, “Holy, Holy, Holy” (Isaiah 6:3). The threefold repetition of the divine adjective emphasizes the infinite holiness of the Triune God – Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Some congregations count the Sundays in this season of the Church Year as the Sundays after the festival of the Holy Trinity, calling it the “Trinity season,” or the “Sundays after Trinity.” That is why most paraments for this season feature symbols of the Holy Trinity.

**Lectern antependium:** The equilateral triangle is one of the oldest emblems of the Holy Trinity. The three equal sides and angles represent the equality, unity, and co-eternal nature of the three persons of the Trinity. Though they are three distinct persons, they are of one essence as one God (Deuteronomy 6:4). The three interwoven circles represent the three members of the Trinity and emphasize their unity and eternal nature; Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are without beginning or end.

**Pulpit antependium:** At each point of the triangle (the significance of the triangle is explained above) is a nimbus, Latin for *cloud*. The nimbus appears as a circle, or a halo. In Christian artwork, nimbi surround the head of the Father (when he is depicted as a human), Jesus Christ, or the Holy Spirit (when he is depicted as a dove) to signify their glory and holiness. In artistic depictions of believers (saints), nimbi are placed around their heads to show that they have been made holy by God’s grace in Christ and through faith. The three fish in between the nimbi and that meet in the middle of the triangle signify Christians who are united to the Triune God by faith. Fish have come to represent the followers of Jesus because believers have been brought into the ship of God’s church through the efforts of those who proclaim Gospel (cf. “fishers of men” in Matthew 4:19).

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

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

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

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