



ABOUT THE PROPER

An Explanation of the Variable Parts of the Divine Service



Fifteenth Sunday after Pentecost

September 1, 2024



The Need for Followership

The Only Food We Really Need

Likewise, following Christ is not simply a matter of outward observance of laws. It is a matter of the heart. The law was given so we could see God's heart and demonstrate how his heart has affected our own. The followership Christ seeks flows from hearts that have been radically transformed by God's law and gospel. This week we see that followers of Christ obey his law from the heart.

First Reading² Deuteronomy 4:1-2, 6-8

God is serious about all of his Word, both the law and the gospel. As the verses left out of the reading (3-5) make clear, those who only take God's gifts seriously soon lose those gifts as a consequence of despising his commands. His commands are good because he who gave them is good. And because he is good, his abundant blessing through a peaceful and orderly life rests on those who follow his Word. That blessing brings forth a still greater blessing and honor: those who do not know his Word may be moved to hear it by the evidence of God's blessings on the godly lives of Christians.

Second Reading Romans 9:30 – 10:4

Followers of Christ obey the law, not to attempt to become righteous, but to show heartfelt love to the God who declares us righteous through faith in Jesus.

Gospel² Mark 7:1-8, 14-15, 21-23

Adding to God's Word is just as bad as subtracting from it. In both cases man sets aside what God has said in favor of what he wants in order to justify himself apart from God's Word and Christ's work. Precisely because the Word of both the law and the gospel is addressed to the heart, it allows for no additions, no subtractions. For to the extent that the heart is cleansed by the gospel, to that extent what flows from it will be clean and in accord with the law. An unclean heart can produce only unclean works, no matter how clean those works may appear on the outside. Those who take the law seriously need first and always the cleansing power of the gospel, lest their outward works be only outward and ultimately a mask for hypocrisy. (Pietism and self-righteousness are often the last refuge of a guilty conscience!) On the other hand, those who refuse to take God's law seriously prove thereby that their hearts are still unclean and separated from God. The sin that begins in the heart will not agree to stay there; it will look for ways to get out and express itself. The Pharisees should have recognized that happening in their own hearts: their hearts harbored hatred for Jesus which yearned for expression in acts that ended in murder during Holy Week.

Psalm of the Day⁴ Psalm 119 E "Teach Me, O LORD"

The Church sings Psalm 119 in services that encourage us to take the Word of God seriously. Martin Luther said, "Psalm 119 is a thorough meditation on the Word of God. It is useful for prayer and for disproving the claims of the devil and false teachers. It contains all kinds of prayer, comfort, instruction, and thanksgiving, pleasing God and grieving the devil."

Gospel Acclamation Jeremiah 15:16

“When your words came, I ate them; they were my joy and my heart’s delight.” The prophet Jeremiah very simply expresses the effect of God’s gracious Word on the heart. It creates faith, which in turn produces joy and delight.

Prayer of the Day

Almighty and everlasting God, give us an increase of faith, hope, and love; and that we may obtain what you promise, make us love what you command; 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 740 “O God, My Faithful God” (Johann Heermann, 1585-1647)

Church Year Season¹ Season 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 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.

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).

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.

⁴ From *Christian Worship: Psalter* © 2021 Northwestern Publishing House. Reprinted by permission.

· Clipart courtesy of “Ecclesiastical Art by Ed Riojas”