



# ABOUT THE PROPERS

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



## Ninth Sunday after Pentecost

Proper 12

July 30, 2023



### The Christian Seeks Spiritual Wealth

Our lessons today show people who have come into great wealth, but yet this earthly wealth only serves to illustrate where true treasure lies. Today we see that true, spiritual wealth can only be found in God and his eternal blessings for us in Christ.

### 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 3:5-12

What would you have asked for? If anything in the world could be yours, what would be your request? God only gave one man the choice between unlimited riches and spiritual wealth. Can you imagine facing his dilemma? What should I pick, temporal blessings or eternal ones? What should I value, the things of this world or the things of God? How well Solomon expressed the words of our Prayer for today, to ask according to God’s will. We marvel at his faith in choosing great wisdom over great riches—especially since we so often fail in the pitifully small choices we make! It’s not for all the riches in the world that we turn down spiritual wealth, but for paltry over-time hours, or a little extra in the check book that we shaved off our offering. For such small things we are willing to trade away opportunities for true spiritual wealth. Look at Solomon and see an example of what God means by spiritual wealth. He doesn’t mean we need to live as mendicant monks; he doesn’t ask us to forgo all earthly treasure. He just doesn’t want us to value them more than the pearl of great price. After choosing spiritual treasure, God blessed Solomon in unbelievable ways. Seek first his kingdom and his righteousness and all these things will be given you as well.

#### Second Reading <sup>1</sup>

1 Timothy 6:17-21

Could Paul’s words be more timely or appropriate for this generation? He instructs preachers everywhere to warn the rich about the two pet sins of the wealthy: arrogance and false hope. Mankind so easily falls in the error of thinking that earthly treasures can provide security or a sense of worth. In our affluent society both of those sins run rampant in many a Christian heart. God commands us not to trust in earthly treasure because he wants us to have a firm foundation on which to stand, a certainty on which to place our hope. That can only be found in spiritual wealth. God richly provides for us, and then we give thanks by being rich in good deeds. Spiritual wealth is certain and secure, for it is treasure laid up in heaven. How can we possibly carry out this command? Teach us to ask according to your will that we may never fail to obtain the blessings you have promised.

#### Gospel <sup>1</sup>

Matthew 13:44-52

Jesus’ parables teach us to seek spiritual wealth. Both of the men in the parables found great treasure. For one it was a complete surprise, as unexpected as it was valuable. For the other it came from an expert search by a discerning man. Before they found these new

treasures, both men no doubt valued what they previously owned. But once they saw this new treasure, see how little they valued all else they had! The spiritual wealth of Christ and his Gospel puts everything else into perspective; in fact it marginalizes all else. The importance of this truth comes to light in the parable of the net. All people, rich and poor, will be caught up. Only those who found true spiritual wealth are spared the furnace. Jesus concludes with an encouragement for the preacher of the Gospel: you have found true wealth in Christ; you have been given a storeroom full of treasures new and old. Bring them out to God's people with joy and delight.

**Psalm of the Day**                      Psalm 63 C

“Lord, You Are My Hope and Stay.”

**Gospel Acclamation**                      Colossians 3:1,2

“Since, then, you have been raised with Christ, set your minds on things above, not on earthly things.”

**Prayer of the Day**

O God, you reveal your mighty power chiefly in showing mercy and kindness. Grant us the full measure of your grace that we may obtain your promises and become partakers of your heavenly glory; 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**                      823 “Jesus, Priceless Treasure” (Johann Franck, 1618-77)

**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.

**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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