



ABOUT THE PROPERs

An Explanation of the Variable Parts of the Divine Service



Seventh Sunday after Pentecost

Proper 10

July 16, 2023



The Christian Is Planted by the Word

The Christian can plant the seed of the gospel into the soil of another's heart. What happens after that is completely beyond our control. Yet God promises us that his Word always accomplishes his good purposes. God's Word is powerful, all on its own, without our help.

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

Isaiah 55:6-11

Though many seeds fall among soil that does not produce fruit, Isaiah gives us God's promise that his Word will never return to him fruitless. The Word is like the rain and snow sent from God in heaven that fall to bring blessing upon the earth and make it fruitful. Just as precipitation makes the earth bud and flourish, so God's Word will always do its work of planting faith in the heart of man and making it fruitful. While this passage is often used to illustrate that God's Word always works, either to convert or to harden, the flavor of this passage and its context is decidedly positive. Faithful preachers are the mouth of God (Jeremiah 15:19) from which the Word goes forth to do its work of planting faith and making it bear much fruit in the heart of man.

Second Lesson

1 Corinthians 3:5-11

We sow the seed of God's Word, but only God can make that seed grow.

Gospel of the Day¹

Matthew 13:1-9, 18-23

What a description of Jesus' ministry! What a description of ours! The Sower scatters the seed of the Gospel to all with no regard for where it might land. Yet most of his seed bears no fruit. This parable brings warning and such comfort. Christ warns us that the seed of the Word faces great opposition from sin, Satan, and the world. Newborn faith can be choked or scorched. The Gospel promise can be snatched from apathetic or misunderstanding soil. Though we sow the seed faithfully and generously, Jesus warns us that most of it will never bear fruit that lasts. Yet for every faithful Gospel preacher, Christ comforts us by showing that the preacher's job is to sow the seed and leave the growing up to God. He comforts us by pointing to what his Word does in the good soil: it plants great faith that does great things. In the man who hears and understands it, the simple sowing of the Word will produce a crop—a hundred, sixty, or thirty-fold.

Psalm of the Day

Psalm 65 A

"The Seed That Falls." Even though God will not be with us in forms we can see and hear, he continues to watch over us and bless us abundantly. He provides for our daily needs. The earth is full of his goodness.

Gospel Acclamation Isaiah 55:11

“My word will not return to me empty, but will accomplish what I desire and achieve the purpose for which I sent it.” God is present and active in his living Word. He will use it to accomplish his will, including his desire to bring the elect to saving faith. There is great comfort in knowing that while we proclaim God’s powerful message, he is always using the Word to achieve his divine purposes.

Prayer of the Day

Blessed Lord, since you have caused all Holy Scriptures to be written for our learning, grant that we may so hear them, read, mark, learn, and inwardly digest them that we may embrace and ever hold fast the blessed hope of everlasting life; 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 644 “Almighty God, Your Word Is Cast” (John Cawood, 1775-1852)

Minor Festivals St. Mary Magdalene (July 22)

Church Year Season³ 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).

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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