



ABOUT THE PROPERs

An Explanation of the Variable Parts of the Divine Service



Thirteenth Sunday after Pentecost

Proper 18

September 7, 2025



“Wounds That Heal”

Count the Cost

This week Jesus’ sharp words expose our desire to pursue comfort and avoid pain at all costs. Jesus explains that following him will be difficult. Jesus’ disciples will be called to let go of things they love and embrace things they naturally loathe. Jesus promises that discipleship comes with crosses—a unique type of pain. So, Jesus tells us that we must count the cost of following him. However, our calculations must not only consider what we might give up for Jesus. They also entail calculating what we get through him! When we perceive the infinite blessings we find in Christ, the decisions we just make, while difficult, will be clear. Whatever is lost as we follow Jesus pales in comparison to what we gain.

First Reading³

Deuteronomy 30:15-20

Moses made it clear that the choice between God and sin was also the choice between life and death. He reminded God’s people that Israel had received a two-sided covenant from God: If you are my people, I will be your God. If you are not my people, you will be destroyed. The choice was a no-brainer! Love the LORD your God and walk in his ways. If serving God was a no-brainer for Israel, how much more for us, who have received the one-sided covenant of God’s grace? We know the LORD is our life, and so we listen to his voice and hold fast to him.

Second Reading³

Philemon, 1,7-21

Philemon had every societal right to demand the return of his slave, Onesimus. Yet Paul, who had already lost everything for the sake of Christ, asks Philemon to live his faith and receive Onesimus in a different way. At great personal sacrifice and financial loss to Philemon, Onesimus was to be received as a brother in Christ. Only a man who feared the Lord could see the wisdom in bearing this cost of discipleship. Yet Paul was confident not only of Philemon’s obedience, but of his even greater acts of devotion.

Gospel³

Luke 14:25-35

Jesus warns all those who would come after him to count the cost of discipleship. Jesus’ statement may seem hyperbolic to those who have been blessed with doctrinal unity within the family. But the weight of each one’s cross is different. Those whose families have been ripped apart by religious differences know how heavy our Savior’s cross can be. Know this; know well; know now what it takes to follow our Savior. The life of faith is certainly not for the faint of heart. Remember, however, whom we follow. We follow a Savior who carried the cross for us and for our salvation. Remembering his love leads us to follow him at any cost.

Psalm of the Day⁴

Psalm 1 A

“Blessed Are They”

The Church sings Psalm 1 in services that emphasize the benefits of meditation on the law of the Lord. The Word of God causes us to flourish and bear good fruit, especially love for God that flows into love for human beings. The church father Jerome called this psalm “the main entrance to the mansion of the Psalter.” Martin Luther said, “The first psalm is a comfort psalm. It admonishes us to hear and learn God’s Word gladly for our comfort. Psalm 1 matches the Second and Third Petitions of the Lord’s Prayer, for there we pray for God’s kingdom and God’s will, which are both conveyed by the Word. The foundation and chief idea of this first psalm is the Third Commandment, for it praises instruction in God’s Word, that we should gladly hear, learn, and read it.”

Gospel Acclamation

John 6:68

“Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life.” After Jesus once again clearly identified himself as the Son of Man who must sacrifice himself for the sins of the world, many of his disciples deserted him. Jesus then asked the Twelve if they too wanted to leave. Simon Peter responded with the proper understanding that Christ’s Word is spirit and life, and those who believe it have eternal salvation.

Prayer of the Day

O merciful Lord, you did not spare your only Son but delivered him up for us all. Grant us courage and strength to take up the cross and follow him, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

Hymn of the Day

694 “Jesus, I My Cross Have Taken” (Henry F. Lyte, 1793-1847)

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.

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