



ABOUT THE PROPERs

An Explanation of the Variable Parts of the Divine Service



Thirteenth Sunday after Pentecost

Proper 16

August 23, 2026



Unexpected Truths
The Son of Man Is God

Some in Jesus' day thought he was John the Baptist or the prophet Elijah come back from the dead. Today plenty of people believe Jesus existed. They think he was a wise teacher or a role model for love. Both answers are expected. However, both miss the main point. Jesus is a real human being, the Son of Man. The unexpected truth is that he is also the Son of the living God, our Lord and Savior. This unexpected truth is the core of saving faith, and the central message God has called our Church to proclaim.

Prayer of the Day

Almighty God, whom to know is everlasting life, grant us to know your Son, Jesus, to be the way, the truth, and the life that we may boldly confess him to be the Christ and steadfastly walk in the way that leads to life eternal; through your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

First Lesson ¹

Exodus 34:5-9

Moses appears before the Lord to plead for mercy on behalf of the rebellious and idolatrous Israelites. Though the Lord warns of judgment against the guilty, he proclaims the meaning of his name to be the God of free and faithful grace. The chosen nation of Israel had already wandered from the Lord, but he comes with forgiveness to those who repent. These words appear again and again in the inspired pages of scripture as the LORD again and again, fulfilling the meaning of his own name and restoring the spirit of his children. The LORD is the Savior of sinners.

Second Reading ¹

Romans 10:5-13

Christ obeyed his Father in all things. Even in the midst of temptation, he obeyed fully where we could not. When he won the battle over sin for us, there was nothing left for us to do. Christ has fully completed all the requirements of God's Law in our place. Paul tells us in verse 4 that Christ is the fulfillment of the Law for the righteousness of everyone who believes. For us, the obedience of the Law is fulfilled and all that is left is the obedience of Faith: that if you confess with your mouth, "Jesus is Lord" and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved.

Gospel ¹

Matthew 16:13-20

Who do people say the Son of Man is? That question is as applicable today as it was in Matthew's Gospel. The question remains, "Who is Jesus?" As the disciples rattled off the popular misconceptions, one is struck by how illustrious that list actually was. There were no slouches in that group. But they didn't even begin to compare with the truth. Many people today give similar answers: they call Jesus a teacher, a philosopher, the founder of a religion, an agent of change. Their answers miss the mark as widely as the answers of the people in the Gospel. Only disciples of Jesus, through the work of the Spirit of God, can confess him as he truly is. Could Peter's answer be any better? You are the Anointed One, the one set apart by God and prophesied by Scripture, the Promised Seed who would save us from sin. But even more than that, Peter showed that the disciples confessed him to be the Son of the living God. You, Jesus of Nazareth, are the Son of the God who is life and who gives life. This living God is the hope of every sinful man ever since Adam in the face of death named his wife "Life," because through her womb would come the Seed who is the Way, the Truth, and the Life. Now here, in the flesh, stood the Son of the living God whose mission was to restore life to this world of death. This truth is the rock on which the Church stands. Because it stands on the rock and not on the pebbles of men who serve it, the Church will stand forever: its message is changeless; the ramifications of its work are eternal.

Psalm of the Day ⁴

Psalm 138 B

“And They Shall Sing”

The Church sings Psalm 138 in services celebrating public confession that God is a gracious Savior. It leads off the final section of psalms written by David. Martin Luther said, “Psalm 138 is a psalm of thanksgiving for all sorts of help in the face of enemies. The psalmist prays for Christ’s kingdom to come, especially that kings would receive his Word and teaching, give thanks for it, and worship him. The psalm closes with a prayer that God would bring his kingdom to fulfillment in eternity.”

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.

Hymn of the Day

510 “In Christ Alone” (Keith Getty, b. 1974; Stuart Townend, b. 1963)

Church Year Season ¹

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.

Minor Festivals

St. Bartholomew, Apostle (August 24)

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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