



ABOUT THE PROPERS

An Explanation of the Variable Parts of the Divine Service



Second Sunday after the Epiphany

January 17, 2021



The Lord God reveals himself to you by the preaching of the Word

The Lord Jesus called Philip and Nathanael to “come and see” that he is “the Son of God” and “the King of Israel”; and they shall see even “greater things than these.” Jesus and his great glory are revealed through the call of the gospel, God’s word of peace and forgiveness. It is in the Word that we hear the call of God that has in it the secret power of God to give what he commands. He commands: Believe! and the Word creates faith. He says, Follow me! and the Word creates the desire and the ability to follow him. That he should consider it glorious to call sinners, that he should attach such power to his Word that we answer the call – is that not an amazing thing?

The Propers

The Propers are those portions of the service that change (or, 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 Lesson ¹

1 Samuel 3:1-10

The call of God to Samuel initially required no work on Samuel’s part. But like the call in the gospel lesson it implies a following that is not going to be easy. If Nathanael and the other disciples will follow Jesus who seems like nothing to reason and to the eyes, they will all need to listen carefully to that Word. Otherwise the difficulties to come will overcome them. Thus as Mary gave us a model of submission in Advent, so Samuel does in Epiphany: Speak, for your servant is listening! That remains the first and most important part of following. How many when confronted by difficulty in the Word or in life would rather say, Listen Lord, for your servant is speaking? But this is one of the amazing things in Jesus’ call to us: It creates a willingness to say: I don’t know what is coming and what you will require of me; but whatever it is, I want to listen to you and to follow you!

Second Lesson ¹

1 Corinthians 6:12-20

The call is to be God’s temple and dwelling place on earth. Jesus was God’s temple and dwelling place on earth during his earthly ministry. And now, because he dwells in us by faith, through his presence in the Word and sacraments, that’s what we have become. Such an intimacy is intimidating and a horror to the flesh. But it is an intimacy that is real. An evidence of its reality is our struggle to be the temples that we are by maintaining sexual purity. How difficult that call is in our day! How desperately we need his presence and the reminder of his presence in us, in his temples, to heed that call! Only the recalling of the price can make it so.

Gospel of the Day ¹

John 1:43-51

There is always a miraculous element in the call of Jesus. For anyone looking at him on the basis of appearance or reason will say what Nathanael said and turn away. In Nathanael’s case Jesus read from a distance the thoughts of Nathanael and then promised even more wondrous things; he promised that Nathanael with the eyes of faith would see heaven opened and Jesus as the ladder to heaven in fulfillment of Jacob’s dream in Genesis 28. But it is all invisible to reason and to the naked eye. Nathanael was astonished by what he saw in Jesus’ demonstration of omniscience, but he believed on the basis of a promise whose fulfillment was shrouded in the future and would never be visible to the human eye. Anyone who thinks that God is far and distant should consider that if he believes the gospel, it is because God is near at hand. He worked and still sustains that faith each moment by his glorious Word.

Psalm of the Day

Psalm 67

“God will bless us, and the ends of the earth will fear him.” Salvation, which comes through our Savior's resurrection, is meant for all people and will fill all with joy.

Verse of the Day

Isaiah 49:3

“He said to me, ‘You are my servant in whom I will display my splendor.’” God’s Servant, the Messiah, is different than his disobedient servant, Israel. Through his sinlessness, Jesus redeems God’s disobedient servant, Israel from their sin, and thus glorifies God the Father. To this Suffering Servant, God says, “You are my Son.”

Prayer of the Day

Almighty God, you gave your one and only Son to be the light of the world. Grant that your people, illumined by your Word and sacraments, may shine with the radiance of Christ’s glory, that he may be known, worshiped, and believed to the ends of the earth; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who with you and the Holy Spirit lives and reigns, one God, now and forever.

Hymn of the Day

86 “The Only Son from Heaven” (Elizabeth Cruciger, 1500-35 v1-3; LBW, 1978 v4)

When the time had come, God sent his Son from heaven in human form. The virgin born Christ is our Morning Star, the anointed King, who has come to conquer death, bring life, and open heaven for sinners. Thus we adore our holy, blessed Trinity.

Church Year Season ¹

Epiphany

The readings during the Epiphany season carry forward the emphasis in the readings for Christmas Eve and Christmas Day, the theme of Jesus revealing himself to us as God and Savior. At the same time the readings present us with a real conundrum. The conundrum is that he hides the manifestations of his deity, so that his glory remains a secret and a mystery, even while he is revealing it. All the riddles are present in the readings for the Feast of the Epiphany. The theme present in all of the Epiphany readings is: He shows his hidden glory to those he calls. You may notice that in many of the Epiphany season readings appropriation is much easier than application. There is a good reason for that: In Christmas and Epiphany our attention is on getting to know Jesus, who he is and how he works; thus there is not so much emphasis on our response beyond the response of faith, which itself is always seen as his work and not ours.

Colors & Symbolism

The Season of Epiphany: Green

Green is the color of vegetation; therefore it symbolizes life. It represents the new life that Christ gives us in baptism, as well as the spiritual growth we experience during the season as we study the Lord’s ministry.

Nain Paraments

Epiphany

Superfrontal: The Greek symbol at the center of the superfrontal is the *Chi-Rho*. Chi (X) and Rho (P) are the first two letters in the Greek word for Christ (ΧΡΙΣΤΟΣ). This ancient symbol represents Jesus and his office as the Messiah, the anointed King of kings and Savior of the world (Matthew 16:16)..... Next to the *Chi-Rho* are the letters *Alpha* (A) and *Omega* (Ω), the first and last letters of the Greek alphabet. These two letters symbolize Jesus Christ, our eternal Lord and Savior, who is the first and the last, the beginning and the end (Revelation 22:13)..... The vines and vegetation branching out from the *Chi-Rho* represent the spiritual life that Jesus, the vine brings to God’s children, the branches (John 15:5)..... The blue wave at the bottom of the symbol represents both Holy Baptism (1 Peter 3:21) and the living water of the Word of Christ (John 7:37-38). The blue wave is intertwined with a vine of thorns, reminded us of Christ’s sacrifice on the cross to pay the price for our sins (John 19:2;30) and that believers are baptized into Christ’s death and resurrection for their forgiveness and eternal salvation (Romans 6:3-4).

Lectern antependium: The circle surrounding the center of the Latin cross (†) symbolizes the eternal nature of Christ and the gift of eternal life to all who believe in him. The Greek letters ΙΧΘΥC (pronounced: *Ichthus*) form both the word for fish and an acronym for the phrase, “Jesus Christ, Son of God, Savior.” A simple drawing of a fish was used in the ancient Church in days of persecution. It symbolized Jesus Christ and also served as a code by which Christians identified themselves to one another as Christ’s followers. It also recalls Holy Baptism and is thus a symbol of Christian regeneration (John 3:5).

Pulpit antependium: The Anchor Cross symbolizes the sure and steadfast hope Christians have in Jesus (Hebrews 6:19). The two fish remind us that Christians are followers of Jesus (see the description above), those who are brought into the ship of God’s church through the efforts of those who proclaim Gospel (cf. “fishers of men” in Matthew 4:19). During Epiphany the Church celebrates the many ways that Christ made himself known as true God to the world. One of these ways was his miracles. The two fish thus also remind us of Jesus miraculously feeding the 5,000 with five loaves of bread and two small fish (Matthew 14:13-21).

¹ Courtesy of “Planning Christian Worship: Year B”. Daniel M. Deutschlander, Author.
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