



ABOUT THE PROPERS

An Explanation of the Variable Parts of the Divine Service



Seventh Sunday after Pentecost

July 11, 2021



Christ's Power is Made Perfect in Weakness

The prophet Ezekiel was raised up by the Spirit of the Lord and sent to speak an unpopular Word to the rebellious house of Israel. As a prophet, he was not to speak his own word, but to preach God's Law and the Gospel. So, too, in the footsteps of the prophets before him, the Lord Jesus went about among the villages teaching. In his hometown, as elsewhere, many who heard him were astonished, marveling at his wisdom and at the mighty works done by his hands, and yet, they took offense at him. The offense culminated at his cross. It is by that authority of his cross that those he sends preach repentance, cast out many demons and heal the sick. Thus, the apostle Paul boasts in the cross of Christ and in his own weaknesses, knowing that God's grace is sufficient and that the power of Christ is made perfect in weakness.

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

Ezekiel 2:1-5

Ezekiel's experience is not the exception but the paradigm. The rejection that Jesus experienced from his own ultimately turned into hatred and bitter hostility. That was the experience of all the apostles and prophets. In fact when there is never any hostility from a rebellious and gainsaying people, either Jesus has changed his mind about persecution or we have joined the rebels! People should know that a prophet has been among them from the faithfulness of the prophet to the Word and to the Savior, whether they like the message or not. For whether they like it or not, it remains the only message that saves. It saves even in the face of persecution from those who should know better.

Second Lesson ¹

2 Corinthians 12:7-10

In the face of opposition the preacher may be tempted to wonder what's wrong with him. Such an examination may indeed reveal that there is a lot wrong with him, that he, too, has thorns in the flesh or such things as get in the way of the message. Those thorns that God wants to remove God will remove in answer to our earnest prayer and the faithful application of his Word. But some thorns will always remain so that the messenger, whether the messenger is the pastor or the congregation itself, will always have reason to ponder the truth that the success of the gospel is always due to the gospel alone. We are not thinking here of moral flaws that make the messenger a contradiction of the message or of such ineptitude that the messenger is ill suited to be a messenger. Among the thorns, at least in the context of the readings for this Sunday, could be persecution of the truth from members who say they are loyal to the truth; it could be resistance to one or more specific applications of the law that obscures the faithfulness we say we have to all of God's Word; it could be lack of time to do everything that we know needs to be done, even a lack of time that keeps us even from knowing what needs to be done; it could be persecution from a community that knows how we apply God's Word in the doctrines concerning fellowship or marriage or lodges and scouts, or creation, or "family values," or any one of a number of other things. Each pastor and congregation will have its own list of messengers of Satan who hinder the course of the gospel's proclamation.

Gospel of the Day ¹

Mark 6:1-6

It is quite bad enough when Jesus is rejected by those who do not know him. But how painful to him, so much so that in his state of humiliation he is amazed by it, when those who should have been first to recognize him instead reject him. The world, even our own so richly blessed country, exchanges the Child in Bethlehem for Santa Claus and the Risen Christ for the Easter bunny. No surprise there. But what of those in our own churches and families who think they know him so well that they no longer know him at all? He could do nothing there in Nazareth because in their unbelief; no one asked him to do anything. And in our midst? Were he still in his state of humiliation, would he be surprised at us who have had his Word for so long and still think so little of it? On the other hand, those who follow him in faithfulness have a stumbling block in their path: the unfaithfulness of those who should know better and then their ultimate hostility to the pure teaching and living of his Word. Only that Word and reliance on it gets us past that stumbling block; Jesus promised such rejection, and his Word even in that regard has proven true.

Psalm of the Day

Psalm 143

Notice how the psalm progresses from a cry for rescue to a cry for the gift of submission and obedience. When the Savior seems weak and his promise ineffective, he shows his power and the power of his Word by giving us patience to endure and the longing to obey while we await his promised help and rescue.

Verse of the Day

Luke 8:15 *(RSV)*

“Happy are they who hear the Word, hold it fast in an honest and good heart, and bring forth fruit with patience.” In the Parable of the Sower, Jesus uses the picture of seed sown on different types of ground to explain how people respond to the proclamation of the kingdom of God. Those who “hear the Word,” believe it, and produce fruit represent the seed that fell along the good soil and produced a good crop. The Spirit has created faith in the hearts of believers, making noble and good souls who, having been planted and fed by God’s Word, produce fruit in keeping with it.

Prayer of the Day

God of all power and might, you are the giver of all that is good. Help us love you with all our heart, strengthen us in true faith, provide us with all we need, and keep us safe in your care; through Jesus Christ, your Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

Hymn of the Day

536 “Lord Jesus Christ, the Church’s Head” (Johann Mentzer, 1658-1734)

Church Year Season ²

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 teach us the characteristics of the Holy Ministry, the Christian, the Church, our God, and the Christian 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.

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

² Courtesy of “Planning Christian Worship: Year A”. Jonathan E. Schroeder, Author and Editor.

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