



ABOUT THE PROPERs

An Explanation of the Variable Parts of the Divine Service



Sixth Sunday after Pentecost

Proper 11

July 17, 2022



Focused Worship Seeks Service from Jesus More than Service for Jesus

We call worship a "service." Which raises the question: who is serving whom? In answering that question, it is easy to focus on what we do in worship. "I set aside time in my week to come to church. I am singing praise to God. I brought him an offering. Clearly, I am serving him." True enough. However, as God speaks this week, he clarifies our focus, letting us see that worship is primarily about him serving us. Through Word and sacrament, he delivers every spiritual gift he wants us to receive. Our service to God is good. His service for us is perfect. Our service to God is important. His service for us is essential. God loves our service to him. But we desperately need his service for us. Receiving his service is actually the highest form of worship. "God wants to be worshipped through faith so that we receive from him those things he promises and offers" (Apology of the Augsburg Confession, Article IV).

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 Reading ¹

Genesis 18:1-14

The Lord appeared to Abraham and promised him a son. While the world laughs with Sarah at the seemingly impossible promises of God, we hear the Word of the Lord and believe it. Promises of free forgiveness, eternal life after death, and the perfection of heaven seem laughable to those who busy themselves with getting ahead or serving self. Even those who are familiar with the Word of the Lord find it difficult to believe his promises when guilt haunts our hearts. But with the Word of the Lord in its rightful, central place in the life of the believer, nothing is impossible. The Lord spoke and ancient Abraham had a son.

Second Reading ¹

Colossians 1:1-14

This lesson begins a series of three readings from Paul's letter to the congregation at Colosse. Spirit-worked appreciation for what has been given to them in Christ Jesus has led the Colossians to bear fruits of faith and love for the benefit of God's kingdom. Paul's prayer is that this work of the Spirit continues, not only in the hearts of the Colossians, but also in hearts of believers today. Rescued from darkness, we too know and embody the love of Christ, bearing fruit in every good work done for the love of our neighbor.

Gospel of the Day ¹

Luke 10:38-42

Twenty-first century Christians can certainly identify with Martha. So much to do and so little time! We have great excuses and fine rationalizations to explain the fact we have so little time to sit at Jesus' feet. But like Martha, our reasons fail in the face of Christ's simple statement: there is one needful thing—to hear the Word of God. On many an occasion, Martha would have surely sat at Jesus' feet. But on this day, she was distracted by the many things being used to drag her away from where it was better for her to be. The busyness of Martha is contrasted by the devotion of Mary to Jesus' words. When this one thing needful is truly treasured in the believer's life, everything else falls into place and it will not be taken from us, even into eternity.

Psalm of the Day

Psalm 119a

"Your Word is a lamp to my feet and a light for my path." The children of God "seek him with all their heart" by hearing and obeying his Word.

Gospel Acclamation

Isaiah 55:11b

"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, eternal 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 share God's powerful message, he is always using the Word to achieve his divine purposes.

Prayer of the Day

Almighty God, we thank you for planting in us the seed of your Word. By your Holy Spirit, help us to receive it with joy and bring forth fruits in faith, hope, and love; 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

290 "One Thing's Needful" (Johann H. Schroder, 1667-99)

The hymn gets its title from the account of Jesus' visiting the home of Martha and Mary (Luke 10:38-42). This hymn, along with the Gospel from which it is derived, has great value and comfort for Christians during their pilgrimage on earth. It reminds us that salvation is by grace alone. For eternal life, there is only one thing needful: the forgiveness Jesus won on the cross and gives us in his Word.

Church Year Season ¹

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 C". Joel J. Gawrisch, Author; Jonathan E. Schroeder, Editor.

² Courtesy of "Planning Christian Worship: Year B". Daniel M. Deutschlander, Author.

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