



ABOUT THE PROPERs

An Explanation of the Variable Parts of the Divine Service



Eleventh Sunday after Pentecost

Proper 16

August 21, 2022



The First Will Be Last; The Last Will Be First

When it comes to the difficult and uncomfortable topic of who goes to heaven and who goes to hell, it is natural to want to avoid the issue. One way we do that is to direct our attention to theoretical questions. “What is heaven like?” “How old will we be there?” Today, someone asks Jesus, “Lord, are only a few going to be saved?” Jesus brushes these questions aside. Instead, he answers the question we should be asking. Rather than talking about how many will be saved, Jesus explains how to be among the saved. What he teaches today through his Word is a hard truth. The doorway into heaven is narrow. Scripture consistently teaches that those individuals who are certain they will be first through that door are more likely to be last. Instead, the one who believes he is the last one God should let into his kingdom and that his only chance of getting in is through the grace of Christ will enter first.

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 Reading³

Isaiah 66:18-24

The chosen nation of Israel had rejected the narrow door of the Lord. Yet in this last chapter of Isaiah (along with much of the last half of Isaiah) comes the promise of spiritual and eternal deliverance. This promise comes to the faithful remnant and those who are being gathered from the ends of the earth. Even in the midst of such beautiful and invitational gospel, there is warning for those who remain in their apostasy. God’s mercy is broad and deep, but it found in only one place, the promised Messiah.

Second Reading³

Hebrews 12:18-24

The giving of the Old Covenant left the Israelites quaking in fear at the foot of Mt. Sinai. Divine justice would not leave the guilty unpunished. But the New Covenant invites all the nations to come to Mt. Zion in joyful assembly with the confidence that they have been judged innocent and made perfect through Jesus, the Messiah. Sprinkled with blood, we enter the narrow door to paradise.

Gospel³

Luke 13:22-30

The narrow door to eternity is open only to the spiritual children of Abraham. The Chosen Nation of Israel thought that they had every right to enter through the door. After all, they were part of the Old Covenant. But their lack of faith in Christ locked out from paradise. In the new Covenant, entrance into the Kingdom of God is open only to those with faith in the Christ.

Psalm of the Day

Psalm 72

“Let the people praise you, O God. Let all the people praise you.” This messianic Psalm portrays Christ as the universal King to whom “all kings will bow down.”

Gospel Acclamation

Luke 13:29

“People will come from east and west and north and south, and will take their places at the feast in the kingdom of God.”

Prayer of the Day

Almighty and everlasting God, give us an increase of faith, hope, and love; and, that we may obtain what you promise, make us love what you command; through Jesus Christ, your Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

Hymn of the Day

395 “Seek Where You May to Find a Way” (Georg Weissel, 1590-1635)

Just as Simon Peter confessed, “Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life” (John 6:68), we too confess to Jesus, “You are my Lord; your precious Word shall be my guide” (v4). We seek no other way to our salvation in heaven, except through Christ. He is our one foundation (1 Corinthians 3:11); whose Word is sure (Psalm 119:89); who overthrows our foes (Colossians 2:15); through whom we conquer (Romans 8:37); the God-man (Matthew 1:23) who redeemed us (Galatians 3:13); the Servant Lord (Isaiah 53) who restores our life and justifies us by his death (Romans 5:9-10); who atoned for our sins to deliver us (1 John 2:2), and who blesses us (Matthew 5:1-12).

Church Year Season³

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.

Minor Festivals

St. Bartholomew, Apostle (August 24)

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

Superfronatal: 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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