



ABOUT THE PROPER

An Explanation of the Variable Parts of the Divine Service



Sixteenth Sunday after Pentecost

September 8, 2024



The Need for Followership

Followers of Christ See the True Purpose of His Power

Power is neither inherently good nor bad. Fire is powerful. The chef uses fire to create meals. But the arsonist uses fire to destroy homes. Nuclear fission is a powerful force. The engineer harnesses it, producing abundant electricity. The tyrant harnesses it, threatening others with nuclear weapons. What matters is the intent of the one who has that power.

Jesus has limitless power, as the numerous accounts of his miracles demonstrate. Those who witnessed those miracles understood that Jesus used his power for good. That *doesn't* mean they all understood Jesus' true purpose. Some thought Jesus' purpose was to make this temporal life on earth better. And while Jesus did that at times, his ultimate purpose was to save us from sin and give us the gift of eternal life. Followers of Christ see the true purpose of his power.

First Reading²

Isaiah 35:4-7a

This reading depicts our spiritual needs in physical terms. Physical weakness and trouble mirror the absolute need in which we were born. Troubles, fears, weaknesses of every sort are often God's rich blessings; for they drive us to despair of our own strength and understanding and to be more ready to receive from his Word ears that hear and eyes that see. The reading is a promise of just such help from the Messiah, who alone can solve that absolute spiritual need and who alone rules over the physical reflections of that need so that they are turned to blessing. Yes, he does indeed do all things well!

Second Reading²

Acts 3:1-10

The (apparently) infrequent miracles of the apostles after Jesus' ascension served to confirm and attest their apostolic office and authority; that is, they were designed to get the attention of the people for the Word that Christ had given them to proclaim. So this man's years of suffering and pain are overwhelmed by the gift of God in a healing that brought him to praise the Savior in whose name he was healed. It also amazed those who saw or heard what had happened to the man. While God does not promise such miraculous healing—most of those begging at the temple gates were not healed—he nevertheless often keeps much suffering from our door, delivers us from such other suffering as he permits to enter it, and preserves us to endure when relief is not soon at hand. The purpose of all three is that we may praise him for his goodness in weal and woe so that others may see in our strength a reason to listen to the Word of the Lord. The witness of suffering Christians no less than that of those delivered from suffering is a powerful pointer to the Savior and his Word.

Gospel²

Mark 7:31-37

That Jesus does all things well is, of course, biblical understatement. Consider just how well he does all things. There is nothing mechanical in his manner or method. He takes into account this individual's very individual needs. The poor man is frightened and comprehends nothing of what the crowd is doing with him. But Jesus understands. Jesus deals with even the momentary fear of the man most gently. That is how he always deals with us, one at a time, with perfect understanding and compassion. He allows the needs that we need and then helps and strengthens and ultimately delivers us at just the right moment and in just the right way. Notice again Jesus' command after he has helped and healed; he wants no publicity to get in the way of his march to the cross and the ultimate help and salvation that he will win there for us.

Psalm of the Day⁴

Psalm 146 A

“I Will Praise the LORD All My Life”

The Church sings Psalm 146 in services that encourage trust in the Scriptures because they testify about Jesus. It gives particular attention to God’s love for the lowly. Martin Luther said, “Psalm 146 is a psalm of thanks to God for helping in time of need. It teaches us to trust in God and not in princes or other human beings, as people do over and over. God is the only one who can truly help us in our times of need, and only his help can truly be called help. Human help is uncertain and does not last.”

Gospel Acclamation

Isaiah 25:9

“Surely this is our God; we trusted in him, and he saved us. Let us rejoice and be glad in his salvation.”

Prayer of the Day

O God, you reveal your mighty power chiefly in showing mercy and kindness. Grant us the full measure of your grace that we may obtain your promises and become partakers of your heavenly glory; 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

769 “Your Hand, O Lord, in Days of Old” (Edward H. Plumptre, 1821-1891)

Church Year Season¹

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.

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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