



# ABOUT THE PROPER

*An Explanation of the Variable Parts of the Divine Service*



## Twenty-First Sunday after Pentecost

October 13, 2024



### *The Need for Followership*

Followers of Christ Maintain Proper Priorities

Throughout Scripture believers are urged to prioritize. It is the heart of the First Commandment: “You shall have no other gods before me” (Exodus 20:3). Jesus calls for prioritization when he says, “Seek first his kingdom and his righteousness” (Matthew 6:33). Good news: followers of Christ maintain proper priorities. Even better news: followers of Christ receive his forgiveness for all the times their priorities have been improper.

#### **First Reading**<sup>2</sup>                      2 Kings 5:14-27

Naaman had such gratitude for the gift of healing that he wanted to give his wealth to God’s instrument in healing him. Elisha had no wealth, only God’s Word, and did not want to do anything that would cause Naaman to think that he could buy the blessing of God. Ah, but Gehazi, a servant of the Church, had other ideas. He knew how to make greed look good. Judas was his disciple. Nor have they lacked followers since their day. We all need to examine ourselves to see if even our piety is a cloak for avarice. Leprosy on the soul kills just as surely as unhealed leprosy on the body.

#### **Second Reading**<sup>2</sup>                      Hebrews 4:12-13

Let us be honest with God. Let us strip away the pretense, pride and self righteousness that we share with the young man in the gospel lesson last Sunday. Let us lay bare before the throne of God the false ambitions we have like those of the disciples in the gospel lesson for today. The sharp sword of God’s Word pierces through our hearts and souls so that we can see and know how far we have yet to go and how much we have to confess. Don’t be afraid to do it. The Confession at the beginning of the service has already reminded us that there is healing from the high priest and on account of his saving work for us. Leave Confession confident of absolution; leave Confession with the resolve to reorder your ambitions to serve him who one day will give you the rest that he has earned and deserved and reserved for you in heaven.

#### **Gospel**<sup>2</sup>                                      Mark 10:17-27

This is the context: God’s gifts to us of wealth more than most of his other gifts can become snares to our salvation when we treasure them more than the Giver and more than our salvation. From a rhetorical standpoint this reading is one of the most brilliant of all of the discourses that Jesus held during his earthly ministry. First he sets up this wealthy young man who would be a treasure to his mother and to any congregation. He sets him up to learn that he has not even kept the First Commandment and that thereby he has lost all hope of saving himself by the law. Then to drive the point home that salvation is the work of God alone, he sets up his disciples and us to see that we are too attached to his gifts of wealth. We either treasure too much what we have or covet too much what we don’t have. We don’t want to miss the triple point that Jesus so effectively places before us. Our situation before the law is always a hopeless one, since we all have things that we think we cannot bear to do without, and thereby we forfeit any claim to salvation even on the basis of the First Commandment. We need to examine ourselves to see what those things are that might make us also go away sad from Jesus our Savior. We, too, can only marvel at his grace and goodness, that he would even give us those things which he knows we are tempted to treasure more than we treasure him.

**Psalm of the Day**<sup>4</sup>

Psalm 90 B

“Lord, Give Success to the Work of Our Hands”

The Church sings Psalm 90 in services where we recognize the perspective that comes after the passage of time, especially when joy comes after relief from affliction. The only psalm written by Moses, it leads off Books IV and V of the Psalter.

**Gospel Acclamation**

Hebrews 4:12

“For the word of God is alive and active. It judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart.”

**Prayer of the Day**

Lord Jesus Christ, whose grace always precedes and follows us, help us forsake all trust in earthly gain and find in you our heavenly treasure; for you live and reign with the Father and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

**Hymn of the Day**

560 “Your Works, Not Mine, O Christ” (Horatius Bonar, 1808-89)

**Church Year Season**<sup>1</sup>

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.

**Minor Festivals**

St. Luke, Evangelist (October 18)

**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).

<sup>1</sup> Courtesy of “Planning Christian Worship: Year A”. Jonathan E. Schroeder, Author.

<sup>2</sup> Courtesy of “Planning Christian Worship: Year B”. Daniel M. Deutschlander, Author.

<sup>3</sup> Courtesy of “Planning Christian Worship: Year C”. Joel J. Gawrisch, Author.

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