



ABOUT THE PROPER

An Explanation of the Variable Parts of the Divine Service



First Sunday after Christmas

December 29, 2024



The Gift of God

God Gives Both Substitute and Sacrifice

The Son of God took on flesh for two reasons: to be our substitute and our sacrifice. You see, when God created mankind in his image, his desire was that we would live holy lives, full of love for him and our fellow man. When mankind fell into sin, that became impossible. So, the Heavenly Father sent Jesus. He is the only human being to keep all of God's law perfectly. He did that as our substitute. Through faith, we claim his perfection as our own. But we needed another gift—one who could pay for the sin we had committed. And so, the Son of God became human for another reason—so that he might die as the sacrifice for our sins, removing that barrier between us and a holy God. Understanding we needed both—substitute and sacrifice—helps us better understand Jesus' saving work. That work includes more than Jesus' death on the cross. Jesus' saving work began the moment he was born under the law and obeyed it. This week, we thank God that Jesus served us in both these much-needed ways!

First Reading³ Isaiah 50:4-9

Jesus is the example of patient endurance in suffering. He listened to the Word of his Father and obeyed it perfectly. But no one suffered as he did. What was the outcome of his suffering? In his resurrection he was triumphant both in achieving the divinely ordained goal of our redemption and was delivered from all sorrow and pain. Those who now walk in darkness, i.e., who do not see the salvation and rescue promised by God, should nevertheless trust in his promise; for at the best time, when the goal is achieved, they will yet see that God is faithful to his Word. God kept his promise to his Son; he will not fail to keep his Son's promise to us!

Second Reading³ Hebrews 2:10-18

The writer to the Hebrews lays out the loving purpose of God in Christ Jesus. It is fitting that the Author of Salvation should make his One and Only Son like those he came to save. As our brother, he knows our weaknesses and temptations. Yet, in service to God, he carried out the Father's will. Having overcome death and made atonement for our sins, he now claims us as members of his family.

Gospel³ Luke 2:41-52

With an emphasis on the two natures of Christ, these words from Luke reveal Jesus' growth "in favor with God and men." Yet, very clearly, Jesus always understood his purpose was to carry out the Father's plan of salvation. Though he willingly obeyed Mary and Joseph, more striking is his willing obedience to the Father's will.

Psalm of the Day⁴ Psalm 84 E "Let Us Go Rejoicing"

The Church sings Psalm 84 in services that emphasize the joy of gathering in Christian congregations around the gospel in Word and sacrament. The imagery is similar to Psalms 42 (from the first section of Sons of Korah psalms) and 63. Martin Luther said, "Psalm 84 is a comfort psalm. It praises God's Word grandly over everything else. It moves us to treasure God's Word above glory, power, joy, or desire. Why? The psalmist is clear: God's Word gives victory, salvation, grace, glory and all good things."

Gospel Acclamation Luke 2:30,31

"For my eyes have seen your salvation, which you have prepared in the sight of all nations." The Holy Spirit had revealed to Simeon that he would not die until he beheld the fulfillment of God's promise to send the Messiah. His and all believers' hope for eternal salvation in heaven is realized in Jesus.

Prayer of the Day

Almighty God, in mercy you sent your one and only Son to take upon himself our human nature. By his gracious coming, deliver us from the corruption of our sin, and transform us into the likeness of his 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 355 “Let All Together Praise Our God” (Nikolaus Herman, c. 1480-1561)

This hymn was part of a larger collection of hymns that the author based on the Gospel readings for each day of the Church Year. In it, he reflects on what it meant for almighty God to become a human being and what Jesus’ incarnation means for his people.

Church Year Season¹ Christmas

The Christmas season celebrates the Incarnation of the Son of God. The eternal Word became flesh that he might be the Christ, anointed to redeem God’s people. God had to become man to live under the law and die in our place. Christ’s birth, then, is inextricably connected to his death: Good Friday necessitated Christmas. So great is the love of God that even though our sin required such a sacrifice, the Light of the world still descended into our darkness.

Colors & Symbolism White

White is the color of our Triune God and heaven. It also symbolizes joy, celebration, gladness, light, purity and innocence. We receive these blessings through faith because Christ, our righteousness Savior, has forgiven all our sins.

Minor Festivals¹ Circumcision and Name of Jesus (January 1)

The child whose birth we celebrated last week came to fulfill the law. “When the time had fully come, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under law, to redeem those under law, that we might receive the full rights of sons” (Galatians 4:4, 5). Jesus needed to fulfill the law to establish the gospel. This fulfillment was to be perfect. Therefore, meticulous attention to the Lord’s command is revealed with the words, “On the eighth day, when it was time to circumcise him, he was named Jesus, the name the angel had given him before he had been conceived.”

Traditions & Customs Christmas

In addition to lighting the Christ candle at the center of the Advent wreath, decorating the church and house (including the Christmas tree), setting up the Nativity scene, engaging in charitable acts, and giving and exchanging presents, many families follow the tradition of gathering around on Christmas Eve or Day and reading the nativity story from Luke 2. Although many consider Christmas Day as the end of the Christmas season, this is not the case. Traditionally, celebrations and festivities began on Christmas Day (or Christmas Eve night) and continued throughout the Christmas season. The Christmas carol, *The Twelve Days of Christmas* points to this. It was the practice to give/receive a gift on each of the twelve days; although some only celebrated during the ‘Christmas Octave,’ which was the eight days from Christmas Day through New Year’s Day.

Nain Paraments Christmas

Superfrontal: “Immanuel” is Hebrew for “God with us.” This name for Jesus Christ was revealed to God’s people through Isaiah in a prophecy of the Savior’s birth (7:14). The angel Gabriel announced to Joseph in a dream that the child in the Virgin Mary’s womb would be that promised Immanuel – God who had come to be with us (Matthew 1:23) in order to save us. Sometimes the name is spelled *Emmanuel*, which is the Latin alphabet transliteration of the Hebrew pronunciation of the same name.

The vines next to Immanuel represent the spiritual life that Jesus, the vine brings to God’s children, the branches (John 15:5).

Lectern antependium: *The Greek Cross:* distinguished by four arms of equal length.

Pulpit antependium: *The Celtic Cross:* similar to the Latin cross (†), but with a circle surrounding the center, which symbolizes the eternal nature of Christ and the gift of eternal life to all who believe in him.

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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