



ABOUT THE PROPER

An Explanation of the Variable Parts of the Divine Service



Sixth Sunday after Epiphany

February 16, 2025



Epiphany Moments

Blessings Are Cursed; Curses Are Blessed

If we want to accurately see the world, we need to have this epiphany. That which the world considers a blessing can often be a curse. Things like success and wealth and health can lead us away from our God. We become so enamored with those blessings that we forget about the Blesser. Conversely, there are hidden blessings in what we would normally consider curses. When we fail, when we suffer, and when things don't go our way, it forces us to put our trust in God and for our souls to be satisfied in him. The reality is that perceived blessings can be cursed and perceived curses can be used for our blessing.

First Reading³ Jeremiah 17:6-8

Those who trust in themselves and all the world offers will find ruin and destruction. Those who put their confidence in the Lord and live according to his ways will bear fruit into eternity.

Second Reading³ 2 Corinthians 12:7b-10

The apparent curse of a "thorn in the flesh" does not seem like a blessing to the world. Yet, what a humbling bounty of blessing comes to the believer who clings to the promise "my grace is sufficient for you."

Gospel³ Luke 6:17-26

After a night of prayer on the hilltop, Jesus descends, revealing his power as the Lord's Anointed to heal and restore. The disciples are instructed about both blessings and woes in connection with the kingdom of God. Blessing comes to those who put God first and live lives of faith, seeking to put the spiritual ahead of the physical. This faithfulness will be eternally rewarded as evidence of faith.

Psalm of the Day⁴ Psalm 1 A "Blessed Are They"

The Church sings Psalm 1 in services that emphasize the benefits of meditation on the law of the Lord. The Word of God causes us to flourish and bear good fruit, especially love for God that flows into love for human beings. The church father Jerome called this psalm "the main entrance to the mansion of the Psalter." Martin Luther said, "The first psalm is a comfort psalm. It admonishes us to hear and learn God's Word gladly for our comfort. Psalm 1 matches the Second and Third Petitions of the Lord's Prayer, for there we pray for God's kingdom and God's will, which are both conveyed by the Word. The foundation and chief idea of this first psalm is the Third Commandment, for it praises instruction in God's Word, that we should gladly hear, learn, and read it."

Gospel Acclamation Psalm 121:8

"The LORD will watch over your coming and going both now and forevermore."

Prayer of the Day

O God of power and might, you know that we live in the midst of many great dangers, and in our frailty we cannot stand upright. Give us strength and protection to support us in all peril, and carry us through all temptations; 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

631 “Speak, O Savior; I Am Listening” (Anna Sophia von Hessen-Darmstadt, 1638-1683)

This hymn is based in part on young Samuel’s response to the Lord’s call (1 Samuel 3:10). Moved by God’s grace given to us through faith, we too desire to hear the Word of the Lord and respond to his call to follow and serve him. The hymnist uses several terms for God’s Word (e.g. God’s “voice,” “waters living,” “bread life-giving,” “light,” “sword,” “cup unfailing”), and several phrases to describe what a great blessing the Word is in the life of a believer.

Church Year Season ¹

Epiphany

The readings during the Epiphany season carry forward the emphasis in the readings for Christmas Eve and Christmas Day, the theme of Jesus revealing himself to us as God and Savior. At the same time the readings present us with a real conundrum. The conundrum is that he hides the manifestations of his deity, so that his glory remains a secret and a mystery, even while he is revealing it. All the riddles are present in the readings for the Feast of the Epiphany. The theme present in all of the Epiphany readings is: He shows his hidden glory to those he calls. You may notice that in many of the Epiphany season readings appropriation is much easier than application. There is a good reason for that: In Christmas and Epiphany our attention is on getting to know Jesus, who he is and how he works; thus there is not so much emphasis on our response beyond the response of faith, which itself is always seen as his work and not ours.

Colors & Symbolism

Green

Green is the color of vegetation; therefore it symbolizes life. It represents the new life that Christ gives us in baptism, as well as the spiritual growth we experience during the season as we study the Lord’s ministry.

Nain Paraments

Epiphany

Superfrontal: The Greek symbol at the center of the superfrontal is the *Chi-Rho*. Chi (X) and Rho (P) are the first two letters in the Greek word for Christ (Χριστός). This ancient symbol represents Jesus and his office as the Messiah, the anointed King of kings and Savior of the world (Matthew 16:16)..... Next to the *Chi-Rho* are the letters *Alpha* (A) and *Omega* (Ω), the first and last letters of the Greek alphabet. These two letters symbolize Jesus Christ, our eternal Lord and Savior, who is the first and the last, the beginning and the end (Revelation 22:13)..... The vines and vegetation branching out from the *Chi-Rho* represent the spiritual life that Jesus, the vine brings to God’s children, the branches (John 15:5)..... The blue wave at the bottom of the symbol represents both Holy Baptism (1 Peter 3:21) and the living water of the Word of Christ (John 7:37-38). The blue wave is intertwined with a vine of thorns, reminded us of Christ’s sacrifice on the cross to pay the price for our sins (John 19:2;30) and that believers are baptized into Christ’s death and resurrection for their forgiveness and eternal salvation (Romans 6:3-4).

Lectern antependium: The circle surrounding the center of the Latin cross (†) symbolizes the eternal nature of Christ and the gift of eternal life to all who believe in him. The Greek letters ΙΧΘΥC (pronounced: *Ichthus*) form both the word for fish and an acronym for the phrase, “Jesus Christ, Son of God, Savior.” A simple drawing of a fish was used in the ancient Church in days of persecution. It symbolized Jesus Christ and also served as a code by which Christians identified themselves to one another as Christ’s followers. It also recalls Holy Baptism and is thus a symbol of Christian regeneration (John 3:5).

Pulpit antependium: The Anchor Cross symbolizes the sure and steadfast hope Christians have in Jesus (Hebrews 6:19). The two fish remind us that Christians are followers of Jesus (see the description above), those who are brought into the ship of God’s church through the efforts of those who proclaim Gospel (cf. “fishers of men” in Matthew 4:19). During Epiphany the Church celebrates the many ways that Christ made himself known as true God to the world. One of these ways was his miracles. The two fish thus also remind us of Jesus miraculously feeding the 5,000 with five loaves of bread and two small fish (Matthew 14:13-21).

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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