

Sunday, March 14, 2021 - 4th Sunday in Lent

Numbers 21:4-9 - The lifting up of the serpent

⁴From Mount Hor [the Israelites] set out by the way to the Red Sea, to go around the land of Edom; but the people became impatient on the way.

When has something happened to you that was more than you could take and so you “became impatient on the way”?

⁵The people spoke against God and against Moses, “Why have you brought us up out of Egypt to die in the wilderness? For there is no food and no water, and we detest this miserable food.”

How quickly and how frequently did the Israelites complain.

See Exodus 15: 22-24 – Just three days after the crossing of the Red Sea, they came to a place where the water was bitter, and so they complained.

Because of all that God has done for us, we should give thanks at least as much and as often as we complain.

Do you give thanks at least as much and as often as you complain?

How many meals in a row could you have manna before you started to complain?

⁶Then the LORD sent poisonous serpents among the people, and they bit the people, so that many Israelites died. ⁷The people came to Moses and said, “We have sinned by speaking against the LORD and against you; pray to the LORD to take away the serpents from us.” So Moses prayed for the people.

What kind of experiences have you had with poisonous snakes in the desert?

Snake avoidance training for dogs – we all need spiritual snake avoidance training.

⁸And the LORD said to Moses, “Make a poisonous serpent, and set it on a pole; and everyone who is bitten shall look at it and live.” ⁹So Moses made a serpent of bronze and put it upon a pole; and whenever a serpent bit someone, that person would look at the serpent of bronze and live.

The Israelites asked God to take away the snakes. Instead God provided a way for a snake bite to not be fatal.

2 Kings 18: 4 – Hezekiah broke in pieces the bronze serpent that Moses had made, for the people of Israel had made offerings to it.

Psalm 107:1-3, 17-22 - You deliver your people from distress

² Let the redeemed of the LORD proclaim
that God redeemed them from the hand of the foe.

How was God delivered you? When was the last time you told somebody about it?

¹⁷Some were fools and took rebellious paths.

Have you ever been a fool and taken a rebellious path?

¹⁸They loathed all manner of food and drew near to death’s door.

How grateful are you even for the gift of food – even if it is leftovers or a repetitive menu?

¹⁹Then in their trouble they cried to the LORD and you delivered them from their distress.

²⁰You healed them and rescued them from the grave.

When and how has God healed you and even rescued you from the grave?

How would you like God to heal you today?

Ephesians 2:1-10 Saved by grace through faith for good works

¹You were dead through the trespasses and sins ²in which you once lived, following the course of this world, following the ruler of the power of the air.

³All of us once lived in the passions of our flesh, following the desires of flesh and senses, and we were by nature children of wrath, like everyone else.

⁴But God, who is rich in mercy, out of the great love with which he loved us ⁵even when we were dead through our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ—by grace you have been saved.

⁶He raised us up with him and seated us with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus

⁷so that in the ages to come he might show the immeasurable riches of his grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus.

⁸For by grace you have been saved through faith, and this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God—⁹not the result of works, so that no one may boast.

¹⁰For we are what he has made us, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand to be our way of life.

John 3:14-21 - The lifting up of the Son of Man

¹⁴Just as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of Man be lifted up, ¹⁵that whoever believes in him may have eternal life.

Jesus took an object that spoke of humanity's ingratitude, rebellion, and sin and made it into the means by which we can be saved from our sin.

¹⁶For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life.

God so loved that he gave – the world – may have – eternal life

¹⁷God did not send the Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him.

¹⁹Light has come into the world, and people loved darkness rather than light because their deeds were evil. ²⁰For all who do evil hate the light and do not come to the light, so that their deeds may not be exposed.

The last words of Nicodemus that are recorded in this conversation are "How can these things be?" (verse 9)

John 7: 50-52 – Nicodemus defends Jesus before the chief priests and Pharisees – "Our law does not judge people without first giving them a hearing."

John 19: 38-40 – Nicodemus helps Joseph of Arimathea prepare Jesus' body for burial