

3/22/09

THE PRAYER OF THE DAY Holy Spirit, point us toward the cross of Jesus Christ that, finding our forgiveness there, we would bring others to find in the cross the forgiveness of their sins and the salvation of their souls; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

THE OLD TESTAMENT LESSON Numbers 21:4-9

(Moses lifts a bronze serpent for all to see God's mercy and healing.)

4 They traveled from Mount Hor along the route to the Red Sea, to go around Edom. But the people grew impatient on the way; 5 they spoke against God and against Moses, and said, "Why have you brought us up out of Egypt to die in the desert? There is no bread! There is no water! And we detest this miserable food!" 6 Then the LORD sent venomous snakes among them; they bit the people and many Israelites died.

7 The people came to Moses and said, "We sinned when we spoke against the LORD and against you. Pray that the LORD will take the snakes away from us." So Moses prayed for the people. 8 The LORD said to Moses, "Make a snake and put it up on a pole; anyone who is bitten can look at it and live." 9 So Moses made a bronze snake and put it up on a pole. Then when anyone was bitten by a snake and looked at the bronze snake, he lived.

THE EPISTLE LESSON Ephesians 2:1-10

(God saves us from death in sin, by grace through faith, AND sets before us good works to do in response to His love.)

1 As for you, you were dead in your transgressions and sins, 2 in which you used to live when you followed the ways of this world and of the ruler of the kingdom of the air, the spirit who is now at work in those who are disobedient. 3 All of us also lived among them at one time, gratifying the cravings of our sinful nature and following its desires and thoughts. Like the rest, we were by nature objects of wrath. 4 But because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, 5 made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions-- it is by grace you have been saved. 6 And God raised us up with Christ and seated us with him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus, 7 in order that in the coming ages he might show the incomparable riches of his grace, expressed in his kindness to us in Christ Jesus.

8 For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith-- and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God-- 9 not by works, so that no one can boast. 10 For we are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.

THE GOSPEL LESSON John 3:14-21

(As Moses lifted up the serpent, so is the Son of God lifted up to save the World.)

14 Just as Moses lifted up the snake in the desert, so the Son of Man must be lifted up, 15 that everyone who believes in him may have eternal life.

16 "For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. 17 For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him. 18 Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe stands condemned already because he has not believed in the name of God's one and only Son.

19 This is the verdict: Light has come into the world, but men loved darkness instead of light because their deeds were evil. 20 Everyone who does evil hates the light, and will not come into the light for fear that his deeds will be exposed. 21 But whoever lives by the truth comes into the light, so that it may be seen plainly that what he has done has been done through God."

THE SERMON “Believing in God, Even When Suffering Comes from our own Sin”
John 3

14 Kai. kaqw.j Mwush/j u[ywsen to.n o;fin evn th/| evrh,mw|(ou[twj u`ywqh/nai dei/
to.n ui`o.n tou/ avnqrw,pou(

And just as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, thus it is necessary for the Son of Man to be lifted up

15 i[na pa/j o` pisteu,wn evn auvtw/| e;ch| zwh.n aivw,nionÅ

In order that everyone who believes in him might have life eternal.

16 ou[twj ga.r hvga,phsen o` qeo.j to.n ko,smon(w[ste to.n ui`o.n to.n monogenh/
e;dwken(i[na pa/j o` pisteu,wn eivj auvto.n mh. avpo,lhtai avllV e;ch| zwh.n aivw,nionÅ

For thus God loved the world, so that he gave the only begotten Son, in order that everyone who believes in Him shall not perish but have life eternal.

17 ouv ga.r avpe,steilen o` qeo.j to.n ui`o.n eivj to.n ko,smon i[na kri,nh| to.n ko,smon(
avllV i[na swqh/| o` ko,smoj diV auvtou/Å

For God did not send the Son into the world in order to judge the world, but that the world might be saved through Him.

18 o` pisteu,wn eivj auvto.n ouv kri,netai\ o` de. mh. pisteu,wn h;dh ke,kritai(o[ti mh.
pepi,steuken eivj to. o;noma tou/ monogenu/j ui`ou/ tou/ qeou/Å

The one believing in him is not judged. But the one who does not believe is judged already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God.

19 au[th de, evstin h` kri,sij o[ti to. fw/j evlh,luqen eivj to.n ko,smon kai. hvga,phsan oi`
a;nqrwpoi ma//lon to. sko,toj h' to. fw/j\ h=n ga.r auvtw/n ponhra. ta. e;rgaÅ

And this is the judgement, that the light came into the world and men loved the darkness rather than the light, for their works were evil.

20 pa/j ga.r o` fau/la pra,sswn misei/ to. fw/j kai. ouv k e;rcetai pro.j to. fw/j(i[na mh.
evlegcqh/| ta. e;rga auvtou/Å

fau/la evil, bad

evlegcqh/| rebuked, disciplined, punished

For whoever is doing evil hates the light because he is not able to come to the light, in order that his works might not be punished.

21 ο` de. poiw/n th.n avlh, qeian e;rcetai pro.j to. fw/j(i[na fanerwqh/| auvtou/ ta. e;rga
o[ti evn qew/| evstin eivrgasme, na

But whoever does the truth comes to the light, in order that his works might be revealed that it has been worked/done in God.

INTRO - One of Jesus' most beloved disciples was Peter. Peter was with Jesus on the mountain of transfiguration. Peter was called by Jesus to walk on the water with him. Peter was one of the three with Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane. Jesus loved this disciple, but in the end we find Peter had trouble believing Jesus' love because of his own actions.

I. The call of today's lesson is that we believe in the love of God, in spite of ourselves.

A. Look at verses 15 and 16.

1. In verses 14 and 15 Jesus says, **14 Just as Moses lifted up the snake in the desert, so the Son of Man must be lifted up, 15 that everyone who BELIEVES in him may have eternal life.**

2. Verse 16 says, **16 "For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever BELIEVES in him shall not perish but have eternal life.**

3. In verse 18 we are told, **18 Whoever BELIEVES in him is not condemned,**

B. Jesus is emphasizing God's call for people to trust and believe that God loves them and saves them. But, sometimes believing this love for ourselves is difficult.

II. Peter sinned against Jesus a number of times, but one seemed really bad, to Peter at least. When Jesus was telling his disciples they would betray him, Peter swore he would never leave Jesus even if all the other disciples did. Peter swore he would rather die than desert Jesus. Then, when Jesus was in the court of the high priest on trial, Peter denied he even knew Jesus, 3 times, in spite of his promise and his oath. Even after Jesus had risen and after Peter knew Jesus' victory, Peter just wasn't even sure that Jesus could love . . . him. After all, he had denied Jesus. Jesus had to ask Peter about His love for him, 3 times, so that Jesus could assure Peter that Jesus did love him.

A. Sometimes it is hard to know and trust that God loves us.

1. We can believe that God loves the world.

2. But we can't believe that we are loved.

B. We know our failure, our rebellion, our sin.

1. You name your failing.

2. Maybe you gave in to temptation.

3. Maybe you hurt someone you loved.

4. Maybe you really failed

C. So you may ask, how CAN God love you. . . we all feel this doubt of failure and sin.

III. You heard the Old Testament lesson today. The Israelites needed healing because they had failed to trust God, and grumbled against him, again. The serpents came among the people because of their ungratefulness, because of their lack of faith, and because of their sin. The serpents and the punishment occurred because the Israelites deserved it. Who would think that God could love those who deserve His punishment? But even for the people who had grumbled against God, God acted in mercy. God had Moses make the bronze snake and everyone who

looked on the snake, even those who grumbled, were healed when they looked at the bronze serpent.

A. Look again at verse 14 and 15 in our Gospel lesson.

1. 14 Just as Moses lifted up the snake in the desert, so the Son of Man must be lifted up, 15 that everyone who BELIEVES in him may have eternal life. Jesus says that He is like that too.

2. You see, God knew our sin, and still sent, not just a bronze snake, but His own Son.

3. Yes, God does so love the world. But God so loves you, that in spite of your sin. Because of your sin, God sent his own son, to be lifted up on the cross and die so we can be saved when we look at the love of God and believe.

4. God wants us to know that He knows our sin, and He still loves us. He calls us to forgiveness, and to new life in Him.

B. Knowing we are loved has important meaning for us as we approach Friendship Sunday.

1. Jesus tells us, "Love your neighbor as you love yourself."

2. One of the great ways to love our neighbor is to tell them about Jesus for forgives and saves them.

3. How can we love them if we don't love ourselves?

4. How can we love ourselves if we don't know that we're loved by God?

5. When we believe God loves us, we can love ourselves and we can share that love with others.

CONCLUSION - Peter was asked by Jesus 3 times if he loved Jesus. Jesus was addressing, not so much Peter's love, as Peter's belief that Jesus could love Him. And then knowing Peter's sin, Jesus still gave him the work of the an apostle. Feed My sheep, Feed my lambs, Feed my sheep.

Peter learned the depth of God's love for Him, that the very Son of God would suffer and die and rise, and forgive *Him*. Knowing He was loved, Peter shared the love of Jesus with others.

May God assure us of his love, and move us to share His love with others. Amen.

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TROUBLE families
Country
Serving
Peter
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Zach