

Fourth Sunday of Lent - March 11, 2018

- Believe

The Passage - John 3:14-21

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

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 they have not believed in the name of God's one and only Son. 19 This is the verdict: Light has come into the world, but people 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 their deeds will be exposed. 21 But whoever lives by the truth comes into the light, so that it may be seen plainly that what they have done has been done in the sight of God.

Initial Thoughts

14 Just as Moses lifted up the snake in the wilderness, so the Son of Man must be lifted up,

- The story being referenced here is found in [Numbers 21:4-9](#)
 - They traveled from Mount Hor along the route to the Red Sea, to go around Edom. But the people grew impatient on the way; they spoke against God and against Moses, and said, “Why have you brought us up out of Egypt to die in the wilderness? There is no bread! There is no water! And we detest this miserable food!”

Then the Lord sent venomous snakes among them; they bit the people and many Israelites died. 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.

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.” 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, they lived.

- And when he wanted to teach him faith he did not begin by saying, "By faith we are allied to Christ, and derive salvation from our living head;" but he said— "Like as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness." - Charles Spurgeon, The Mysteries of the Brazen Serpent
- The snake was a "type" of Christ. It pointed to Jesus who would be lifted up and draw all humanity to Him.



- [John 12:32](#) - And I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all people to myself.
- How is Jesus like this bronze snake? The snake was lifted up for people to see and if they believed in what God had said and thereby placed trust in looking at the snake the snake became a means of salvation from the poison of the snake. Choosing darkness instead of the light we were created in the image of is siding with the serpent of the Garden. We have chosen to believe his lies, for he is the father of lies ([John 8:44](#)), and have been poisoned by those lies. Looking to the Christ Who was raised on the cross and risen from the dead is placing faith in the Father of the heavenly lights ([James 1:17](#)) rather than the father of lies. We have moved from the dominion of the accuser to the dominion of the Forgiver.
- This examples reminds the reader that this plan of salvation that Jesus is telling Nicodemus about isn't something new. It has been hinted at and partially discussed throughout the Old Testament.
 - "As" Moses"

- “So the Son of Man”
- How is it similar?
 - Death threatens as a punishment for rebellion
 - God Himself provides the remedy
 - In both cases the remedy involves something/someone being lifted
 - In both cases those with a believing heart look to that which has been lifted up and are healed.
- Ὑψωθείς - hypsōsen - to be lifted up. Used for lifting up Christ on the cross and for Him being exalted.
 - Acts 2:33 - Exalted to the right hand of God, he has received from the Father the promised Holy Spirit and has poured out what you now see and hear.
 - Acts 5:31 - God exalted him to his own right hand as Prince and Savior that he might bring Israel to repentance and forgive their sins.
- An interesting reminder of how idolatrous we are as a people can be found in the fact that the children of Israel eventually began to burn incense (i.e. worship) the bronze snake. King Hezekiah eventually destroyed the Nehushtan to keep the people from worship the created image instead of the Creator.
- 2 Kings 18:3-4
 - 3 He did what was right in the eyes of the Lord, just as his father David had done. 4 He removed the high places, smashed the sacred stones and cut down the Asherah poles. He broke into pieces the bronze snake Moses had made, for up to that time the Israelites had been burning incense to it. (It was called Nehushtan.)
- “Nehushtan of copper; a brazen thing a name of contempt given to the serpent Moses had made in the wilderness ([Numbers 21:8](#)), and which Hezekiah destroyed because the children of Israel began to regard it as an idol and "burn incense to it." The lapse of nearly one thousand years had invested the "brazen serpent" with a mysterious sanctity; and in order to deliver the people from their infatuation, and impress them with the idea of its worthlessness, Hezekiah called it, in contempt, "Nehushtan," a

brazen thing, a mere piece of brass ([2 Kings 18:4](#)).” Easton’s Bible Dictionary.

■

15 that everyone who believes may have eternal life in him.”

- The point of all this is to point people to believe.
 - John 20:31 - But these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.
- Far too often it seems that people who claim to be followers forget that the point is for people to believe in Jesus. Instead they focus on the condemnation, not something that should be ignored but also not the end goal. The end goal is belief in Jesus.

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.

- John 3:36 - Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life, but whoever rejects the Son will not see life, for God’s wrath remains on them.



- Rollen Stewart - The Rainbow John 3:16 Man from the 70s and 80s. Now in Prison.

17 For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him.

- It is all about salvation not condemnation. Seems so often that we turn the focus to condemnation rather than salvation.

18 Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe stands condemned already because they have not believed in the name of God's one and only Son.

- "stands condemned already"

19 This is the verdict: Light has come into the world, but people loved darkness instead of light because their deeds were evil.

- [John 1:10](#) He was in the world, and though the world was made through him, the world did not recognize him.
- John 1 talks about the world not recognizing Him while John 3 talks about the world hating Him. Why the difference? Because we've learned to love the darkness. WE didn't recognize the light and therefore become creatures of the dark. Once the Light is shone on our darkness we no longer can stand the very light that we were created for. "Oh wretched (beings) that (we are). Who will save (us)." Paraphrased Romans 7:24.
- [Romans 7:21-23](#) - 21 So I find this law at work: Although I want to do good, evil is right there with me. 22 For in my inner being I delight in God's law; 23 but I see another law at work in me, waging war against the law of my mind and making me a prisoner of the law of sin at work within me.
- [Romans 7:25](#) - Thanks be to God, who delivers me through Jesus Christ our Lord! So then, I myself in my mind am a slave to God's law, but in my sinful nature a slave to the law of sin.
-

20 Everyone who does evil hates the light, and will not come into the light for fear that their deeds will be exposed.

-

21 But whoever lives by the truth comes into the light, so that it may be seen plainly that what they have done has been done in the sight of God.

-

Message Outline (This will be developed Friday)

- I. Introduction - Jesus came into the world to save

- A. The first moment that I remember hearing something described as a “come to Jesus meeting”
 - 1. Working for F.A. Richard and I really messed up - I probably should have been fired.
 - 2. I was told that I was about to have a “come to Jesus meeting” with my manager.
 - 3. I remember how scared I was.
- B. Come to Jesus meetings are thought of as bad things in popular culture but not in the gospel.
 - 1. They are moments of condemnation
 - 2. But in scripture a come to Jesus meeting is about love, even if some condemnation ends up being a part of the meeting.
 - 3. John 3:17 - For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him.

II. The brazen snake

- A. One of the beauties of the Gospel is that it isn't something new.
 - 1. It isn't just an add-on or Plan B when God's original plan didn't work.
 - 2. Instead, it was the plan all along and is hinted out throughout scripture.
 - 3. Over and over again we see “types” of Christ within the Old Testament
 - a) As Moses ...
 - b) So the Son of Man ...
 - c) Typology - look for what is similar but don't overstate it.
 - (1) Death as a punishment for sin
 - (2) God Himself provides the remedy
 - (3) The remedy involves something/someone being lifted
 - (4) Those with a believing heart look to that which has been lifted up and are healed.

- d) Destructions comes because of our rebellion and God wants to bring salvation.

III. This is the verdict

A. It is so easy to start thinking that God's plan is condemnation

1. You don't have to look for long to see the evil in the world
2. You don't have to look very long into your own soul to discover the evil intent that often lays within ourselves

B. But God's plan isn't about condemnation. He came to save us.

1. John 3:17 For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him.
2. John 3:16 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.

C. This plan includes saving us from our evil actions themselves

1. [Romans 7:21-23](#) - 21 So I find this law at work: Although I want to do good, evil is right there with me. 22 For in my inner being I delight in God's law; 23 but I see another law at work in me, waging war against the law of my mind and making me a prisoner of the law of sin at work within me.
2. [Romans 7:25](#) - Thanks be to God, who delivers me through Jesus Christ our Lord! So then, I myself in my mind am a slave to God's law, but in my sinful nature a slave to the law of sin.

D. Because Jesus Saves

IV. Conclusion - We have to believe in the One Who was lifted up

- A. So Jesus was lifted up, like the brass serpent before him.
- B. We must believe in the One Who was lifted up
- C. That a real "come to Jesus moment"
- D. Revelation 21:3 - And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, "Look! God's dwelling place is now among the people, and he will dwell with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God.

**Help find a piece of art that displays the theme of this Sunday (we'll display it somehow)
Please post it or a link below.**

Help find a song that conveys the theme of this Sunday (we'll play it somehow Sunday morning). Please post a link or full song details below.

<https://m.youtube.com/watch?v=MZU2aEZe61k> "Lord, I Believe" by Bifrost Arts