

March 14, 2021
The Fourth Sunday in Lent
The Rev. Ayo Omoniyi

Prayer: In the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Amen.

Good morning.

Some of my friends try to convince me that not all snakes are poisonous, but to me a snake is a snake, I do not want any part of it.

I do not like snakes and just get scared every time that I see one. If you want to see me move so fast, let me see a snake, I am leaving everybody behind with the exception of my wife, because I am gone. Probably move faster than Usain Bolt, the Olympian.

In our first reading this morning, the Israelites were complaining and grumbling that Moses brought them out of Egypt to die in the wilderness. They complained about everything about Moses and directly sinned against God. They spoke against God and God got news for them by sending poisonous snakes after the Israelites. Many of them died after they were bitten by the snakes.

So they begged Moses to plead on their behalf to God for forgiveness. In response God directed Moses to create an image of a snake on a pole that those Israelites who were bitten by snakes will be cured simply by gazing upon the serpent image.

What a contract to the instruction given to Moses by God in our reading last week in regards to the Ten Commandments.

“You shall not make for yourself a carved image any likeness of anything that is in heaven or above or that is in the earth beneath or that is in the water under the earth.”

Moses followed God’s directive and made the image of a snake on a bronze pole and all Israelites who got bitten by the snakes were cured simply by gazing upon the bronze serpent image.

However, let us take a step back and look at the instruction given to Moses by God to deliver to the Israelites. They have to look at the serpent on the pole to be cured. That means whoever is bitten by a snake have to believe looking at the serpent will cure him / her and will not die.

Our God is basically telling the Israelites to look at Him and trust Him i.e. for them to believe in Him instead of them complaining and crumbling all the time.

My question this morning is this, what serpent do you have in your life?

Well, my serpent is that I worry too much about stuff and sometimes I do not put everything in God's hand that is the snake that continues to strike my heels. I am working on it. Working on my faith and asking God to strengthen my faith in Him.

Serpent comes in different forms, some might look like grudges against a family member or a friend, hatred towards someone that do not have your belief or that do not look like you, or selfishness that makes you not even bother to care about others in your surroundings.

In order to be healed we have to reexamine ourselves. I encourage you to seek healing by praying to God and as well forgive yourself. Look unto Christ on the cross.

In our gospel reading for today we read about Jesus response to Nicodemus a Jewish scholar who came to ask questions from Jesus at night.

In John 3:14 -15, Jesus told Nicodemus

“And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness so must son of man be lifted up”

“That whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life”

Jesus is no snake but making a connection with his own death on the cross for us. For us to look upon him, believe in Him and be saved.

Just like the Israelites looked upon at the brazen serpent they were able to be healed, the cross has the power to heal and give life too.

The gospel today is telling us that gazing upon the cross is not enough we need to have faith. We need to believe in our Lord Jesus Christ which of course is what John 3: 16 is telling us.

“For God so loved the world that he gave His only begotten son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life”.

God gave us the gift of his Son freely without limitation. Jesus did the heavy lifting as we walk our way through this Lenten period into holy week and Good Friday. God's invitation through the gift of His Son is for all of us.

As we talk about God sending his only begotten Son to us, who later died on the cross so that our sins can be forgiven.

What about His Grace on us as we read in Ephesians 2: 8 this morning

“For by grace you have been saved through faith and that not of yourself it is the gift of God”

It is through God's Grace that we are worshipping Him today.

This reminds me of Hymn 671 in our hymnal book – Amazing Grace (2-4)

1 Amazing grace! How sweet the sound
that saved a wretch like me!
I once was lost, but now am found,
was blind, but now I see.

2 'Twas grace first taught my heart to fear
and grace my fears relieved;
how precious did that grace appear
the hour I first believed!

3 The Lord has promised good to me,
his word my hope secures;
he will my shield and portion be
as long as life endures.

4 Through many dangers, toils and snares
I have already come;
'tis grace that brought me safe thus far,
and grace will lead me home.

5 When we've been there ten thousand years
bright shining as the sun,
we've no less days to sing God's praise
than when we first begun.

Wow!!!!

Grace of God is not based on need, merit or appeal. Grace of God is the unearned, unexpected, unmerited and undeserved goodness of our Lord.

God does not need us to be clean before coming to Him. Our God is Merciful and a Great God.

One thing I know for sure is this Our Almighty Father is love, He calls us out of darkness into the light, and Our God never stops from calling us into relationship with Him.

God did not send his begotten Son to condemn us, no matter how many times we have sinned against Him. God's open hand is there to accept us as we are at all times.

Therefore, I encourage all of us to take a step back and look at the ways we choose to follow Christ, in that we do not need to leave our lives in condemnation, but to find our loving God who gave His only Son that everyone who believes in Him will not perish but have eternal life.

During this Lenten period let us re-examine ourselves and walk towards the light of Christ.

As we continue on this Lenten journey, let us hold unto that assurance of God's love for each one of us and strive to find its meaning.

Our God is awesome, merciful, forgiven and He continues to invite us into relationship with Him, therefore during this Lenten season, let us continue to trust our God, pray to Him to strengthen our faith in Him, and grant us His Grace, so we can overcome the serpents in our lives. Amen.