

Welcome to Worship at
Trinity Lutheran Church, Osceola, WI
Lent 4 - March 14, 2021

P: In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be acceptable in Your sight, O Lord, my Strength and my Redeemer. Amen.

Hymn #414 - *"I Leave All Things to God's Direction"*

**I leave all things to God's direction;
He loves me both in wealth and woe.
His will is good, sure his affection;
His tender love is true, I know.
My fortress and my rock is he:
What pleases God, that pleases me.**

**God knows what must be done to save me;
His love for me will never cease.
Upon his hands he did engrave me
With purest gold of loving grace.
His will supreme must ever be:
What pleases God, that pleases me.**

**My God desires the soul's salvation;
My soul he, too, desires to save.
Therefore with Christian resignation
All earthly troubles I will brave.
His will be done eternally:
What pleases God, that pleases me.**

**My God has all things in his keeping;
He is my ever-faithful friend.
He gives me laughter after weeping,
And all his ways in blessings end.
His love endures eternally:
What pleases God, that pleases me.**

P: Beloved in the Lord, let us draw near with a true heart and confess our sins to God our Father, asking Him in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ to grant us forgiveness.

C: **Almighty God, our Maker and Redeemer, we poor sinners confess to You that we are by nature sinful and unclean and that we have sinned against You in our thoughts, words, and actions. Therefore we flee for refuge to Your infinite mercy, seeking and imploring Your grace and forgiveness for the sake of our Lord Jesus Christ. O Lord, have mercy on us!**

P: Upon this your confession, I as a called servant of Christ and His Word announce to you the grace of God, and in the place of and by the command of my Lord Jesus Christ, I forgive you all your sins in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

C: **Amen.**

First Lesson: Numbers 21:4-9

They set out from Mount Hor along the road to the Red Sea to go around the land of Edom, but the people became very impatient along the way. The people spoke against God and against Moses, "Why have you brought us up out of Egypt to die in the wilderness? Look, there is no food! There is no water! And we are disgusted by this worthless food!" The Lord sent venomous snakes among the people, and the snakes bit the people. As a result many people from Israel died. The people went to Moses and said, "We have sinned, because we have spoken against the Lord and against you. Pray to the Lord to take the snakes away from us." So Moses prayed on behalf of the people. The Lord said to Moses, "Make a venomous snake and put it on a pole. If anyone who is bitten looks at it, he will live." Moses made a bronze snake and put it on the pole. If a snake had bitten anyone, if that person looked at the bronze snake, he lived. (EHV)

Psalm 38

Refrain: Be merciful, O Lord, for we have sinned.

**O LORD, do not rebuke me in your 'anger
Or discipline me 'in your wrath.**

**For your arrows have 'pierced me,
And your hand has come down up'on me.**

**My guilt has over'whelmed me
Like a burden too heav'y to bear.**

Refrain: Be merciful, O Lord, for we have sinned.

**All my longings lie open before 'you, O LORD;
My sighing is not hid'den from you.**

**I wait for 'you, O LORD;
You will answer, O 'Lord my God.**

**Come quickly to 'help me,
O Lord my 'Sav ior.**

**Glory be to the Father and 'to the Son
And to the Holy 'Spirit,
As it was in the be'ginning,
Is now, and will be forever. 'Amen.**

Refrain: Be merciful, O Lord, for we have sinned.

Second Lesson: Ephesians 2:4-10

But God, because he is rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us, made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in trespasses. It is by grace you have been saved! He also raised us up with Christ and seated us with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus. He did this so that, in the coming ages, he might demonstrate the surpassing riches of his grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus. Indeed, it is by grace you have been saved, through faith - and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God - not by works, so that no one can boast. For we are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared in advance so that we would walk in them. (EHV)

Verse of the Day: 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.

Gospel: John 3:14-21

“Just as Moses lifted up the snake in the wilderness, so the Son of Man must be lifted up, so that everyone who believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. “For God so loved the world that he gave his only-begotten Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish, but have eternal life. For God did not send his Son

into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him. The one who believes in him is not condemned, but the one who does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only-begotten Son of God. This is the basis for the judgment: The light has come into the world, yet people loved the darkness rather than the light, because their deeds were evil. In fact, everyone who practices wicked things hates the light and does not come toward the light, or else his deeds would be exposed. But the one who does what is true comes toward the light, in order that his deeds may be seen as having been done in connection with God.” (EHV)

The Apostles’ Creed:

I believe in God, the Father almighty, maker of heaven and earth.

I believe in Jesus Christ, His only Son, our Lord, who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died, and was buried. He descended into hell. The third day He rose again from the dead. He ascended into heaven and is seated at the right hand of God the Father almighty. From there He will come to judge the living and the dead.

I believe in the Holy Spirit, the Holy Christian Church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting. Amen.

Hymn #391 - “God Loved the World So that He Gave”

**God loved the world so that he gave
His only Son the lost to save
That all who would in him believe
Should everlasting life receive.**

**Christ is the solid rock of faith,
Who was made flesh and suffered death.
All who confide in him alone
Are built on this chief cornerstone.**

**God would not have the sinner die -
His Son with saving grace is nigh.**

**His Spirit in the Word does teach
How we the blessed goal may reach.**

**Be of good cheer, for God's own Son
Forgives the sins that you have done.
You're justified by Jesus' blood;
Baptized, you are a child of God.**

**When you are sick, when death draws near,
This truth your troubled heart can cheer:
Christ Jesus saves my soul from death -
This is the anchor of my faith!**

**Glory to God the Father, Son,
And Holy Spirit, Three in One!
To you, O blessed Trinity,
Be praise now and eternally!**

**The Sermon: Numbers 21:4-9
 "God Rescues His People"**

Was there ever a time in your life when you needed to be **rescued**? Maybe it was when you were a **child**, and you climbed up into a **tree**, and then you couldn't figure out how to get **down** again. Or, maybe later in life you found yourself stranded on the side of the **road**, or you got out to the middle of a **lake** and ran out of **gas**. If you've ever found yourself in a situation like that, then you know what a great **feeling** it is when someone comes to the **rescue**. There is a reason we **respect** rescue workers - people like **policemen**, **firemen**, and first **responders**. Their work is so **valuable** - **especially** when we find ourselves in a **crisis** situation. In our sermon text today, we see a very dramatic **rescue** take place. As we look at how **God Rescues His People** - the children of **Israel** - we **also** think about how God rescues each and every one of **us**.

Our text begins by filling us in on the travel plans of the Children of Israel. We read, "*They set out from Mt **Hor** along the road to the **Red Sea** to go around the land of **Edom**.*" This event takes place near the **end** of the 40 years of wandering in the **wilderness** for the Israelites. They were **almost** ready to enter into the **Promised Land** - but not quite **yet**. They had asked the king of Edom **several** times, if they could travel **through** his land to **finish** their journey, but each time he **refused**. Now, because the Edomites were not inhabitants of **Canaan**,

they were **not** one of the groups of people that the Lord wanted His children to **destroy** in battle. So, instead of starting a **conflict** with them, they were forced to make a **detour**, and go **around** the land of Edom.

As a result of this **delay**, the people started to **complain** again, and unfortunately, this **younger** generation sounded very much like the **previous** generation who had **often** grumbled against the Lord. They complained, “*Why have you brought us up out of Egypt to **die** in the desert? Look, there is no **food!** There is no **water!** And we are **disgusted** by this **worthless food!**” Apparently, they didn’t **realize** that they had almost **reached** their destination - the **Promised Land**. The Lord had promised to be **with** them along the way, and He **was**. The Lord had promised to give them the food and drink they **needed**, and He **did**. In the verses before these, we even read how the Lord granted them a **military victory** over the Canaanite king of **Arad**. But somehow, the people looked right **past** all those blessings, and returned to their **grumbling** and **complaining**.*

What a **selfish** and **sinful** attitude. They **deserved** to be **punished** for their actions, and that’s exactly what **happened**. We read, “*The Lord sent venomous **snakes** among the people, and the snakes **bit** the people. As a result many people from Israel **died**.*” Sounds like a pretty **harsh** punishment, doesn’t it? But the Lord was completely **justified** in His actions. These people were completely **misrepresenting** Him and **defying** Him. They were accusing the Lord of **not** taking **care** of them, when in reality He had done much **more** for them than they could ever have **earned** or **deserved**. Their sin was **serious**, and if it went **unchecked**, it could eventually lead to **total rebellion** against the Lord, just like it had with their forefathers. So God punished them **swiftly** and **severely**.

I think we would be more than a little bit **surprised** if the Lord would decide to send **venomous snakes** into our **church** today, and people would start **dying** from **snakebites** right in front of our eyes. But in **reality**, we aren’t any **less** guilty of **sin** and **rebellion** than the Israelites were. There have been **many** times when we have looked **past** our blessings from the Lord, and found all kinds of reasons to **grumble** and **complain** about what we **don’t** have. It seems like it’s so easy to **forget** just how **much** we have **received** from the Lord. So, we get **upset** when God causes us to take a **detour** in our lives. Just because something happens that we don’t **want**, or that we don’t **like**, we start accusing God of being **unfair**. Instead of looking at what we actually **have** from God, we focus on the things we **don’t** have. And that kind of **self-centered** attitude is very **offensive** to our God.

Do we even **realize** just how **serious** those sins are? If we **don't**, I'm pretty sure that a few **venomous snakes** would open our eyes. But we shouldn't **need** anything that **drastic** to happen, because the Lord **constantly** tells us about the **seriousness** of sin in His Word. He says, "*The wages of sin is **death**.*" Our sins **deserve** death - not just the **physical** death which is common to **all** people, but **eternal, spiritual** death. Eternal death in **hell** is far worse than venomous **snakes**. And it's something that each and every one of us **deserves**, because each and every one of us has **sinned** against our gracious God. So that leaves us in pretty much the same situation as the **Israelites** in our text for today. The question is, what comes **next**?

Well, let's take a look at those **Israelites**. What did **they** do? We're told that this generation of Israelites weren't **completely** like the previous generation, because when they were **confronted** with their sin, they **repented**. They realized that they didn't want to go down that same path of **rebellion**, and end up wandering in the **wilderness** for **another** forty years. They **knew** they had **sinned**, so they called out to Moses, "*We have **sinned**, because we have spoken against the **Lord** and against **you**. Pray to the Lord to take the snakes **away** from us.*" And **Moses**, as he had done so many times in the **past**, **pleaded** once again on behalf of God's people. And once again, the Lord **listened** to Moses' prayer, and He provided a **rescue** for those **sinful, self-centered** people.

The rescue came in what seemed to be a very **unusual** way. We read, "*The LORD said to Moses, "Make a venomous **snake** and put it on a **pole**. If anyone who is bitten **looks** at it, he will **live**."* We can well imagine that **some** of the people thought that solution was absolute **foolishness**. What **good** is a bronze snake on a **pole** going to do **me**, when I'm **dying** from a poisonous **snakebite**? Yet, there was no **reason** for them to **doubt**, because **God Himself** had **provided** this solution. So we read: "*Moses **made** a bronze snake and put it on the **pole**. If a snake had **bitten** anyone, if that person **looked** at the **bronze** snake, he **lived**."* It wasn't that this bronze **snake** had some kind of magical **power** to heal. It was the **Lord** who did the healing. Looking at the bronze **snake** was just the outward **means** that He used to bring it about. Their willingness to **look**, demonstrated their **faith** in the words which God had spoken. So, everyone who **believed** and **looked** to **God's solution**, was immediately and dramatically **rescued**.

Now let's bring that into **our** situation. Because of our **sin**, we are just as **lost** and **desperate** as the **Israelites** were. It's not something we can **fix** on our own. No matter how hard we **try** - no matter where we **turn** - we will always be left with the fact that we are **sinful**, and that we deserve God's **punishment**. We

can't rescue ourselves. But thanks be to God, He has provided a rescue **for us**, by sending His one and only **Son** to **suffer** and **die** for us. Jesus' **life, death** and **resurrection** made up God's **rescue** plan. And it was a plan that worked **perfectly**.

When Jesus suffered and died on the cross, He suffered the punishment for the sins of the **whole world**. That **suffering** was **exponentially** worse than a **snakebite**. Jesus suffered all the torments of **hell itself**, and He **suffered** those things to satisfy God's **justice**. Our rescue took place **on the cross**, and now when we **look** to that cross in **faith**, we **also** are **safe - rescued** from the venom of **sin**.

In today's Gospel reading, Jesus made a **comparison** between the bronze **snake** and the **cross** when He said, "*Just as Moses lifted up the **snake** in the wilderness, so the Son of Man must be **lifted up**, so that everyone who **believes** in him shall not **perish** but have **eternal life**.*" Some of the people in Moses' day **scoffed** at the idea of looking at a **bronze snake** for their **rescue**. And in the same way, some people today **still** scoff at the idea of looking to the **cross** for rescue. They think it's **ridiculous** - they think it's **foolish**. What **good** is a man dying on a **cross** going to do for **me**? But you and I **know** that the cross is **nothing** to scoff at. The Lord has **opened** our eyes to **see** the cross for what it truly **is** - the means of our **rescue** - from **sin**, eternal **death**, and the power of the **devil**.

May we continue to **look** to that cross in **faith**. When our lives take a **detour**, and we are tempted to **grumble** and **complain**, may we look again to the **cross**, and remember how God has **rescued** us from our **greatest problem** - the problem of **sin**. And may we always **remember** that God is with us **every day**, to **strengthen** us and **guide** us. When we feel **crushed** by the weight of **guilt**, or **burdened** by regrets over our sinful actions, may we look to the cross of **Jesus**, and know that God has completely **removed** our sin and guilt through **His Son**. Amen.

Prayers:

Heavenly Father, we thank You for the love with which You loved us. You did not **spare** Your only-begotten Son, but delivered Him upon the **cross** for our sins. You were pleased even to **forsake** Him for a time, so that with His **suffering**, He might endure the very **depths** of anguish for us. To establish Your everlasting **friendship** with us, You made Him whom You declared to be Your beloved **Son**, the object of Your **rejection**. We ask You then, for **Jesus'** sake, not to be **hostile** toward us because of our sins, but to be at **peace**. **Forgive** us for the sake of His innocent suffering and death. And as You once sent Your Son to be our **Savior**, send Him to reign in our hearts through our **faith**.

O dearest Jesus, we confess that **our** sins too, including our **selfishness**, brought You to the cross where You suffered for every sinner. At Your own invitation we take **refuge** in Your wounds, and seek **cleansing** in Your blood. By the **sacrifice** You made, stir us up to **love** You, and to do **good** works. Give us **patience** to endure tribulations, **strength** to resist temptations, **joy** to overcome sorrows, **love** to replace bitterness, **guidance** to keep us on the path of righteousness, **boldness** to seek Your help in prayer, and a **will** to seek **counsel** from Your holy Word. May You always be to us the **Light** of Salvation, especially when we pass through the dark shadows of **death**.

O Holy Spirit, beloved author of our faith, lead us to remember the **sacrifice** Jesus made for us, lest failing to remember, we fall into **unbelief** and all kinds of sin and vice. Open our mouths to bear **witness** to our Savior's name. Open our hearts to give **generously** to the cause of Christian missions, and to the **relief** of those who suffer. Let the **joy** of our salvation in Jesus fill our hearts and minds, until that day when we meet Him in **glory**. We commend to Your care all who are **afflicted**, all who need Your **help** and **encouragement**, and all who need Your **healing** - whether **physical**, or **spiritual**. Be with us now, and forever. Amen.

The Lord's Prayer (Sung).

**Our Father in heaven,
Hallowed be Your name;
Your kingdom come,
Your will be done on earth as in heaven.
Give us today our daily bread.
Forgive us our sins,
As we forgive those who sin against us.
Lead us not into temptation,
But deliver us from evil.
For the kingdom, the power and the glory are Yours
Now and forever.
Amen.**

Hymn #377- "Dear Christians, One and All, Rejoice"

**Dear Christians, one and all, rejoice,
With exultation springing,
And, with united heart and voice
And holy rapture singing,**

**Proclaim the wonders God has done,
How his right arm the vict'ry won.
How dearly it has cost him!**

**Fast bound in Satan's chains I lay;
Death brooded darkly o'er me.
Sin was my torment night and day;
In sin my mother bore me.
Yet deep and deeper still I fell;
Life had become a living hell,
So firmly sin possessed me.**

**My own good works availed me naught,
No merit they attaining;
My will against God's judgment fought,
No hope for me remaining.
My fears increased till sheer despair
Left naught but death to be my share
And hell to be my sentence.**

**But God beheld my wretched state
Before the world's foundation,
And, mindful of his mercies great,
He planned my soul's salvation.
A Father's heart he turned to me,
Sought my redemption fervently;
He gave his dearest treasure.**

**He spoke to his beloved Son:
"Tis time to have compassion.
Then go, bright Jewel of my crown,
And bring mankind salvation.
From sin and sorrow set them free;
Slay bitter death for them that they
May live with you forever."**

**The Son obeyed his Father's will,
Was born of virgin mother,
And, God's good pleasure to fulfill,
He came to be my brother.**

**No garb of pomp or pow'r he wore;
A servant's form like mine he bore
To lead the devil captive.**

**To me he spoke, "Hold fast to me -
I am your rock and castle.
Your ransom I myself will be;
For you I strive and wrestle.
For I am yours, your friend divine,
And evermore you shall be mine;
The foe shall not divide us."**

**"The foe shall shed my precious blood,
Me of my life bereaving.
All this I suffer for your good;
Be steadfast and believing.
Life shall from death the vict'ry win;
My innocence shall bear your sin,
And you are blest forever."**

**"Now to my Father I depart,
The Holy Spirit sending
And, heav'nly wisdom to impart,
My help to you extending.
He will a source of comfort be,
Teach you to know and follow me,
And in all truth will guide you."**

**"What I on earth have lived and taught
Be all your life and teaching;
So shall my kingdom's work be wrought
And honored in your preaching.
Take care that no one's man-made laws
Should e'er destroy the gospel's cause.
This final word I leave you."**

P: Lord, now let Your servant depart in peace, according to Your Word, for my eyes have seen Your salvation, which You have prepared before the face of all people, a light to lighten the Gentiles and the glory of Your people Israel.

Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit! As it was in the beginning, is now, and will be forever. Amen.

The Blessing:

P: The Lord bless you and keep you,
The Lord make His face shine on you and be gracious to you.
The Lord look on you with favor and give you peace.

C: **Amen.**

Hymn #451 - *“Precious Lord, Take My Hand”*

**Precious Lord, take my hand, lead me on, let me stand;
I am tired, I am weak, I am worn.
Through the storm, through the night, lead me on to the light.
Take my hand, precious Lord; lead me home.**

**When my way grow drear, precious Lord, linger near,
When my life is almost gone,
Hear my cry, hear my call; hold my hand lest I fall.
Take my hand, precious Lord; lead me home.**

**When the darkness appears and the night draws near
And the day is almost gone,
At the river I stand; guide my feet, hold my hand,
Take my hand, precious Lord; lead me home.**