

St. Olaf Lutheran Church
Sunday, March 14, 2021
Fourth Sunday in Lent, Year B

Introduction

The fourth of the Old Testament promises providing a baptismal lens this Lent is the promise God makes to Moses: those who look on the bronze serpent will live. In today's gospel Jesus says he will be lifted up on the cross like the serpent, so that those who look to him in faith will live. When we receive the sign of the cross in baptism, that cross becomes the sign we can look to in faith for healing, for restored relationship to God, for hope when we are dying.

Confession and Forgiveness

All may make the sign of the cross, the sign marked at baptism, as the presiding minister begins.

Blessed be the holy Trinity, ✠ one God,
the keeper of the covenant,
the source of steadfast love,
our rock and our redeemer.

Amen.

God hears us when we cry, and draws us close in Jesus Christ. Let us return to the one who is full of compassion.

Silence is kept for reflection.

Fountain of living water,

pour out your mercy over us.

Our sin is heavy, and we long to be free.

Rebuild what we have ruined

and mend what we have torn.

Wash us in your cleansing flood.

Make us alive in the Spirit

to follow in the way of Jesus,

as healers and restorers of the world you so love.

Amen.

Beloved, God's word never fails.

The promise rests on grace:

by the saving love of Jesus Christ,

the wisdom and power of God,

your sins are ✠ forgiven, and God remembers them no more.

Journey in the way of Jesus.

Amen.

1 Longing for light, we wait in darkness.
Longing for truth, we turn to you.
Make us your own, your holy people,
light for the world to see.

Refrain

Christ, be our light!
Shine in our hearts.
Shine through the darkness.
Christ, be our light!
Shine in your church gathered today.

2 Longing for peace, our world is troubled.
Longing for hope, many despair.
Your word alone has pow'r to save us.
Make us your living voice. ***Refrain***

P: The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all.

C: **And also with you.**

In peace, let us pray to the Lord.

Lord, have mercy.

For the peace from above, and for our salvation, let us pray to the Lord.

Lord have mercy.

For the peace of the whole world, for the well-being of the church of God, and for the unity of all, let us pray to the Lord.

Lord have mercy.

For this holy house, and for all who offer here their worship and praise, let us pray to the Lord.

Lord have mercy.

Help, save, comfort, and defend us, gracious Lord.

Amen.

In the Cross of Christ I Glory

ELW 324

Vs. 1

In the cross of Christ I glory,
tow'ring o'er the wrecks of time.
All the light of sacred story
gathers round its head sublime

Prayer of the Day

O God, rich in mercy, by the humiliation of your Son you lifted up this fallen world and rescued us from the hopelessness of death. Lead us into your light, that all our deeds may reflect your love, through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. **Amen.**

First Reading: Numbers 21:4-9

Though God provides food and water for the Israelites in the wilderness, they whine and grumble. They forget about the salvation they experienced in the exodus. God punishes them for their sin, but when they repent God also provides a means of healing: a bronze serpent lifted up on a pole.

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. 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." 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. 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.

L: Word of God, word of Life

C: **Thanks be to God.**

Second Reading: Ephesians 2:1-10

While we were dead in our sinfulness, God acted to make us alive as a gift of grace in Christ Jesus. We are saved not by what we do but by grace through faith. Thus our good works are really a reflection of God's grace at work in our lives.

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, the spirit that is now at work among those who are disobedient. ³All of us once lived among them 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—⁶and 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.

L: Word of God, word of Life

C: **Thanks be to God.**

***Gospel Acclamation**

**Return to the Lord, your God, for he is gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love,
and abounding in steadfast love.**

Gospel: John 3:14-21

To explain the salvation of God to the religious leader, Nicodemus, Jesus refers to the scripture passage quoted in today's first reading. Just as those who looked upon the bronze serpent were healed, so people will be saved when they behold Christ lifted up on the cross.

[Jesus said:] ¹⁴“Just 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.

¹⁶“For 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.

¹⁷“Indeed, God did not send the Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him. ¹⁸Those who believe in him are not condemned; but those who do not believe are condemned already, because they have not believed in the name of the only Son of God. ¹⁹And this is the judgment, that the light 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. ²¹But those who do what is true come to the light, so that it may be clearly seen that their deeds have been done in God.”

CHILDREN'S SERMON

Emily Wikner

SERMON

Pastor Emily

HYMN

Lead Me, Guide Me

ELW 768

Vs. 1 & 3

Refrain

Lead me, guide me, along the way;
for if you lead me I cannot stray.
Lord, let me walk each day with thee.
Lead me, O Lord, lead me.

1 I am weak and I need thy strength and pow'r
to help me over my weakest hour.
Help me through the darkness thy face to see.
Lead me, O Lord, lead me. **Refrain**

3 I am lost if you take your hand from me,
I am blind without thy light to see.
Lord, just aways let me thy servant be.
Lead me, O Lord, lead me. **Refrain**

***Apostle's Creed**

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

**I believe in Jesus Christ, God's 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 to the dead.*
On the third day he rose again;
he ascended into heaven,
he is seated at the right hand of the Father,
and he will come to judge the living and the dead.**

**I believe in the Holy Spirit,
the holy catholic church,
the communion of saints,
the forgiveness of sins,
the resurrection of the body,
and the life everlasting. Amen.**

Prayers of Intercession

P: Here us O God.

C: **Your mercy is great.**

Merciful God, hear the prayers of your people, spoken or silent, for the sake of the one who dwells among us, your Son, Jesus Christ our Savior.

Amen.

Peace

P: The peace of Christ be with you always.

C: **And also with you. (feel free to do an 'air' high five or a peace sign).**



Offering

Thank you for joining us in worship. At this time we will receive the offering for the mission and ministry at St. Olaf Lutheran Church. Our congregation relies on the generosity of God's people to sustain the work of our Lord. You can give by mailing a check to the church or on our Paypal link paypal.me/stolaffd

Offering Prayer

Faithful God,
you walk beside us in desert places,
and you meet us in our hunger with bread from heaven.
Accompany us in this meal,
that we may pass over from death to life
with Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord.
Amen.

***Lord's Prayer**

**Our Father
Who art in Heaven
Hallowed be thy name
Thy kingdom come
Thy will be done
On earth as it is in Heaven
Give us this day our daily bread
And forgive us our trespasses
As we forgive those who trespass against us
And lead us not into temptation
But deliver us from evil
For thine is the Kingdom
and the power and the glory
Forever and ever.**

Amen.

***Blessing**

You are what God made you to be:
created in Christ Jesus for good works,
chosen as holy and beloved,
freed to serve your neighbor.

God bless you (✝) that you may be a blessing
in the name of the holy and life-giving Trinity.
Amen.

- 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 that taught my heart to fear,
and grace my fears relieved;
how precious did that grace appear
the hour I first believed!
- 3 Through many dangers, toils, and snares
I have already come;
'tis grace has brought me safe thus far,
and grace will lead me home.
- 4 The Lord has promised good to me;
his word my hope secures;
he will my shield and portion be
as long as life endures.
- 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'd first begun.

***Dismissal**

Go in peace. Share the good news.

Thanks be to God.

Assisting in Worship

Presider:	Pastor Emily Sauer
Children's Sermon:	Emily Wikner
Lector:	Nancy Hamilton
Organist:	Jason Swedlund
Soloist:	Lynda Mumm
Sound Tech(s):	Marc Matthes Mark Oester Robert Younie