

Salem-Sauk Valley Lutheran Parish
Order of Sunday Worship- Fourth Sunday in Lent- March 10th, 2024
At Sauk Valley Lutheran Church

Prelude

Emily Larson, Musician

Welcome/Announcements

Invocation:

P: We gather in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. **C: Amen.**

Opening Prayer:

P: O Lord, our Maker, Redeemer, and Comforter, we are assembled in Your presence to hear Your holy Word. We pray that You would open our hearts by Your Holy Spirit, that through the preaching of Your Word we may be taught to repent of our sins, to believe on Jesus in life and in death, and grow day by day in grace and holiness. Hear us for Christ's sake. **C: Amen.**

Hymn:

"Abide with Me"

Praise #478

Confession of Sin:

P: Let us bow before the Lord and confess our sins.

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 by thought, word, and deed. Therefore, we flee for refuge to Your infinite mercy, seeking and imploring Your grace, for the sake of our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

Kyrie:

"Gathered in your Peace we Pray"

1. Gathered in your peace, we pray: **Grant your mercy, holy Lord.**

For our shattered world, this day: **Grant your mercy, holy Lord.**

Give us peace upon our way: **Grant your mercy, holy Lord.**

2. For the Church, your wounded Bride: **Grant your mercy, Jesus Christ.**

Heal, restore her to your side: **Grant your mercy, Jesus Christ.**

Take away her sin and pride: **Grant your mercy, Jesus Christ.**

3. For your people, saved by grace: **Grant your mercy, holy God.**

Make of us one holy race: **Grant your mercy, holy God.**

'Til we see you face to face: **Grant your mercy, holy God.**

Absolution:

P: Almighty God, our heavenly Father, has had mercy upon us, and has given his only Son to die for us, and for his sake God forgives all our sins. To those who believe in his name he gives power to become the children of God, and has promised them his Holy Spirit. Those who believe and are baptized shall be saved. Grant this Lord unto us all.

C: Amen.

Gloria:

P: Glory be to God in the highest.

C: And on earth peace, good will toward men.

P: The Lord be with you.

C: And also with you.

Prayer of the Day:

P: Let us pray together.

C: 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.

Psalm-107:1-3, 17-22

First Reading- Numbers 21:4-9

Second Reading- Ephesians 2:1-10

Gospel Reading- John 3:14-21

P: The Gospel of the Lord.

C: God be praised for his glad tidings!

Apostles Creed

C: I believe in God the Father Almighty, Creator 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, dead, and buried. He descended into hell. The third day he rose again from the dead. He ascended into heaven and sits on the right hand of God the Father Almighty from whence he shall 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 life everlasting. Amen.

Children's Message – "Jesus Loves Me"

Offering and Offertory: *We give Thee but Thine own, whate'er the gift might be. All that we have is Thine alone, a trust O Lord from Thee.*

Hymn:

"Rock of Ages"

Praise #315

Sermon

Pastor Lexy Carson

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

Grace and peace to you from God the Father and our Lord and Savior Jesus the Christ.

I spent some time in Australia when I graduated from college and while I was there I worked at a lutheran camp. Now when you hear Australia I'm guessing you picture deadly animals snakes and spiders. Well you're not wrong. They are around along with some scarier looking but less deadly snakes and spiders. I remember one of the training lessons I had was on removing pythons from you if you were to end up getting bitten. Their fangs go in the opposite direction so you actually have to pull them further into your skin to pull them out. So what do these slippery serpents have to do with our Gospel lesson?

Well, our Gospel lesson for today is known for the beautiful and peaceful verse that is so well known. John 3:16 "for God so loved the world that he gave his only son so that whoever believes in me will not perish but have eternal life." It is so well known that when I began typing it on my

computer it had an autofill. A verse that brings hope and comfort, a peace like looking out at the sunset over Lake Osakis or the Sauk River. “For God so loved the world that he gave his only son so that whoever believes in me will not perish but have eternal life.”

But if you back up just two verses to John 3:14, you hear Jesus saying “Just as Moses lifted up the snake in the wilderness, so the Son of Man must be lifted up, that everyone who believes may have eternal life in him.” A snake? Jesus why do you need to bring a snake into the conversation? Beyond even the cringe worthy feeling of just mentioning a snake, why are you saying that the Son of man will be lifted up like Moses lifted the snake? Why are you comparing yourself to a snake?

I began writing this sermon and wanted to skip over the first two verses, to put the thought of serpent out of my mind. Just as I longed to never think about python or even worse a taipan as I looked out over the beautiful Australian coastline. Except these questions of what is going on with this snake kept tugging into my mind.

Why was Jesus comparing himself to a snake? It is not just me that has a bad connotation with snakes. Throughout Scripture, the serpent has been associated with the devil. In the beauty of the Garden of Eden, the devil enters in the role of a snake that says to Eve, “Did God really say?” raising the question, instilling lies in the conscience of Eve.

Even this verse that Jesus is referring to with the snake instills further the fear of snakes. This comes from our First Reading for today, from Numbers 21. Where Moses along with the Israelites are wandering around in the wilderness, seeking the promised land and they are tired, hungry and frustrated. They are complaining and God sends poisonous snakes that bite the Israelites, killing them off.

God sent the snakes upon the Israelites. Just as God sent them into the wilderness, without food or knowledge as to when they might possibly reach the Promised Land. In the same way that God sent this world into a global pandemic, leaving us to wonder how long? Could you have imagined it would take this long? I’m sure the Israelites asked this many times. This is where the voice of the serpent enters. Is God really for you? Do you really have God’s favor? Look what he’s done to you. The hardships of a pandemic, economic turmoil, political unrest of red versus blue. The poisonous snakes just keep coming and coming, nipping at your heels. Making you feel as though you may perish.

Jesus says whoever believes in me will not perish but have eternal life. You live by faith alone. Faith in the son who will be lifted up. As Moses lifted the serpent into the air, so the son of man shall be raised. When Moses saw the Israelites being bitten, he prayed and it was God’s word that saved them. God’s work, telling him to lift a serpent into the air and all those who believe will be saved. So Moses lifted a serpent and the Israelites who believed were spared. It was God's word that accomplished this. If Moses and the Israelites would have been running around trying to come up with a solution they never would’ve survived. It was God's word, God's promise that saved them.

God takes something like a slippery, poisonous and treacherous snake and uses it to deliver a promise. You often hear Jesus called the lamb of God, king of kings, Emmanuel all these beautiful names, but his name in this text is rarely heard. Martin Luther calls Jesus the Serpent of Salvation. The Serpent of Salvation, capital S.

In the midst of poisonous snakes nipping on your heels, the devil raising doubts in your ear. Jesus comes to crush the lies. To be raised up, to be the Serpent of Salvation. To give you a promise. Your sins are forgiven.

For God so loved you, that he gave his only son so that you, who believes, will not perish but have eternal life. This is a promise specifically for you. For God so loved the world, he lifted his only son. Lifted him on the cross.

Jesus came to be the Serpent of Salvation, to die and rise again so that you would not perish. So that you do not have to worry about the serpent's nipping on your heel, so that you do not have to worry about if God is for you or if he favors you. To not perish means you are free, no concern over the lies of the devil. Just as the Israelites who believed God's promise no longer felt the bites of the poisonous snakes around them. So do you sitting here in this pew, no longer feel the sting of death as you believe in the Son of man, the Serpent of Salvation that was lifted up for you.

For God so loved you, that he gave his only son so that you who believe in him will not perish but have eternal life.

May the peace of Christ which surpasses all understanding guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. Amen.

Hymn:

"My Song is Love Unknown"

Insert

Prayer of the Church: Each prayer will end: Lord, in your mercy. **C: Hear our prayer.**

Holy Communion

P: The Lord be with you.

C: And also with you.

P: Lift up your hearts to the Lord.

C: We lift up our hearts unto the Lord.

P: Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

C: It is meet and right so to do. P: It is truly meet, right, and salutary that we should at all times and in all places give praise to You, holy Lord, almighty Father, everlasting God through Jesus Christ our Lord. You call your people to repent of sin and prepare for the joy of the paschal feast, Renews us in faith and holiness and bring us into the fullness of your grace and truth that belongs to the children of God. Therefore, with angels and archangels and all the company of heaven, we laud and magnify Your glorious name; evermore praising you and singing:

C: Holy, holy, holy, Lord God of Sabaoth. Heaven and earth are full of Your glory. Hosanna in the highest. Blessed is he that comes in the name of the Lord. Hosanna in the highest.

Words of Institution

Lord's Prayer

Invitation/Distribution

Thanksgiving-

P: The Lord be with you. **C: And also with you.**

P: Let us give thanks and pray: We thank you Lord God almighty that you have refreshed us with these gifts; and we ask you, in your mercy, to strengthen us through these same gifts in faith toward you and in fervent love for one another; through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord.

C: Amen.

Benediction

P: Now may the Lord bless us and keep us. May the Lord make his face to shine upon us and be gracious to us. May the Lord lift up the light of his countenance upon us and give us his peace.

C: Amen, Amen, Amen.

Doxology

C: Praise God from whom all blessings flow. Praise him all creatures here below. Praise him above ye heavenly host. Praise Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. Amen.

Birthdays & Anniversaries

Dismissal: P: Go in peace. Serve the Lord. C: Thanks be to God! Postlude