

FAITH COMES BY HEARING THE WORD OF GOD 3.14.2021

Let's look at the Bible readings for the 4th Sunday in Lent, March 14, to prepare for on-line, drive-in, and in-person worship (10 am) with Abounding Joy.

1ST READING: Numbers 21:4-9 Complainers are punished; Lookers are saved

⁴From Mount Hor (the Israelites) set out by the way to the Red Sea, to go around the land of Edom. And the people became impatient on the way. ⁵And the 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 loathe this worthless food." ⁶Then the Lord sent fiery serpents among the people, and they bit the people, so that many people of Israel **died**.

⁷And the people came to Moses and said,

"We have sinned, for we have spoken against the Lord and against you. Pray to the Lord, that he take away the serpents from us."

So Moses prayed for the people. ⁸And the Lord said to Moses, "Make a fiery serpent and set it on a pole, and everyone who is bitten, when he sees it, shall **live**." ⁹So Moses made a bronze serpent and set it on a pole. And if a serpent bit anyone, he would look at the bronze serpent and **live**.

SOME QUESTIONS TO PONDER RELATED TO NUMBERS, CHAPTER 21

1. What was the sin of the people in verses 1-5? What did they not trust?
2. What did the attack of the fiery serpents do to the people's attitude (vs. 7)?
3. In this story, where is the Law (God's expectations of us) and the Gospel (God's saving grace for us)?

2ND READING: Ephesians 2:1-10 God's grace raises the dead for a life of love

¹You were **dead** in the **trespasses** and **sins** ²in which you once walked, following the course of this world, following the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of **disobedience** — ³among whom we all once lived in the passions of our flesh, carrying out the desires of the body and the mind, and were **by nature children of wrath**, like the rest of mankind.

⁴But God, being rich in **mercy**, because of the great love with which he **loved** us, ⁵even when we were **dead** in 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 coming ages 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 a result of works, so that no one may boast. ¹⁰For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.

SOME QUESTIONS TO PONDER RELATED TO EPHESIANS, CHAPTER 2:

1. Sin (capital S) is the condition into which we are all born; sins (small s) are the behaviors that stem from our sinful condition. Do vs. 1-3 refer to big S sin, small s sin, or both?
2. Paul describes our condition as being dead in sin (verses 1 and 5).
What are dead people able to do to help themselves?
3. What's the significance of the first two words in verse 4?
4. According to verses 4-8 what has God done for us and given us through Jesus?
5. Who's responsible for us having saving faith in God? (vs. 8)
6. For what purpose has God created us (vs. 10)?
7. Do Christians do good deeds in order to be saved, or do we do good deeds because we are already saved?
8. Martin Luther said, "God does not need our good works, but our neighbor does."
How does that relate to this Bible passage?

THE GOSPEL: John 3:14-21 The Gospel in miniature

¹⁴Jesus said to Nicodemus, "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**. ¹⁶For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever **believes** in him should not perish but have **eternal life**. ¹⁷For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him. ¹⁸Whoever **believes** in him is not condemned, but whoever does not

believe is condemned already, because he has not **believed** in the name of the only Son of God. ¹⁹And this is the judgment: **the light** has come into the world, and people loved the darkness rather than **the light** because their works were evil. ²⁰For everyone who does wicked things hates **the light** and does not come to **the light**, lest his works should be exposed. ²¹But whoever does what is true comes to **the light**, so that it may be clearly seen that his works have been carried out in God."

SOME QUESTIONS TO PONDER RELATED TO JOHN, CHAPTER 3:

1. In vs. 14 Jesus refers to Numbers, chapter 21. In both stories the one who looks to the serpent receives **life**. In John 3 it is "**eternal life**." What's the difference?
2. Is eternal life for the here and now, or only for the hereafter?
3. (Vss. 16 & 17): What is God's will/desire for you?
4. Why do you think John 3:16 has been called "the Gospel in miniature"?
5. In John's gospel, belief is of primary importance. What does John 20:30-31 say about how we are able to come to believe in Jesus.
6. Who or what is the light in vs. 19-21? On the average day, do you walk mostly in the light or in the darkness?