

**SUNDAY March 15, 2026 "From Death to Life"**  
**Numbers 21: 1- 9 Psalm 130 Refrain 2--853 VU John 3 :1-21**

We continue our Lenten journey which for many of us, it is not an easy path. There is wilderness and weariness, unknowns and anger, and there is confession of sins and seeking forgiveness. And there is a question of trust- in oneself, in others, in Jesus and even whether to trust God with everything. These are real in our hearts and minds because of what we carry with us in our hearts, in our minds and even in our words and actions with others.

Last week the focus was on how Jesus got angry and overturned the tables of the money changers at the temple. His reason was that God's house is a place of prayer. Yet when we look at incidents taking place not too far from us where the Jewish community was attacked, we wonder why? Why are people so upset? What is it that people are missing?

But this is not only the case there, but even in our world-- we pray for peace in Iran with the US and we wonder why? We might feel the effects with prices at the gas pump, but many people are truly hurting because of the actions of others.

Just what is it that causes us to argue and be angry? Often it is because we have not read or listened to the information provided to us to have logical responses to what was shared. OR even it is because the reason for the anger is because we cannot change the outcome to something we want to occur.

Jesus is in the wilderness for 40 days and nights and he is learning about his life's purpose as the Son of Man and as God's Son. Does he argue with the Father about what will occur? Does he wonder if he will be alone in the time prior to his death? Will anyone care for him after his death? And will he be loved at all? No he knows his purpose and when we think about ours no matter how old we are-- is there reason to be angry? Or is the anger coming out because you cannot control what you want to happen or what is easy or what is content? Anger often comes because one has lost control of situations and inevitably there is change.

One can imagine what Moses was thinking as the people became impatient on their journey to the Promised Land. The people spoke against God and Moses. Why have you brought us up out of Egypt to die in the wilderness. For there is no food or water and we detest this miserable food! God heard their anger and complaining and sent poisonous serpents among the people which bit them which lead to many of them dying.

IN their grief, the people came to Moses and said, "We have sinned by speaking against the Lord and against you. Pray to God to take away the serpents from us. Moses did so. God

instructed Moses to make a poisonous serpent and set it on a pole. Everyone who is bitten shall look at it and live. SO Moses make a serpent of bronze, put it upon a pole and when a serpent bit someone, that person would look at the serpent of bronze and live. From venomous snakebites to looking up at what Moses raised-- there was new life. But only if the people realized that they sinned and could be saved from death by looking up to the bronze snake.

How often do we seek healing and wonder what might occur? Do we look up to God for answers? Or do we complain and grow angry and maybe become child-like?

It is interesting how the medical and health care companies use this snake on a pole as their symbol of hope-- for when there is healing, hope is restored. But do you have hope in God? Do you trust him as you wander this Lenten path to Holy Week and Easter? DO you wonder about whether your faith is grounded enough or whether you are growing in your understanding of having hope when in reality you are just coasting along- doing what you have to? Or even arguing without knowing why?

Nicodemus was a Pharisee a leader amongst the Jews who watched and listened to Jesus teaching in the temple. Not wanting the other leaders to know, he visited Jesus by night and talked not about the beauty of the stars but about who Jesus is. He calls him, Rabbi, and states we know, not sure who he is including in the "we", but he continues, we know you are a teacher who has come from God. This is his belief of Jesus-- teacher sent by God. And he knows this because of what he saw-- the signs of healing and listening to his profound insights of life which he witnessed. Yet Nicodemus is just not sure about how it is that Jesus can do these things.

Jesus challenges this learned man "No one can see the kingdom of God without being born from above." Nicodemus thinks Jesus is referring to physical birth, but what he is talking about is spiritual birth-- that is to be born of the Spirit. Jesus wonders how Nicodemus doesn't get this idea of spiritual birth when he asks you do not understand these things?

So Jesus explains- we speak of what we know and testify to what we have seen, yet you do not receive our testimony. If I have told you about earthly things and you don't believe how can you believe if I tell you about heavenly things? No one has ascended into heaven except me-for I descended from heaven!

Then Jesus refers to Moses' action of lifting up the bronze serpent in the desert to bring healing. This is what will happen -Jesus will be lifted up-- not in health- but in death. Jesus tells Nicodemus that he will be lifted up to die. But the good reason for this is because when this

happens, everyone who believes in the One who dies on the cross will live eternally because he will rise again.

This is Jesus' purpose- and what he states to Nicodemus explains it-- I was sent to earth not to condemn but to save the people. Those who believe are not condemned. But others who do not believe are.

Jesus states that the light of the world has come-- this is what we celebrated at Epiphany-- The light of Christ, has come into the world! But many people choose to stay in darkness instead of living in Christ's light. This is because their deeds and actions were evil and went against God's teachings. But those who experience Christ as Light see that what they do is from God.

When we consider Jesus teaching time with Nicodemus we need to realize that this discussion holds the foundation of our Christian faith. Jesus life will be lifted up-- on a cross- for all to see as he dies in a horrific manner- crucifixion. His life is given away- by God the Father- for the sake of all who believe and come to know him as Saviour for the sake of being forgiven and being healed with hope for themselves and for the world.

Jesus is not being raised in glory but suffering and death and through his will come life. And this is the foundational teaching of the Christian faith- Christ has died, Christ is risen Christ will come again. But the question for each of us today is simply this-- do you look to the One we call Saviour to be your Saviour? DO you look to Jesus as the one who because of his death will offer you life eternal? Or are you still searching!

We are saved by God's wonderful gift we call grace. This what it means to be grounded and growing in the middle of Lent- to remember that in the dry places, the wilderness and where there seems to be no life, God is still at work. God is coaxing life out of hard soil and bringing green shoots out of the ground.

Today is a day to lift our eyes, to take heart and to trust again in the healing mercy and love of God. And to do so with faith in God, in his Son Jesus and the Spirit which binds us together as one. But we must believe- look up- be healed and see Christ on the way to Calvary for your sake. It also means that when we lift up Jesus- we remember his suffering and this is what moving from death to life is about. This is what enables us to move forward- one step at a time and to do so in faith!

PRAYER God of grace we praise you for healing and hope; for faith and love and knowing that Jesus' journey to the cross was for us so that we may live eternally with you. Hear our prayers as we seek to be healed in you. Enable us to lift up Jesus as our Saviour with hope and new life. SILENCE. Amen.