



Sunday Teaching Guide

Lent, Week 4

March 10, 2024

Bible Texts

- John 3:1-21
- Numbers 21:4-9
- Ephesians 2:1-5

Important Terms

- Lent: A period in the Christian calendar that focuses on fasting and repentance leading up to the feast of Easter.

Sermon Notes

- Nicodemus, a member of the ruling council, came to Jesus. He knew that what Jesus was doing, what he was teaching, the picture of the world full of grace, mercy, and love that Jesus called the Kingdom of God, was only possible if it was from God. Jesus tells him that no one can see the kingdom of God unless they are born again. Jesus then tells him that the son of man must be lifted up.
- Jesus is referring to a story from the Hebrew Bible about Moses putting a snake on a pole and telling the Israelites that anyone who needed to be healed could look up at the snake on the pole and be healed. Jesus was telling Nicodemus, "Look up to the crucified and risen Christ, and you will be saved." Nicodemus didn't know what was coming then, but it would make sense soon.
- Jesus then tells Nicodemus one of the most famous lines from the Bible: "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. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him."
- Because of Jesus, the cross, which was a symbol of suffering and death, like the snakes in the desert, becomes a symbol of life, healing, and love. On the cross, we see the horror and result of sin, as Jesus and his message of the Kingdom of God were rejected, betrayed, and murdered. But, on that very same cross, we also see the depth of God's love, as his response to sin is unexplainable suffering, sacrifice, and love. This demonstration brings healing and life to our hearts. Sin placed Jesus on the cross, but the cross was transformed, so we no longer have to fear it or live as slaves to it. Jesus conquered sin and death.

Reflection Questions

- Why do you think Nicodemus visits Jesus in the middle of night? What do you think this says about Nicodemus?
- Why do you think Jesus uses analogies, metaphors, and references to the Hebrew Bible in his teaching?
- How do you think the cross was understood by followers of Jesus before his crucifixion? How do you think it was understood after the crucifixion?
- Why do you think John 3:16 is such a popular verse?
- What are some things that Jesus saves us from? What are some things that Jesus saves us for? What difference is there when the word "from" is replaced with "for"?

Prayer for the Week

- God of the covenant, in the glory of the cross your Son embraced the power of death and broke its hold over your people. In this time of repentance, draw all people to yourself, that we who confess Jesus as Lord may put aside the deeds of death and accept the life of your kingdom. Amen.

Additional Readings

- Psalm 107:1-3, 17-22