

# 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.

### Order of Worship

Today is a usual non-communion worship service at Grace.

### 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.**

### Readings and Psalm

#### [Numbers 21:4-9](#)

*The lifting up of the serpent*

#### [Psalm 107:1-3, 17-22](#)

You deliver your people from their distress. (*Ps. 107:19*)

#### [John 3:14-21](#)

*The lifting up of the Son of Man*

### 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.*

<sup>4</sup>From 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. <sup>5</sup>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 detest this miserable food." <sup>6</sup>Then the LORD sent poisonous serpents among the people, and they bit the people, so that many Israelites died. <sup>7</sup>The 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. <sup>8</sup>And 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." <sup>9</sup>So 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.

A The Word of the Lord.

C THANKS BE TO GOD.

### **Psalm: Psalm 107:1-3, 17-22**

*You deliver your people from their distress. (Ps. 107:19)*

<sup>1</sup>Give thanks to the LORD, for the LORD is good,  
for God's mercy endures forever.

<sup>2</sup>Let the redeemed of the LORD proclaim  
that God redeemed them from the hand of the foe,

<sup>3</sup>gathering them in from the lands;  
from the east and from the west, from the north and from the south....

<sup>17</sup>Some were fools and took rebellious paths;  
through their sins they were afflicted.

<sup>18</sup>They loathed all manner of food  
and drew near to death's door.

<sup>19</sup>Then in their trouble they cried to the LORD  
and you delivered them from their distress.

<sup>20</sup>You sent forth your word and healed them  
and rescued them from the grave.

<sup>21</sup>Let them give thanks to you, LORD, for your steadfast love  
and your wonderful works for all people.

<sup>22</sup>Let them offer sacrifices of thanksgiving  
and tell of your deeds with shouts of joy.

### **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:] <sup>14</sup>“Just as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of Man be lifted up, <sup>15</sup>that whoever believes in him may have eternal life.

<sup>16</sup>“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.

<sup>17</sup>“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. <sup>18</sup>Those 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. <sup>19</sup>And this is the judgment, that the light has come into the world, and people loved darkness rather than light because their deeds were evil. <sup>20</sup>For all who do evil hate the light and do not come to the light, so that their deeds may not be exposed. <sup>21</sup>But 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.”

## **Prayers of Intercession Lent IV B**

When I say, "Hear us, O God," you respond,  
**"Your mercy is great."**

Relying on the promises of God, we pray boldly for the church, the world, and all in need.

*A brief silence is kept as we gather our prayers.*

In their trouble they cried to the LORD, wrote the psalmist,  
and you delivered them from their distress.

We also cry out to the LORD: one year, O LORD, have mercy!

Hear us, O God.

**Your mercy is great.**

Almighty God, you created all that is, and in creation you take delight. We thank you for the gift of life itself. May we ever be mindful of this gift. We pray for the world you have created, for peace in the world.

Hear us, O God.

**Your mercy is great.**

We remember our own United States of America and our government at all levels: Grant us peace. Show us how to work toward unity, with love and respect for all people, even those with whom we disagree. Heal divisions among us that make our life together as a nation so difficult. Carve out a path for us toward racial reconciliation, for often we do not know how to begin. Let sanity guide our leaders in government and society:

Hear us, O God.

**Your mercy is great.**

Eternal God, in whom we live and move and have our being: All that we have and all that we are comes from you. Inspire the witness of all people toward fairness, even as we long to protect our own and the ones we love. Remind us of your love for the poor, the downtrodden, the stranger, the imprisoned and those we consider enemies as vaccines roll out to every corner of our country and the world.

Hear us, O God.

**Your mercy is great.**

O Christ the Healer, we have come, to pray for friends, ...

In the face of the coronavirus, we have felt afraid, overwhelmed, angry, confused, powerless.

Be a shield of protection, O LORD, around family and loved ones to keep them healthy and safe.

Beat back the gates of death until the vaccines can do their work, the virus is contained, and the pandemic ended. If there is culpability in the virus' beginnings, allow the weight of the law to hold those accountable. *pause*

Help all in need of your love and care. Heal people suffering from Covid, those with ongoing difficulties with illness, grief, unemployment or mental health distress.

Hear us, O God.

**Your mercy is great.**

O LORD, our LORD, we long to be “back to normal!” We long for a relief from the tension, a return to predictability, to the good life we knew and often took for granted, socializing with friends and family without fear.

Yet you are leading us to a new place beyond the pandemic, where health and growth will be your gifts to us.

Grant us the ability to give grace to others and to ourselves.

Extend our patience for restrictions that are still needed.

Let us not grow weary in helping our neighbors.

Still our anxious hearts, that we NOT be known by fear and anxiety

but by faith, hope and love.

Hear us, O God.

**Your mercy is great.**

We remember before you students and their teachers, aides and other school staff as more schools return to in-person learning, for their safety, for their learning. We lift Grace’s ministries of teaching and learning before you: Sunday School; the planning for a one-day Vacation Bible School this summer; Stepping Stones and scouts:

Hear us, O God.

**Your mercy is great.**

Your Word stands ever before us, O LORD, that no matter where we are, or what we have done, we may always turn to you and live! Standing on your promises, grateful ever for your mercy, we pray these and all things in Jesus’ name.

**Amen.**

Prepared by Interim Pastor Janet S. Peterman from the prayers submitted in anticipation of the one-year anniversary of the pandemic by the people of Grace in worship on 3/7/21

## **Blessing**

God bless you ☩ that you may be a blessing,  
in the name of the holy and life-giving Trinity.

**Amen.**

## **Dismissal**

Go in peace. Share the good news.

**Thanks be to God.**

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Prayers prepared by Interim Pastor Janet Peterman from the prayers offered by the people of Grace on March 7<sup>th</sup>, 2021

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