**Serpent to Son of Man**

**John 3:1-17**

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

In our text, Jesus says this, “And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of Man be lifted up, that whoever believes in Him may have eternal life.”

Do you remember the history of the Israelites after they came out of Egypt, having been in slavery for many years, and begging God to bring them out of hard bondage? Do you remember Moses and the Ten Plagues? And how God had parted the Red Sea so the Israelites could walk through on dry ground, but once the Pharaoh and his army was in the midst of the sea God made the waters return to their place and drowned them all?

Then they were at Mt. Sinai where Moses was up on the mountain and received from God His Law on two tables of stone. They rebelled with the golden calf and God punished them. They were thirsty and God brought forth water from the rock. They were hungry so God gave them manna from heaven every morning, and quail at night. Their clothes and shoes never wore out, they never lost in battle, God was constantly with them – His divine providence was evident all over the place, but…

In that history we come upon the people of Israel, having just thoroughly defeated the Canaanites, going around the area where Esau’s descendants dwelled, and they are doing what they always did – grumbling and whining against God. From Numbers 21, we read:

But the people grew impatient on the way; they spoke against God and against Moses, and said, “Why have you brought us up out of Egypt to die in the wilderness? There is no bread! There is no water! And we detest this miserable food!” Then the Lord sent venomous snakes among them; they bit the people and many Israelites died. The people came to Moses and said, “We sinned when we spoke against the Lord and against you. Pray that the Lord will take the snakes away from us.” So Moses prayed for the people.

The Lord said to Moses, “Make a snake and put it up on a pole; anyone who is bitten can look at it and live.” So Moses made a bronze snake and put it up on a pole. Then when anyone was bitten by a snake and looked up at the bronze snake, and lived.

Sound familiar? God’s people know of God’s blessings until life is not quite to their liking. Too often, even God’s saints are more concerned with having the desires of the flesh gratified, and sadly – yeah, even sinfully – they do not find contentment in the gifts with which God has already blessed them.

Maybe we could use God sending a few fiery serpents amongst us?

It was after the fiery serpents had bitten many, and they had died, that the people of Israel repented. It was only after many died that they realized their sinfulness, repented, and were restored. But did you notice how they were restored? When anyone was bitten by a snake and looked at the bronze snake, they lived.

How could that happen? God told them what to do through the mouth of Moses, when they were obedient to God’s Word – when the Holy Spirit moved them to faith, that is, to trust God’s Word and look at the bronze serpent they would be healed and live. When they were led by faith, to put their faith in action, they lived.

Was it really faith in a serpent that brought them healing? Or was it faith in the promise of God? The bronze serpent – on a pole – pointed forward to the greater healing to come in the Son of Man crucified on cross?

Do you trust the Word of God? “For God so loved the world, that He gave His only Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through Him.”

Do you trust the promise given in Christ crucified?

What exactly does that mean?

Do you fear, love, and trust in God above all things?

Do you confess your sin, that you are more enthralled with the things of this life than with God? What comes before time with God in your daily and weekly schedule? Do you believe that you need all that Christ offers in Word and Sacrament ON A WEEKLY BASIS to grant you forgiveness, and to build and strengthen your faith? Do you confess your sin, that while God has provided for all your needs, you are not completely content with what He gives? Do you believe that you need to repent of you worldly preoccupations and trust that what Christ accomplished upon the cross was done for your forgiveness and eternal salvation?

We gather around the font because we believe what Jesus says in our Gospel lesson, “Unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God.” Why does little Ella need to be born of water and the Spirit? Isn’t she innocent? How could she be sinful? Look at her, she is a cute, little, innocent, newborn child! She cannot even talk yet, how could she be a sinner?

She was born in sin and conceived in iniquity! No, that is not a commentary on her parent’s behavior. It is a commentary on what she has inherited from her parents – all the way from Adam – sinfulness, just as you and I inherited.

Baptism is hearing the promise of God which says that in Christ there is forgiveness for all those baptized into Him. Joe and Lizzy brought Ella to the font because the Spirit has granted them in faith in the promises of God.

You are gathered here today, knowing your sinfulness. You know that you have been bitten by the serpent, the wily foe. The venom running through your veins is killing you, it leads you into sinful desires. And so, in repentance you look to Christ crucified. You gather in this place because you trust the promise that in the Word you hear, your sins are forgiven and you are restored to life.

As the Israelites looked upon the bronze serpent, believing God’s promise, and lived, so you come to Christ’s table, believing that He was lifted up on the cross, your eating and drinking is celebrating His death. With your mouths you receive His very flesh pierced for you. With your lips you drink of the cup, filled with His blood, shed for you for the forgiveness of sins.

Yes, the Son of Man was lifted up, so that whoever believes in Him may have eternal life.

Dear friends, today is Holy Trinity Sunday, we look at the work of God in a Trinitarian, that is a three-in-one-ian manner. It is how God works. God loved the world, gave His Son to die for the sins of the world, and it is the Spirit who works faith by means of the Word of Christ, in order that all glory might be given to the Father.

How wonderful that Ella is baptized today, we can use that to help understand how it happens that one is born again. It is all the work of God! Yes, it is my voice which speaks the Word and my hand which applies the water, but it is the Word of Christ. It is in that Word through which God the Father calls the baptized by name, and makes them His. In that Word, Jesus takes your sins into Himself and unites you to His death and resurrection, cleansing you from all your sins. In that Word the Holy Spirit works faith in hearts to believe that it is finished, and that this is how God works His gracious gifts of forgiveness, eternal life, and salvation in you from God.

God puts His name upon us through baptism – In the name of Father, and of the Son, and the Holy Spirit. He blesses! He makes us a part of His family in this miracle. This gives us the privilege to come into His house!

It is the Spirit who works faith in you, which trusts the work of the Son for you, giving all glory to the Father.

There is never any time that it is not the work of the Holy Trinity.

Today we began our service in the name of that same Holy Trinity – Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. The Spirit gathered us together to receive the gifts that the Father would give us in His Son. Christ purchased those gifts by His work upon the cross, and the Father declares that those gifts are dispensed by the Spirit in the water, through your ears, and when you open your mouths to eat and drink.

These are the gifts you receive as members of the body of Christ, His Church, and the family of God into which you were born again, believing that in Christ you have eternal life.

Our service will conclude with the Called Servant of the Word putting God’s name upon you.

The Lord bless you and keep you.

The Lord make His face shine upon you, and be gracious to you.

The Lord lift up His countenance upon you and give you peace.

It is in this manner – as God commanded it to be done by His servants, and as He has promised that in the doing His name is put on the people – and that He blesses them. That is God’s promise! It is sealed in the blood of Christ shed for you! It is grasped by faith through the Spirit’s work upon your heart.

Blessings to you all for a wonderful Holy Trinity Sunday! You are born again, of water and the Spirit – into the kingdom of God – from the Father, through the Son, by the Holy Spirit – unto life everlasting. Amen.