

March 14, 2021 – Lent 4

Prelude

Introduction to the Day

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.

GATHERING

The Holy Spirit calls us together as the people of God. O give thanks to the Lord, who is good; God's steadfast love endures forever. Come let us Worship

CALL TO CONFESSION

This is the judgment, that the light has come into the world, for people loved darkness rather than light because their deeds were evil. Let us uncover our sin before the liberating light of Christ.

PRAYER OF CONFESSION

Merciful God, we confess the folly of our sin and the hypocrisy of our complaints. We grumble about the evils in our world, even as we commit injustices and profit through deceit. We fret about the scarcity of resources while hoarding earth's goods and cheating the poor. We protest the problems of our world, but we do not actively work to address them. Merciful God, expose our sins before the light of your grace. Heal our sin and free us from our foolish ways that we me know the joy of eternal life in Jesus Christ, in whose name we pray. Amen.

DECLARATION OF FORGIVENESS

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. In the name of Jesus Christ, you are forgiven.†

Thanks be to God.

GATHERING SONG - ELW #779 - "Amazing Grace"

GREETING

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all. **And also with you.**

KYRIE - Page 138

In peace, let us pray to the Lord.

Lord, have mercy.

For the peace from above, and for our salvation, let us pray to the Lord.

Lord, have mercy.

For the peace of the whole world, for the well-being of the church of God, and for the unity of all, let us pray to the Lord.

Lord, have mercy.

For this holy house, and for all who offer here their worship and praise, let us pray to the Lord.

Lord, have mercy.

Help, save, comfort, and defend us, gracious Lord.

Lord, have mercy.

PRAYER OF THE DAY

Let us pray.

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.**

WORD

God speaks to us in scripture reading, preaching, and song.

FIRST READING: Numbers 21:4-9

A reading from Numbers.

⁴From 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.

⁵The 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." ⁶Then the LORD sent poisonous serpents among the people, and they bit the people, so that many Israelites died. ⁷The 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. ⁸And 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.” ⁹So 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.

Word of God, word of life. **Thanks be to God.**

PSALM: Psalm 107:13, 17-22

¹Give thanks to the LORD, for the LORD is good,
for God’s mercy endures forever.

²**Let the redeemed of the LORD proclaim
that God redeemed them from the hand of the foe,**

³gathering them in from the lands;

from the east and from the west, from the north and | from the south.

¹⁷**Some were fools and took rebellious paths;
through their sins they were afflicted.**

¹⁸They loathed all manner of food
and drew near to death’s door.

¹⁹**Then in their trouble they cried to the LORD
and you delivered them from their distress.**

²⁰You sent forth your word and healed them
and rescued them from the grave.

²¹**Let them give thanks to you, LORD, for your steadfast love
and your wonderful works for all people.**

²²Let them offer sacrifices of thanksgiving
and tell of your deeds with shouts of joy.

SECOND READING: Ephesians 2:1-10

A reading from Ephesians.

¹You were dead through the trespasses and sins ²in which you once lived, following the course of this world, following the ruler of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work among those who are disobedient. ³All of us once lived among them in the passions of our flesh, following the desires of flesh and senses, and we were by nature children of wrath, like everyone else. ⁴But God, who is rich in mercy, out of the great love with which he loved us ⁵even when we were dead through 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 ages to come 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 the result of works, so that no one may boast. ¹⁰For we are what he has made us, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand to be our way of life.

Word of God, word of life. **Thanks be to God.**

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION – *Recited by All*

Return to the Lord, your God, For he is gracious and merciful, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love, and abounding in steadfast love.

GOSPEL: John 3:14-21

The holy gospel according to John. **Glory to you, O Lord.**

[Jesus said:]¹⁴“Just 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. ¹⁶“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. ¹⁷“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. ¹⁸Those 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. ¹⁹And this is the judgment, that the light has come into the world, and people loved darkness rather than light because their deeds were evil. ²⁰For all who do evil hate the light and do not come to the light, so that their deeds may not be exposed. ²¹But 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.”

The gospel of the Lord. **Praise to you, O Christ.**

GOSPEL MESSAGE – Icons vs Grace

Today we might identify an icon as a favorite hockey player, or a movie star and some reality show personality. Part of their attraction is that they are splashed all over our television sets, the internet, and in popular magazines. They are the subject of morning, afternoon and evening talk shows. We are bombarded with celebrity. It kind of makes one think we are not good

enough, doesn't it? They live lavish lifestyles that we might envy and only dream of.

Advertisers use these famous people to help sell their products whether it is perfume, jewelry, cars or favourite food products or restaurants. When we go out and purchase whatever they are selling, maybe we might have a feeling or a sense of being lifted up in status too. We are as good as the celebrity, are we not?

There is nothing wrong with having icons or material wealth, but the problem arises when we start to worship those things or those people. What makes matters worse is that we might not even notice we have fallen down the rabbit hole of worshipping these icons. We fall off our faith path with God and it might take years to even notice we have lost touch with our relationship with God.

The ancient Israelites in our first scripture lesson of Numbers had turned to other Gods while in the wilderness. They were disheartened by the wilderness living and lost their patience in God and Moses.

“Why have you brought us up out of Egypt to die in the wilderness?”

(Numbers 21verse 5)

Even after all God's grand displays of glory, the pillars of cloud and fire, parting of seas, providing daily manna to eat, and more, the grumbling Israelites still had no confidence in the promise of God's deliverance. They had become impatient in the wilderness while finding their way to the promised land. They turned their worship to idols that they could see and feel. They spoke against Moses and against God.

This angered God, so he sent poisonous snakes that bit the people, and many died. It seems harsh coming from God - but it seemed to have worked as the people turned back around and begged Moses to pray and intervene for them, and he did.

Following God's instructions Moses makes a bronze snake mounted on a pole, so when the people were bitten by snakes they could look up at the bronze snake and be healed and live.

In our gospel today, the writer of the gospel of John uses this story of the bronze snake on a pole to describe the crucifixion of Jesus on the Cross.

“And just 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.”

(John 3 verses 14 – 15)

As we are mid way through this Lenten season, we are encouraged to work at being more conscious and aware of our most random reactions and instant thoughts.

Paul tells the Ephesians, “All of us once lived among them in the passions of our flesh, following the desires of flesh and senses, and we were by nature children of wrath, like everyone else. ⁴But God, who is rich in mercy, out of the great love with which he loved us ⁵even when we were dead through our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ—by grace you have been saved—”.

God is "rich in mercy" and loves and understands each of us as only our Creator can, certainly better than we understand ourselves or each other. Our lives are filled with anxiety, and there are all sorts and conditions of "snakes" that might bite us. These snake bites can be likened to our sins. These snakes might come into our lives by our own actions as we strive to build up our reserves of earthly material things and icons.

Throughout Lent, we are called to look to Christ and the Cross, in faith, for our salvation, before we are bitten by the snakes of sin. With meaningful prayer and practice over time, even our unconscious thoughts and actions may be less poisonous to ourselves and others.

Meanwhile, let us strive to grow in faith, to accept and feel the infusion of the ever-flowing Grace within us that is a saving antidote to the darkness of sin.

Like the Ancient Israelites, as long as we repent and keep our eyes fixed upon Jesus, we are saved by God and we are given life here and now and into eternity. So let us thank God for his gifts we so abundantly receive, and while we might enjoy our modern day icons and symbols, let us live in faith with expectancy and comfort. Amen.

HYMN OF THE DAY – ELW #666 – “What Wondrous Love Is This”

PRAYERS OF INTERCESSION

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

You sent your Son that the world might be saved through him. Inspire the witness of the church throughout the world. Empower missionaries, Bible translators, and ministries of service in your name. Bless our partners in

ministry CLWR, our ELCIC global partner churches, and Canadian Lutheran Anglican Youth (CLAY) Gathering.

Your mercy is great.

From east to west your steadfast love is shown. Nourish seas and deserts, wilderness areas and cities. Give water to thirsty lands; nurture spring growth that feeds hungry creatures; bless farmers as they prepare for the growing season. Hear us, O God.

Your mercy is great.

You sustained your people in the wilderness. Give courage to all who lead in times of crisis and scarce resources. Prosper the work of those who aid victims of famine and drought. Bring peace in places where scarce resources cause violence. Hear us, O God.

Your mercy is great.

Your mercy endures forever. Deliver all who cry to you, especially those who are hungry or without homes. Give life in places where death seems triumphant; give healing to those who are sick and comfort to those who mourn. We pray for Florence, Jason, Harold, Richard, Sheila, Albert, Addrienne, Robert, Dorian, Sharon. And those we name silently in our hearts. Hear us, O God.

Your mercy is great.

By grace we have been saved. Fill this congregation to overflowing with that grace, that we show mercy to others. Nourish any in our midst who are hungry, especially children, and bless our ministries of feeding and shelter *especially The Grind and the Pembroke Foodbank*. Give us patience and courage when the way seems long. Hear us, O God.

Your mercy is great.

Your Son was lifted up that whoever believes might have eternal life. We praise you for all who have died in Christ. Bring us with all the saints into the fullness of your promises. Hear us, O God.

Your mercy is great.

We entrust ourselves and all our prayers to you, O faithful God, through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Amen.

MEAL

God feeds us with the presence of Jesus Christ.

INVITATION TO THE OFFERING

From God's immeasurable grace, we have been saved by faith. In thankfulness for this mighty gift, let us give thanks to the Lord and offer God homage, as we offer back our tithes and our offerings.

OFFERING PRAYER (ALL)

Let us pray.

God our provider, you have not fed us with bread alone, but with words of grace and life. Bless us and these your gifts, which we receive from your bounty, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Music

THE GREAT THANKSGIVING

The Lord be with you.

And also with you.

Lift up your hearts.

We lift them to the Lord.

Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

It is right to give our thanks and praise.

PREFACE

P. It is indeed right...we praise your name and join in their unending worship:

HOLY, HOLY, HOLY

Holy, holy, holy Lord, God of pow'r and might, heaven and earth are full of your glory. Hosanna. Hosanna. Hosanna in the highest.

Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord. Hosanna in the highest.

THANKSGIVING AT THE TABLE

Pastor prays the Eucharistic Prayer, ending with the Lord's Prayer.

Lamb of God – Page 146

Communion is received while you remain in your pews.

COMMUNION MUSIC

PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION *(Assistant)*

Let us pray.

Compassionate God, you have fed us with the bread of heaven. Sustain us in our Lenten pilgrimage: may our fasting be hunger for justice; our alms, a making of peace; and our prayer, the song of grateful hearts, through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord.

Amen.

BLESSING AND SENDING

God blesses us and sends us in mission to the world.

BLESSING

God sends us forth with the immeasurable gift of faith

We will live in the joy of our salvation

God sends us forth to walk in the light of holy love.

We will walk in the light of Christ

God sends us forth in spirit and in truth

We will journey in the Spirit's tender mercies.

Almighty God, Father, +Son, and Holy Spirit, bless you now and forever.

Amen.

SENDING SONG - ELW #339 – *“Christ, the Life of All the Living”*

DISMISSAL

Go in peace. Share the good news.

Thanks be to God.

Postlude

From sundaysandseasons.com.

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News and Announcements:

Please Pray for Those Who are Ill, in Hospital, or Requested Special

Prayers: Florence Felske, Jason Godin, Harold Hampel, Richard Hubert, Sheila Purdy, Albert Reiche, Addrienne Schroeder, Robert Schoof, Dorian Verch, Sharon Watt.

SERVICE BROADCAST ON COGECO

Cogeco Community Channel is now broadcasting Zion's services at 9:00 a.m. and 12 noon on Sunday mornings a week later.

GUIDING LIGHT DEADLINE

Please note that the deadline for April issue of the Guiding Light is this Friday, March 19th. Please have all submissions, including meetings and other events happening at Zion for the month of April, into Jean at the office by this date. Thank you!

CONFIRMATION CLASS

Confirmation classes resumes today at 11.30am in the fellowship hall after Sunday Worship.

UPDATES FROM CHURCH COUNCIL

1. Please remember that Pastor Leena is available to all for pastoral care during the next few months. This support may look different than we are accustomed to as she will be following all of the covid restrictions. She can be contacted at 613-631-1082
2. There will be congregational meeting on Sunday, March 14th following the service to hold a vote on calling a new pastor recommended by the Call Committee and endorsed by Church Council. Please be sure to attend this important meeting in the life of Zion.

REGISTERING FOR EASTER SUNDAY SERVICES

At this past week's Worship & Music Committee meeting, it was decided that we will once again have 2 Easter Sunday services – at 8am and 10:30am. Those wishing to attend will need to contact the church office by phone at 613-732-8792, or email at zionoffice@nrtco.net to pre-register (similar to what was done for the Christmas Eve services). We will take pre-registrations until March 29th. The church office is open on Monday, Wednesday and Thursday mornings from 9am until 12 noon to receive your phone calls.

EASTER DONATIONS

Anyone wishing to sponsor an Easter Lily or make any other Easter donations to the following funds (Building, Office, Good Shepherding, etc) is asked to contact the church office. The cost for the Easter lily is \$17.00. The deadline

for the Easter lilies is Monday, March 22, 2021, and all other donations is Monday, March 29, 2021. Please note that due to the amount of donation requests received during this busy time, we request that bulletin announcements must be either e-mailed to the church office (zionoffice@nrtco.net), or legibly printed on the donation forms located at the entrances to the sanctuary, and dropped off at the office, or placed on the offering plate or in the office correspondence mailbox. In this way, your announcement will be placed in the Easter bulletin exactly the way you wish.

COLDEST NIGHT OF THE YEAR

This past February 20, 2021 Team Zion walked 5 km through the streets of Pembroke raising money to help the most vulnerable in our community. This money will be supporting the Grind. We raised a total of \$4,615.00 through sponsorships. Thank you everyone for your support. As a church it is important to reach out and help those in need. The world can be a difficult place and we hope to ease the burden. We want our little light to shine in these dark times. Team Zion Members were: Gayle Seegmiller, Susan Dupuis, Kathy Godin, Debbie Sitkiewicz, Denise Schizkoske, Koit and Diane Rull, Catherine Bromely Arends, Ellen Vandersleen

Thank you Everyone! Altogether Pembroke has raised \$85,172.00. A community of caring people, a great place to live.

HELP FOR ONE OF ZION'S FAMILIES

It is with a caring and prayerful heart that the Social Ministry Committee is appealing to Zion's church family and friends to assist one of our young families.

Jason and Karen Godin, with their children Haley and Lucas are active members here at Zion. Jason is the son-in-law of Cheryl Sack and brother-in-law of Blaine Sack. Jason works as a Commissionaire Barrack Warden at Garrison Petawawa as well as a volunteer firefighter for Petawawa.

Jason recently received a Glioblastoma brain cancer diagnosis - the same type of cancer that Gord Downie battled. Jason will be needing radiation and chemotherapy treatment for this aggressive, incurable type of cancer. With the long road ahead; they could use some assistance as Jason's work benefits will not be enough to cover the many expenses that will be incurred in the foreseeable future. Therefore, we are asking for your help to soften the financial stress. Let us show them our love and support.

You can help with your contribution of cash, cheque or e- transfer.

- Make the cheque payable to Zion Lutheran Church, noting 'Karen and Jason Godin' on the envelope or the memo line. You can drop off the cheque at the church office or mail it to:

Zion Lutheran Church,
454 Miller Street,
Pembroke, ON K8A 5Z4.

******Please note that we will not be able to issue donation receipts for this appeal due to what the CRA refers to as "private benevolence". The CRA does not permit a charitable donation receipt under these circumstances.

- Use your online banking to send an e-transfer to:
["zionoffice@nrtco.net"](mailto:zionoffice@nrtco.net). Passwords are not required as auto deposit is set up. Please indicate that it is for Karen and Jason in the message box.

We pray for God's healing touch.

Thank You and blessings to each of you for your generosity!

This Week at Zion – March 15 – 21

Tuesday	7p.m.	Narcotics Anonymous
Wednesday	1pm	Staff Mtg.
	7pm	Lenten Service
Friday		Guiding Light Deadline
Sunday	10am	Lent 5 Worship Service with Holy Communion