

4<sup>th</sup> Sunday in Lent  
March 14, 2021

"God loves the 'line jumpers', because Jesus, the antidote for sin, is for all!"  
(John 3:14-16)

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LSB 571

"Grace to you and peace from God the Father and our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, Amen.

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ,

Today's text for this fourth Sunday in Lent is from our Gospel reading John 3:14-16.

**"And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life. For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life."**

What we just heard is an open-ended invitation from God to the world to receive the most precious gift that ever has been offered – His only begotten Son, Jesus.

This invitation was first extended to Adam and Eve after they sinned and has been given to every generation, including you and me – no limitations!

This is the one gift that all people need for without it they will perish. For just as the Israelites were perishing from the poison from the serpents, so also, all people have been bitten by the serpent of sin. All have been born with sin and all have failed to keep God's law perfectly. And for this reason, all deserve to perish eternally. But, God doesn't want that! He doesn't want anyone to perish. He is a merciful and loving God. He invites all men, women and children to believe in His Son, Jesus, believe that He is the Savior of the world, and thereby escape hell and have everlasting life.

Have everlasting life! Have it right now! Anyone, absolutely anyone...whoever...no restrictions, whoever believes in Jesus has everlasting life.

God does not group people by age or whether they are essential people or not. There is no 1a,b,c or 2 groupings to get cured from eternal death. The antidote for

sin - Jesus, is offered immediately to all because the need is immediate. At any moment God could bring this present age to its close. Then those who are without sin will freely enter the new world where the disease of sin is no longer present. The rest, sadly, will remain outside the door knocking and hear Jesus say, **“I do not know you”**. (Matthew 25:12)

Without sin. Yes, this is what this Gospel invitation offers. All people who look at the One who was lifted up on the cross and believe in Him will not die eternally. For on that cross, Jesus removed the world’s sin once and for all. He paid for it completely. It is finished Jesus said. There is nothing that a person needs to do or can do to save himself or herself. With a repentant heart God invites all to look at Jesus and believe in Him.

The Israelites cried out to God with repentant hearts. **“We have sinned, for we have spoken against the Lord and against you; pray to the Lord that He take away the serpents from us.”** (Numbers 21:7) Look, then at the snake. That is all that God required of the Israelites to do in order not die from the serpent’s poison. They were told to look at the bronze serpent that Moses was lifting up on the pole. Look and believe. And God Himself, God the Holy Spirit gives the gift to believe by creating faith in one’s heart.

Of course, any of the Israelites could have rejected God’s offer. This is silly, absurd to look at a bronze snake. Shouldn’t you be giving me some type of medicine instead? Then they would have perished.

The bronze serpent was the antidote. It could not bite. Jesus used this story to tell all people of how He is also the one way to be rescued. Sure, any man is free to reject God’s invitation to look at Jesus on the cross and believe. Many do. Jesus goes on to say in verse 18 these words. **““He who believes in Him is not condemned; but he who does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God.”** (John 3:18)

**“already”**. That is the state of those who don’t receive the gracious invitation from Jesus. One thief on the cross did and entered paradise. The other didn’t and perished. God wants each of our hearts to also say daily, “I have sinned against You. Take away my sin”.

And He does. **“For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved.”** (John 3:17)

Again, God says that His salvation is not just for some people but for the whole world! For just as the bronze snake was not poisonous, so Jesus causes no harm from the cross, only healing. For only Jesus died on the cross. He alone perished from all the venom of the world's sin so that no one else would have to.

There was a recent article in the Texas Tribune about people who aren't waiting their turn to get vaccinated. They're called "line jumpers". There was the story of a 37-year-old Austin mother who feared for her newborn if she or the baby caught Covid-19. She acknowledged that the family's decision to vaccinate her healthy young husband is an "ethically gray area" that could bring backlash from family members or the public if they shared it on social media. "But here's what I know now," she said. "I know if I get sick, my husband or mom could take care of my baby in the same household. I'll do anything to protect my baby."

And providers of the vaccinations are not turning away questionable seekers of the vaccine, because the goal is to achieve herd immunity. One provider said, "a shot in an arm is good for the entire community." But instead of line jumping, the providers say, "help a senior sign up".

Here is the good news about God's invitation to receive the antidote for the poison of sin. God wants "line jumpers" to take advantage of what He's offering. God loves line jumpers. There is plenty of antidote for everyone. You don't have to wait in line. Believe now and you have full protection. You have eternal life immediately. And there is no delay to receive full protection!

God wants the whole world to be saved from the deadly virus of sin. He wants all people to become a part of His herd, His sheep under the Good Shepherd, Jesus. Yes, jump into Jesus' herd by believing in Him and you are protected eternally by the Lamb of God. There is no herd immunity from sin. You are either in Jesus' herd or with the goats. (Matthew 25:31-46)

The vaccine that people are cutting in line to get is not 100% guaranteed. The best percentage is 95%. You have a 1 out of 20 chance of catching Covid-19 basically. Good..., but still not absolutely effective. And sometimes there are side effects that come with the shot which range from being unpleasant to life threatening.

It's very difficult to get registered for this less than 100% protection from Covid-19. Time slots fill up immediately. The vaccines run out. Some have spent hours in line just to get registered. Is there the same eagerness to receive the eternal life that God offers to all through His Son Jesus?

But there is no waiting to receive the gift of life that God is offering in the Gospel. There is no shortage of doses of faith by the Holy Spirit to completely cure you from the poison of sin. Yes, the cure rate is 100%.

Jesus told Nicodemus with whom He was telling the Gospel promise of John 3:16 that what God offers is a complete rebirth.

**““Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. Do not marvel that I said to you, ‘You must be born again.’” (John 3:5-7)**

Water and the Spirit. Baptism. God gives a new birth to a sinful man. For sinful flesh is flesh and man’s sinful nature cannot enter the kingdom of God. But God does everything by creating a new spirit. And that is how the gift which Jesus won for the world on the cross is given to an individual personally.

**“He that believes and is baptized will be saved.” (Mark 16:16)** The Holy Spirit creates faith to believe the invitation and seals the promise to us in our baptisms.

In this world, those who cut to the front of the line are sometimes get to be first to receive what the world offers. But to receive what God offers, you have to be invited to the front of the line.

**“So the last will be first, and the first last. For many are called, but few chosen.” (Matthew 20:16)**

It’s by grace alone that we are saved. The owner of the vineyard gives to all those who have entered His vineyard and labored the same wage. Why? Because He is good. He wants all people to be saved. He loves the line jumpers because He makes the last to be first. He wants all people to eagerly heed His call to repentance and receive the gift of salvation won by His Son Jesus on the cross.

So, you’re not going to die if you do not receive the Covid-19 vaccine. But if you don’t receive the Gospel invitation of John 3:16, you most certainly will perish. Repent, therefore, believe and be saved eternally.

So, after you've received the antidote for sin, help a senior, help a young mother, help anyone know that **“God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish but have eternal life.”**  
**Amen.**

**The peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.” Amen. (Philippians 4:7)**