

RECEPTION of Christ's Body & Blood which are Really Present, In / With and Under the Bread and the Wine for the forgiveness of sins.

Communion Hymn **C.W. 136** sung by the Congregation after everyone has communed including the Pastor

Nunc Dimittis (Song of Simeon - Liturgy pg. 24)

Collect / Prayer (pg. 24)

Benediction

Closing Hymn **C.W. 381** sung by the Congregation.

SERMON TEXT: John 3:14-19

Vs. 14 - Just as Moses lifted up the snake in the desert, so the Son of Man must be lifted up,

Vs. 15 - that everyone who believes in him may have eternal life.

Vs. 16 - "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.

Vs. 17 - For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him.

Vs. 18 - Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe stands condemned already because he has not believed in the name of God's one and only Son.

Vs. 19 - This is the verdict: Light has come into the world, but men loved darkness instead of light because their deeds were evil.

GREETING: How great is the love the Father has lavished on us that we should be called the children of God! And that is what we are!

Someone who has never heard of the account when Moses lifted up the snake (Numbers 21:4-9) in the desert will have a difficult time understanding what Jesus is talking about in this section of John chapter 3.

In the account in which Moses made the bronze snake to put on the pole, Moses was obeying the Word of the Lord. The people of Israel had again been complaining against God and against Moses because they were not happy with the food which the Lord God was providing for His people, the Israelites. (Num. 21:4-9)

As you will remember, the Lord God delivered the people of Israel from slavery in Egypt. (Exodus 11:1 – Exodus 12:51)

God then provided the people with Manna & Quail as well as water from rocks. (Exodus 16:1-Ex. 17:7)

Yet the people of Israel complained, and so the Lord God sent venomous snakes among the people which bit the people, and people began to die.

The people of Israel then went to Moses and asked him to pray to the Lord to take the snakes away.

God did not take the snakes away, but God did give the people of Israel an opportunity to demonstrate their trust and faith in the Word of the Lord.

God directed Moses to make a bronze snake, put the snake on a pole, and then anyone who was bitten by a snake, simply needed to look upon the snake on the pole, and they would live.

Those people who *submitted* themselves to the word of the Lord and looked at the snake on the pole lived. Those people who were bitten and then *hardened* their hearts against the Word of the Lord and refused to look at the snake on the pole, those people died.

It is this Old Testament account that the Lord Jesus uses as He instructs Nicodemus, a Pharisee who came to Jesus in the night, we are told that Nicodemus came to Jesus and said: **“Rabbi, we know you are a teacher Who has come from God. For no one could perform the miraculous signs you are doing if God were not with Him.”** (John 3:2)

Instead of allowing Himself to be flattered by the words of Nicodemus, Jesus cut right to the chase and said to Nicodemus.

John 3:3 – “In reply Jesus declared, “I tell you the truth, no one can see the kingdom of God unless he is born again.”

Jesus went straight for the jugular and wanted to teach Nicodemus the way to salvation, the way to eternal life in heaven.

Jesus first taught Nicodemus about Baptism.

The truth of Baptism is that in water Baptism, God the Holy Spirit (John 3:5-8) also comes and creates saving faith in the heart of the individual. After this miraculous work of the Holy Spirit, the person has faith in Jesus and the forgiveness of sins, and where there is the forgiveness of sins, there is life and salvation in heaven. (See also Acts 2:38-39 & Acts 22:16)

After Jesus brought in the example from O.T. History of the snake lifted up on a pole, Jesus then gently leads Nicodemus to HIMSELF as the Savior.

**Vs. 14 - so the Son of Man must be lifted up,
Vs. 15 - that everyone who believes in him may have eternal life.**

Since Nicodemus was a Pharisee, he would have been well studied in the O.T. Scriptures. Nicodemus would have been familiar with the account of the serpent having been lifted up on the pole.

Jesus is telling Nicodemus – “To gaze upon the Savior, and trust the Word of the Lord is Eternal Life!!!”

The Salvation in Christ Jesus is not only for Nicodemus, but it is also for every single person in the Whole – Wide - World!

Vs. 16 - “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.

Vs. 17 - For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through HIM.

Just as there would have been those who refused to look upon the bronze serpent in the desert at the time of Moses, so also during the days of Nicodemus, as well as today, there are those who harden their hearts and refuse to gaze upon Jesus as their One and Only Savior from sin.

The message of Salvation is plain and simple and clear as Jesus says it in another way:

Vs. 18 - Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe stands condemned already because he has not believed in the name of God's one and only Son.

Jesus then brings in another picture to illustrate the salvation which Jesus has won for all Mankind on the cross of Calvary.

Jesus uses the illustration of The LIGHT.

Vs. 19 - This is the verdict: Light has come into the world, but men loved darkness instead of light because their deeds were evil.

When the power goes out, how many people like to sit in the darkness for an extended period of time?

The sinful human nature unfortunately would rather sit in spiritual darkness than have their deeds exposed by Jesus the Light of the World. The sinful human nature, which we inherited from our beloved parents, is by nature hostile to God and enemies of God. (Gen. 6:5, Ps. 51:5; Isa. 64:6-7; Rom. 7:14-20; Rom. 8:5-8; Eph. 2:1-5)

What a blessing that God the Holy Spirit has come to us in the Gospel in Word and Sacrament (Baptism & The Lord's Supper), and we have been brought to faith in Christ Jesus our Living Savior.

Jesus says: **"I AM the Light of the World. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the Light of Life."** (John 8:12) AMEN

THEME: The Lord Promises Life To The World - And To You.