

God, how His kingdom works, faith doesn't make sense to our reason. It doesn't make sense Abraham praises the Lord for the promise of offspring, a nation, the Christ comes through his family when he has no children and he journeys on knowing it will take place but not how. It doesn't make sense to look at a serpent on a pole and be healed. It doesn't make sense to Nicodemus. **How can a man enter again into his mother's womb?** It doesn't make sense your birth from above, entrance into the Kingdom, your entire Christian identity, water and His Word poured over your head, even for babies.

A very real danger even for the strongest, most experienced Christian. We listen too much either to our reason or other Christian's theology and turn faith into an individual's feeling, their effort, their faithfulness. Something that makes sense to me. Instead of relying upon God, scriptural faith -pure gift, what He is doing, has done, will do for our life and salvation.

We have *absolutely nothing* to do with than being born! All the work of others, happens to you; you receive. All that is asked of a baby when it is born is to breathe and cry and eat and live the life that it has been given. So it is with the things of God, Nicodemus. There's nothing a man can do, to be born from above, for faith; all the work of God, **by water and Spirit.**

And what is now asked of you is simply to live this life that has been given to you. To breathe the Word of God, to cry out in prayer, to eat and drink the food your Savior has provided for the forgiveness of your sin. To live your life as His. To repent of your selfishness, your wrong focus and pride. To not listen to one of the worse advice ever, "to believe in yourself" and **fix your eyes on Jesus.**

Unless we have the concrete forms of the means of grace, found at altar, font, pulpit, liturgy of the Word, we meet God only with our reason, our feelings. This is not how Scripture speaks; not what Jesus says.

Our strength in temptation, our refuge in trouble, our confidence in doubt are not a feeling we have or what we think. Temptation, trouble, doubts rob us of these things and call into question everything we want to believe.

His kingdom -from the water and Spirit of His baptismal work in you -to the bread and wine of His body and blood -to the living voice of His Word that speaks and bestows what it says. His Word calls into existence things that are not.

Your reason, your feelings will tempt you to believe God loves you more when you're good than when you've sinned. It's true God delights in your good works rather than sins, but that's not the same as His love. If you believe His love for you changes according to your behavior, you're saying that you earn His love by your good works—His love comes at the price of your obedience or based on your thoughts, not Christ's blood. Repent. Rejoice our Lord's love is not like our love. Your love for others should imitate the divine love, which demands nothing in return, selfless and giving.

When Jesus speaks of His death by crucifixion He draws on a type of His suffering and our salvation from the Old Testament. Israel complained bitterly against God in the Exodus, even after all they'd just seen of God's hand in Egypt and Red Sea. God sent poisonous snakes among them and those repentant were given healing from their suffering, spared death -looking at another serpent on a pole. Who would desire to look upon the sign of their suffering and death -for healing from suffering and death? How does that makes sense?

Ironically, modern medicine discovered antidotes to many venomous snake bites from snake venom itself. The same of Moses serpent on the pole. The antidote to death was the sign of death. Counter-intuition reigns supreme in this Kingdom.

Today Jesus portrays Himself as fulfillment of the serpent in the wilderness, that we look upon Him, are healed and live. What an ugly picture He paints Himself! How does this make sense? Behold the antidote to your death. **As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of Man be lifted up.**

Lifted up in glory on a Hellish stick to cleanse men of the serpent's most deadly poison. Look there! Look with eyes of faith to the agony of grace outside of Jerusalem! There flows the only love the world have ever known. And you cannot stop Him from loving you.

Whoever believes in Him - the One raised up in death and lives and reigns, will never perish, have eternal life. **Whoever** promises our Lord - no matter how bad, how despicable, how wrong or mean or stupid or lazy or negligent or resentful or lonely - looks to Christ crucified, despite your past crimes; He brings forgiveness, healing, spared death.

God, how His kingdom works doesn't make sense to our reason. Our Lord calls His crucifixion His glory, how God loves, thus we see Jesus on the cross and there is nothing more beautiful to the eye. Jesus sacrificed for the sins of the world, even for your sins. That is how God loved the world. That is how God has loved you. And the wounds He now bears for all eternity are not reminders of your sin, but of His love, your healing. You belong to Him. You, born from above, through water and the Word. He does all things necessary by baptismal grace, that you spend eternity with Him. By His love, by faith alone given to you -you see the Kingdom of God even now.