

**Trinitarian Congregational Church**  
**TakeOut**  
**Lent 4 B**  
**March 14, 2021**

**Bells** <https://youtu.be/o6MOhSByB1g>

**Announcements**

**Prelude** “Healer of My Soul”  
John Michael Talbot  
<https://youtu.be/xonYvhL12eM>

**Call to Worship**

Heather Tower  
Rosemary Dawson

One: Come, gather from north and south, from east and west!  
Worship God with thanksgiving and praise!

**All: The steadfast love of God is everlasting.**  
**We extol God with our worship.**

One: Let those whom God has redeemed rejoice!  
Let them tell the world of God’s good news!

**All: We thank God for all his wonderful works.**  
**We will proclaim God’s love to all humankind.**

One: By God’s word, we are delivered from destruction.  
By God’s mercy, we are healed and made whole.

**All: With our voices we join in songs of joy.**  
**With our lives we will offer sacrifices of thanksgiving.**

**Hymn** Come Thou Fount  
<https://youtu.be/MqrWNYHsISQ>

OPENING OF WORSHIP

## 521 Come, Thou Fount of Every Blessing

A7 D A D G A7 D

1 Come, thou Fount of ev-ery bless-ing, tune my heart to sing thy grace;  
 2 Here I raise my \*Eb-en - e - zer; hith-er by thy help I've come;  
 3 Oh, to grace how great a debt - or dai - ly I'm con-strained to be!

A7 D A D G A7 D

streams of mer - cy, nev - er ceas - ing, call for songs of loud-est praise.  
 and I hope, by thy good plea - sure, safe - ly to ar - rive at home.  
 Let that grace now like a fet - ter, bind my wan-dering heart to thee:

A7 D G D A7 D G D

Teach me some me - lo-dious son - net, sung by flam-ing tongues a - bove.  
 Je - sus sought me when a stran - ger, wan-dering from the fold of God;  
 prone to wan - der, Lord, I feel it, prone to leave the God I love;

A7 D A D G A7 D

Praise the mount—I'm fixed up - on it—mount of God's un-chang-ing love.  
 he, to res - cue me from dan-ger, in - ter-posed his pre - cious blood.  
 here's my heart, oh, take and seal it; seal it for thy courts a - bove.

\* "Then Samuel took a stone . . . called its name Ebenezer, saying, "Thus far the Lord has helped us'" (1 Sam. 7:12)

Words: Robert Robinson, 1758, alt., P.D.

Music (NETTLETON 8.7.8.7 D): J. Wyeth's *Repository of Sacred Music*, Part II, 1813, P.D.

## Gathering Prayer

Heather Tower

**We gather to celebrate your wondrous love, O God. As you sent Jesus to earth to share our common lot and bring eternal life into our midst, help us today to turn to him in belief and trust. Show us the light of your revelation and help us to welcome its presence in the life of this congregation as we gather and in our personal lives as we scatter to our daily pursuits. May we faithfully represent you in all our deeds so that the world may come to a saving knowledge and experience of your grace. Amen.**

## Gloria Patri

<https://youtu.be/OLz3R1hnUjs>

Glory be to the Father, and to the Son and to the Holy Ghost.

As it was in the beginning, is now and ever shall be, reign without end. Amen, amen.

## Scripture Readings

Numbers 21: 4-9

Heather Tower

<sup>4</sup>From Mount Hor they set out by the way to the Red Sea, to go around the land of Edom; but the people became impatient on the way. <sup>5</sup>The 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.” <sup>6</sup>Then the LORD sent poisonous serpents among the people, and they bit the people, so that many Israelites died. <sup>7</sup>The 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. <sup>8</sup>And 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.” <sup>9</sup>So 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.

John 3:14-21

Rosemary Dawson

<sup>14</sup>And just as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of Man be lifted up, <sup>15</sup>that whoever believes in him may have eternal life. <sup>16</sup>“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. <sup>17</sup>“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. <sup>18</sup>Those 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. <sup>19</sup>And this is the judgment, that the light has come into the world, and people loved darkness rather than light because their deeds were evil. <sup>20</sup>For all who do evil hate the light and do not come to the light, so that their deeds may not be exposed. <sup>21</sup>But 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.”

## Special Music

“What a Savior!”

Philip P. Bliss, arr. Tedd Smith

<https://youtu.be/ZV1f4NQZg0U>

## Sermon

### “Lifted Up”

Have you ever been in a conversation that leaves you befuddled, or thoughtful, or maybe even annoyed? When you hear today’s gospel reading how do you feel? Grateful, confused, disturbed? I wonder how Nicodemus experienced Jesus’ words in that encounter. Our reading today picks up at the tail end of their conversation and seems to move from dialog to deep reflection and perhaps to some apologetics.

Nicodemus had come to Jesus recognizing him as a man with something important to say about God. And Jesus immediately tells him that unless you are ‘born from above’ you cannot be in or experience God’s kingdom.’ It threw poor Nicodemus. Here he was a learned teacher of the law, and Jesus is basically saying ‘you don’t have a clue’. And it seems he didn’t because he takes Jesus’ words literally, rather than figuratively. So Jesus begins to speak of the work of the Spirit, again with Nicodemus somewhat perplexed, or perhaps intrigued.

And that is where we pick up the conversation – with snakes in the wilderness. Jesus points Nicodemus back to something he would be very familiar with - the Exodus, the story of the beginning of the people of God. Now you may think he would have pointed to the day of the Passover, or the Covenant at Mt Sinai, but no, he goes into the very heart of the desert.

Even though the trip from Mt Sinai to the promised land should have been relatively short, it was not going well. On the way the people grumbled and complained, the food, manna, was tasteless, the water scarce, their leader, Moses, incompetent, and God – well, let’s just say they had their doubts.

Finally, near Edom God had had enough. The people complained one too many times. And so God sent fiery serpents to bite and kill them. Why? Because they accused God of bringing them into the wilderness to die – when it was God himself who delivered them from slavery and death in Egypt, who chose to bring them into freedom and life.

And so God sent snakes among them. Snakes that pointed directly back to The Snake – The Snake in the Garden. The snakes were not simply a ‘rap on the knuckles’. They were a message loud and clear. The way they had chosen, the way they were acting, would only lead them to suffering and death.

Finally, Israel saw the foolishness of their actions – at least they didn’t like the consequences. So they begged Moses to intervene, to get God to remove the judgment. And God does – kind of – in a very strange and painful way. He doesn’t remove the snakes, instead he has Moses create another snake, a bronze snake on a pole. He was to lift up that snake so that everyone could see it – see what they did, see the wrong and its consequences. And then God flips it on its head! He tells Moses that when anyone who is bitten – turns and looks to this sign, this snake on a tree, they will live! The very sign of their rebellion, their darkness and lostness and sin, this symbol of death becomes the doorway to life, if they will turn, and look, trust and believe.

Fast forward now to one particular meeting, one dark night when a leader of Israel finds himself lost in his own spiritual wilderness. And Jesus says to him

“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”.

In that short phrase Jesus says a mouthful – more than we can grasp. When Israel was wandering in the desert, Moses was there, God’s representative, to lead them to a new life in the Promised Land. Now, there is Jesus. Not just God’s chosen Messiah, his representative among men, to lead them to a new life; He is God in the flesh, come to save us from sin and death, come to give us eternal life, the only way it could be done.

“Coming in the likeness of sinful flesh, and to deal with sin,  
he condemned sin in the flesh, that we might live in the Spirit of God.  
(Romans 8:3)

By taking up human flesh, by taking up our condemnation, and nailing it to the cross, he set us free, and gave us life. Jesus, lifted up in death – for us. Jesus, lifted up in resurrection – for us. Jesus lifted up on the cross is both the symbol of Sin and Death - of the very depth to which humanity sinks (the most potent symbol of evil) and the sign and symbol of Life, the very depth to which God will go (the most potent symbol – of love.)

“For God love the world so fully, that he gave his only Son,  
so that everyone who believes in him may not die but have everlasting life.”

The cross, that awful and awesome sign, a stunningly painful and stunningly beautiful intersection - the only place where man and God can meet; where sin and grace are bound together, and love conquers all. The cross is God’s sign that life, that God, is to be found precisely in the places and moments of our deepest darkness and hopelessness and helplessness. The life of God – the light of Christ – is found where it ought not be! –in the midst of sin and suffering and shame. And yet it is there precisely because that is where we need it most; it is mercy, that is stronger than sin, it is love, that is stronger than hate, it is life, that is stronger than death; strong enough to embrace it all and rob it of its power. It is why Christ came in the first place - not to condemn us, but to save us.

The cross is our crossroad. It is a point of ‘judgement’ as John 3:18 says, because it is literally a ‘crisis’, the point on which our lives are staked. Believe, trust that here is where God forgives and saves, and you will know the fullness of everlasting life, God’s life, where you will be ‘born from above’. Or distrust and reject its meaning and power, and you will be consumed, die, by the toxins of Eden’s snake.

It is a terrible choice, and yet a grace-filled choice, the same choice once given us in the garden. Will you, will we, believe and live?

Amen.

Hymn

Beneath the Cross of Jesus

<https://youtu.be/m1xEWod9GnE>

THE PASSION AND ATONING DEATH OF CHRIST

Beneath the Cross of Jesus

350

1. Be - neath the cross of Je - sus I fain would take my stand,  
 2. Up - on the cross of Je - sus mine eye at times can see  
 3. I take, O cross, thy shad - ow for my a - bid - ing place:

the shad - ow of a might - y Rock with - in a wea - ry land;  
 the ver - y dy - ing form of One who suf - fered there for me;  
 I ask no oth - er sun - shine than the sun - shine of his face;

a home with - in the wil - der - ness, a rest up - on the way,  
 and from my strick - en heart with tears two won - ders I con - fess,  
 con - tent to let the world go by, to know no gain nor loss;

from the burn - ing of the noon - tide heat and the bur - den of the day,  
 the won - ders of re - deem - ing love and my un - wor - thi - ness.  
 my sin - ful self my on - ly shame, my glo - ry all the cross.

Elizabeth C. Clephane, 1868; alt. 1990

ST. CHRISTOPHER 7.6.8.6.8.6.8.6.  
 Frederick C. Maker, 1881

## **Joys and Concerns**

As you meet with God in prayer, please lift up the joys and concerns shared through the Trumpet Blast. God is eager to be your help and strength, to listen to you and meet your needs. Prayer is a gift we can always use. If you would like the church to pray for you please contact pastor Rosemary or Michele Lawler.

## **Prayers of the People**

Wondrous God, we thank you and praise you for the incomprehensible nature of your love. We thank you for Jesus Christ, who came among us to reveal your mercy and become your redemption. We thank you for your Spirit who calls us to faith and leads us in faithfulness. And so we come to you, O God, asking that we may grow in our understanding, our trust and our obedience to your holy way.

We pray, for your church and for this congregation. May we behold the glory of your cross, face its truth and discover its power in our own lives. May this church become the crossroads of your grace, where all may come to acknowledge their need, discover your love and receive true life.

We pray as well for the world you came to save. May our leaders experience the truth of your grace and power of your ways, that our world may live in justice and peace. May those who are suffering experience your compassion, know your presence, and find the gift of your everlasting life. May the sick be made whole, the sorrowful know comfort, and the needy be satisfied. We especially remember ... and we thank you for... And may the life we know in Christ be our strength and power as we seek to share your goodness with all our neighbors, near and far.

We praise you, Glorious God, for filling us with the depth of your love and the abundance of your grace, through Jesus Christ, who taught us to pray...

## **Lord's Prayer**

### **Choral Response**

[https://youtu.be/IAivVHv\\_mbc](https://youtu.be/IAivVHv_mbc)

### **Offering**

With awe and gratitude we recognize all the blessings God has granted to us. It is our privilege to share in God's wonderful works to humankind, through our giving of time and resources, words and deeds. Let us dedicate our gifts in faith.

O God, who has given so much to this world, we offer these gifts as an expression of our faith, as a sign of our love, and as a commitment to your ways. Use them for the blessing of the world, and for the glory of Christ. Amen.

**Doxology**

<https://youtu.be/5I7PEGUPAXQ>

(choose the one that is best for your faith)

Praise God from whom all blessings flow, praise him all creatures here below,  
praise him above ye heavenly hosts, praise Father, Son, and Holy Ghost

Praise God from whom all blessings flow, Praise God all creatures here below  
Praise God for all that Love has done; Creator, Christ and Spirit One. Amen

**Hymn**

Lift High the Cross vs 1, 3, 5

<https://youtu.be/OZkFdmDU4fw>

# Lift High the Cross

CRUCIFER

George W. Kitchin, 1887

Sydney H. Nicholson, 1916

Lift high the cross, the love of Christ pro - claim, till

all the world a - dore his sa - cred name.

Come, Christ - ian, fol - low where our Sav - ior trod, our  
Led on their way by this tri - um - phant sign, the  
O Lord, once lift - ed on the glor - ious tree, as  
Thy king - dom come, that earth's de - spair may cease be -  
For thy blest cross which doth for us a - tone, cre -

King vic - tor - ious, Christ, the Son of God.  
hosts of God in con - qu'ring ranks com - bine.  
thou hast prom - ised, draw us un - to thee.  
neath the shad - ow of its heal - ing peace.  
a - tion's prais - es rise be - fore thy throne.

### **Common Commission**

**Let us go forth into the world in peace, being of good courage, holding fast to that which is good, rendering to no one evil for evil, strengthening the faint-hearted, supporting the weak, helping the afflicted, honoring all persons, loving and serving the Lord, and rejoicing in the power of the Holy Spirit.**

### **Benediction**

Go now into the world

And may the amazing grace of our Lord – Jesus Christ,  
the extravagant love of God  
and the intimate friendship of the Holy Spirit  
be with each and every one of you. 1 Cor 13:13

Go in peace to love and serve the Lord. Amen.

### **Postlude**

“Safe Within Your Arms”  
Mark Hayes  
<https://youtu.be/F3klEeG3BNk>