

Fourth Sunday of Lent – B 2021
2 Chron. 36.14-17/19-23///Eph.2.4-10///John 3.14-21

→we just heard one of the most beloved, memorized, and often quoted verses in the Bible....

“for God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him will not perish but might have eternal life.”

→that verse has been called... *“the Gospel in a nutshell.”*....and so popular is this verse that it shows up almost everywhere

→it is not unusual at almost any event to see someone holding a sign...John 3:16...
...it appears so often.... that one could say...this verse is still “trending” pretty strong some twenty centuries after it was first written into the pages of Scripture....

→but sadly the verse after this one...often gets lost and is not as well-known or quoted or referred too....but it too is crucial to the message of Lent

“and this is the verdict...that the light came into the world...but people preferred darkness

PAUSE

→one of the hallmarks of Lent ...and focal point of our Lenten theme “mending our heart...a new kind of hope” is our call to repentance

→this call is summarized in those two verses I just quoted...the popular one and the not so popular...

“God giving his son...so that everyone who believes might have eternal life...and a light came into the world...but people preferred darkness” is really about repentance...

→it is no surprise that....we live in the "condition" of sin AND as a result we are called to be aware of our sinfulness

→those parts of our life that we don't like about ourselves

→and we do this because we are called to REPENT...////to be sorry for our sins ////to regret what we have done and what we have failed to do

→and yet I wonder these days...if that is truly something that many people actually take seriously... or if they even believe it anymore...

→throughout history...humans have had a tendency to choose what is easier...but not necessarily the better path...

→the easier path often leads us away from God and into the darkness...

→however as we hear today...Christ's way...the way of light...is to take the path which leads to truth and goodness

→[you know]...it is interesting to note [these days] how we deal with this whole idea of repentance---how we deal with being sorry for our sins

→...in some instances we will go to great lengths to do everything to avoid it

PAUSE

→years ago....I remember two 2nd graders preparing for their first reconciliation saying to me....."if I have to tell you all my sins, I'm going to be here all day..

→and the other one said, "why do I have to tell you my sins, why can't I tell you & GOD about the good things I do instead!!!!"

→now both of those 2nd graders I believe expressed a very profound insight about human nature...////.....

→.....we don't like dealing with our sinfulness....with the dark side of our lives

→and when we do so....we do it in either one of two ways

-----**EITHER** we will look at our sinfulness...and become overwhelmed by it...becoming very conscientious of every thing we've ever done wrong...only to conclude just how awful we actually are.....

OR we look at our sinfulness in a half-hearted ... indifferent way...perhaps concluding that we really haven't done anything wrong or caused any pain at all

→yet all of us sin...we 're impatient, greedy, jealous, selfish and so on...almost on a daily basis...

→and those are the so-called traditional sins that we all engage in....

→think beyond that, however, about the newer type of sins that seem to becoming part of our landscape these days.... indifference...not caring...irresponsibility...unreliability...

→these are just some of ways that prevent us from loving God...and his Son ...--the light...whom he sent into our world so that we might not perish

→A recent article, I read, stated....*there seems to be a whole lot of sinning going on but not much reconciling*....that's not that far off the mark.....

PAUSE

→calling to mind our sinfulness....which is hopefully something we do every night before we go to bed...and what we do at the beginning of every Mass.... is not meant to demean or burden us....but rather it is meant to bring about a sense of repentance in us

PAUSE

→it is a given fact that you and I sin,

---we create barriers between God and ourselves

---we cloud up the sky and prevent the sunshine from shining forth

---however.....we can also break down those barriers and clear away the clouds from our hearts

→we can turn away from those obstacles that prevent us from seeing and acting like we should **and turn back to the light that is offered to us today**

PAUSE

→ these remaining precious weeks of Lent...before Easter are indeed a time to do just that.....

→to look at the things I've done wrong and to also look at the ways in which I can improve

→to think about those things that make me enter the darkness and also to see how I might be directed towards the light

PAUSE

→this time of year [Lent] provides us with the opportunity to embrace penance

---however doing penance is **not** meant to be punishment for the things we've done wrong on the contrary.....doing penance is about becoming a better person

it is about discovering ways to reach towards God and the light he is calling us to

→to start moving the clouds away and to let the sunshine of God's love shine forth

PAUSE

but in order for that to happen, we need to first start looking for the sunshine in our own heart

we all have it....it is the **light** that our gospel reading speaks of today

God so loved the world...

and being reconciled to God and to each other...is the best way for us discover that light that will indeed....*mend our heart and offer a new kind of hope*