

**Church of the Divine Love**

**FOURTH SUNDAY IN LENT**

**March 14, 2021 10:15 A.M.**

**Morning Prayer, Rite I**

*All pages refer to The Book of Common Prayer*

Opening Hymn #488 – Be thou my vision

Opening Sentences for Lent page 38

Confession of Sin page 41

The Invitatory and Psalter page 42

Venite page 44

The First Lesson: **Numbers 21:4-9**

The Psalm Appointed: **Psalm 107:1-3, 17-22**

The Second Lesson: **Ephesians 2:1-10**

Gradual Hymn #474 – When I survey the wondrous cross

The Gospel Lesson: **John 3:14-21**

The Sermon

Welcome and Announcements

Offertory Hymn #657 – Love divine, all loves excelling

The Apostles Creed page 53

The Lord's Prayer page 54

The Suffrages page 55

The Collects page 56

Petitions and Thanksgivings of the People page 57

For Strength and Confidence page 459

#49 – For the Aged page 830

#47 – For Young Persons page 829

#62 – Prayer of St. Francis page 833

The General Thanksgiving page 58

A Prayer of St. Chrysostom page 59

Dismissal page 59

Dismissal Hymn #685 – Rock of ages, cleft for me

## Sermon Sunday March 14, 2021

Numbers 21: 4-9; Psalm 107: 1-3, 17-22; Ephesians 2: 1-10; John 3: 14-21

### **Sisters and brothers in Christ,**

We are inching our way toward Easter. We are impatient and want to get there now! In some respects, we are like God's people in today's scripture text. The Jews are moving from Mount Hor to the Red Sea. They are still very much a pilgrim people, not sure of their destination but anxious about the journey. Their grumbling is treated as a serious problem. Impatience breeds distrust and mutiny. As we wait during this Easter season, we can learn needed lessons.

Our whole society seems to be waiting for something significant. What significant event are we waiting for? It varies with different people. For some it is more money or a better job. For others, the hunger is for meaning in life. Henri Nouwen writes: "Beneath all the great accomplishments of our time there is a deep current of despair. While efficiency and control are the great aspirations of our society, the loneliness, isolation, lack of friendship and intimacy . . . and a deep sense of uselessness fill the hearts of millions of people in our success-oriented world." Like the ancient Jews, we are on the way also. But to where? Often, we do not know, and that lack of knowledge requires open hearts and patience. Our journey takes patience and grace. We cannot put life on fast-forward. What we can do is to rely on God to help us develop patience.

The people "spoke against God and against Moses". That sounds so typical! They had a better plan! Their question was extremely sarcastic. They wanted to know why they were led out into the desert to die of hunger and thirst. The rest of the complaint is summed up by these words: "There is no food and no water, and we detest this miserable food." The people hated the manna, the special food given by God. The liberty they had and the food not enough for them. They wanted more! But what really matters in life? Is it not some worthwhile work to be engaged in? God Takes Care of Our Most Pressing Problems. The Jews were bitten by poisonous snakes because of their grumbling. God provided a remedy for their dilemma. A snake of bronze was made and placed on a pole. Whenever someone was bitten, he had only to look at the bronze serpent and he would live. We learn from 2 Kings 18:4 that the bronze snake later became a pagan symbol and lost its original meaning.

Jesus took the image of a healing pole and applied it to himself in John 3:14-15. He said he was to be lifted. Anyone who looked to him for life would find it. Most people want to cling to life at all costs and will do almost anything to escape death. We have a sin problem and a mortality problem. God, through Christ, provides a way to be redeemed from sin and to have eternal life. If in this Easter season you would see the greatness of God's power, look not to creation with its awesome mountain grandeur; look not to the dark secret of the seashore at night, mind-boggling as the unfolding universe is; look not to the accounts of Jesus healing and teaching, as out of step with this world as they are. Rather, look to the power of God revealed in the two resurrections—the resurrection of Jesus, and the resurrection of each saint from the unredeemed life. God's power is demonstrated first and foremost in raising Jesus. This was no public event; there was no news conference. Yet in the stillness of that resurrection dawn, a new world was born. God's re-creation of the world began in earnest.

There are three kinds of work mentioned in the Bible. There is God's work, a work of salvation springing from his eternal decision to love us, to pour out his grace through Jesus, to reveal the secret of the gospel through us, to appoint Christ as ruler overall, to create a new race of people like Jesus. Then there are the human works. However commendable a man's kindness, generosity, moral outlook, rule keeping— All for sin could not atone; thou must save, and thou alone. The long and the short of it is simply that we cannot be saved by anything we do; but only by what God has done in Christ. The third category of works is the good works of the Christian. There are several references in the Bible to an examination of our works at Judgment Day. These works are not the works of the merely moral person, but the works spoken in the Bible. God's mercy in Christ gives a foundation and basis for the good works of a Christian. His good works are a result, not a cause, of his salvation.

In eternity, God prepared good works, like mystery packages, and put them in the life path of each Christian, that we should find them and carry them out in our daily life. In this way we show forth to an unbelieving world by our very nature, outlook, and deeds what the power of God really is. Weaving images of Christ within the context of human sinfulness, the Gospel of John helps one to feel a part of the tapestry that began even before the New Testament. When the people of Israel encountered venomous snakes in the wilderness (Num. 21), God offered a way of salvation. God still offers a solution to our need for salvation: Jesus Christ. If our own sin were as obvious as a snakebite, comprehending our need for salvation would be easier. One obstacle to overcoming sin is denial. We deny our brokenness and our need for God's mercy. The Bible repeatedly reveals God's pattern of offering solutions to the crises of the human condition. God's grace and mercy are ready to respond to human need. The stumbling block arises in our failure to accept the gift.

God does not remove evil. God offers a solution to the crisis of evil, a means of salvation. God did not save the Israelites by taking the serpents away. The Israelites were saved by faith in God's ability to save them. Some people face enormous hardship in life. It is faith that sees them through such struggles. History records that when Abraham Lincoln was seven years old, his family was forced out of their home on a legal technicality, and he had to work to help support them. At age nine, his mother died. At age twenty-two, he lost his job as a store clerk. He wanted to go to law school, but his education was lacking. At twenty-three, he went into debt to become a partner in a small store. At twenty-six, his business partner died, leaving him a huge debt that took years to repay. At twenty-eight, after courting a young woman for four years, he asked her to marry him, but she said no. At thirty-seven, on his third try, he was elected to Congress, but two years later, he lost re-election. At forty-one, his four-year-old son died. At forty-five, he ran for the Senate and lost. At forty-seven, he failed as the vice-presidential candidate. At forty-nine, he ran for the Senate again, and lost. At fifty-one, he was elected president of the United States and became one of the greatest leaders of this nation. When someone asked Lincoln, what enabled him to endure a life of hardship, he replied, "Faith in God."

As we continue our Lenten journey, there may be no more important time for us to take account of the ways in which each of us are afflicted by the venom of fear. Only when the Hebrew people brought that which they feared most into full view, were they made whole. The same is true for us. As we come into full view of the cross and the reality of death, it is only by walking headlong into death's dark shadow that we come to know the fullness of Christ's resurrected life. For indeed, God so loves the world. **Amen**

Easter flower memorial donations gratefully accepted.

Please make checks payable to Church of Divine Love Altar Guild and return no later than Palm Sunday.

Those at home can mail a check to the church att: Altar Guild and enclose your list of departed love ones.

4 LENT

10:15 AM      MORNING PRAYER  
(also on zoom)

MONDAY

8:00 AM      AA MEETING

WEDNESDAY

7:00 PM      AL-ANON MEETING

THURSDAY

10AM-2PM      THRIFT SHOP

8:00 PM      AA MEETING

SATURDAY

10AM-2PM      THRIFT SHOP

5 LENT

10:15 AM      MORNING PRAYER  
(also on zoom)

SUPPORT THE FOOD DRIVE DROP-OFF IN THE KITCHEN

**Prayer for Grace and Favor :**

**Dear God, we ask that you provide for our needs, we ask for your grace and favor. We pray for your blessings to cover us; we pray that you would help us to prosper and make every plan that you have birthed in our heart to succeed.**

**We pray that others would take notice of your goodness and could not help but say, "these are the ones that the Lord has blessed." Shine your light in us, through us.**

**May we make a difference in this world, for your glory and purposes. Set your way before us. May all your plans succeed. We may reflect your peace and hope to a world that so desperately needs your presence and healing.**

**In Jesus Name, Amen.**

**PARISH PRAYER LIST**

Barbara Curran	Irene
Dina Palkowski	Margaret
Frances & Donna Mongelli	Bernie Walther
Nathan Treadwell	Jerry & Family
Girard Bishop	Kim
Chris Dickson	Rachael
Michael Echevarria	Del
Warren	Bill Conklin
Michael & Family	Anthony Paribello
Martinisi Family	Edward Lent
Lois Kessler	Kate Jones
Kathleen	

Children who are ill:

Christopher and his family	
Franklin Tenesaca	Ciara Berbeck
Aidan	Gabriel