

We spend our lives trying to figure out people. A lifetime to figure out your spouse. Try and figure out your children. The people you work with. We try and figure out 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 I to pour water over Ava today and it does all the things Scripture says it does. It doesn't make sense look at a serpent on a pole and be healed, spared from death.

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 your feeling, your effort, your faithfulness; that God, His things makes sense to me. Instead, of relying upon God by Scriptural faith -pure gift, what He is doing, has done, will do for your life.

Instead how often we love, we love to grumble against God. Like the children of Israel in today's lessons. That's us. Why can't you go at least 1 day without complaining, whining, grumbling and when you do it- think about it, ultimately is complaining against God; what He has done, where He has brought you, who He has brought into your life, how you wish He did things different for you.

God's care isn't good enough, His means of serving me, taking care of me, His Word, works in my life in not good enough. Stop complaining. Do you not fear God?

When Jesus speaks of His death by crucifixion He draws on 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; those repentant healed 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?

The Law's threats are not idle. Face your sinfulness. Instead, we all prefer to not let our sins bother us. We are deluded. You want to have license to sin or deal with sin on your terms and sin without consequences

We've all fallen prey to the deception of Billy Joel. I like him, but his song lyrics "its better to laugh with sinners than cry with the saints." In fact, sinners don't have more fun, pleasure, it's an illusion. And only saints have a life with true meaning. That's what it means with Cain when it says **sin is crouching at your door**. When sin is easy or light; sin is your pet project, crouching at your door and you love many of your sins. Beware. Sin is always dangerous, always has victims. God dies for what you take lightly. May God have mercy on you when you, I, don't feel our sins. You are so absolutely so much worse than you think. You are exposed. Stop the false bravado.

Faith see the one lifted up that you not die in your sins. John 3:16, so often misunderstood by Christians, especially as this verse has risen to prominence

just the last 100 years. First off, it's taking about a crucifixion while people think it's a hallmark card of God's love. It drives me crazy when people hear the word "so" as an emphatic, **God so loved**, like God loved the world so much. Wrong. As if the passage is about the depths of God's love; how much God loves. That's a true sentiment but not here. **So** means "in this way." Not about "how much God loves" but "in the way" God loves -look at the context -God loved in this way -a sacrifice for you, His son killed. He's lifted up as sin, the snake, became sin for you. John 3:16 is as detestable as it is glorious about a crucified Jesus. Most don't think it that way- but this is what sinners need.

Jesus portrays Himself as fulfillment of the serpent in the wilderness, that we look upon Him, be healed, live. How does this make sense? What an ugly picture He paints Himself!

Look at Him. We'd rather look at flowers, sunsets, babies, kittens, puppies. Why would anyone want to look at this? Jesus on cross is so offensive.

Lifted up in glory on a Hellish stick to cleanse you of the serpent's most deadly poison. Look there with eyes of faith to the agony of grace outside Jerusalem.

The beautiful lent hymn 439 O Dearest Jesus, has that great lyric, What punishment is suffered so strangely yonder, the Shepherd dies for sheep that love to wander. Oh how He loves His little lambs.

Whoever believes in Him - the One lifted up in death and lives and reigns, **will never perish, eternal life. Whoever** promises our Lord, is anything more comforting for you in all the world; no matter how you've failed and complained, how bad, how wrong or mean, how you've doubted His goodness; no matter how much of a mess you are and how broken, **whoever** - looks to Christ crucified; He brings forgiveness, healing for you now, spared death and the only love this world has ever known flows to you in the Sacrament.

God, how His kingdom works doesn't make sense to our reason. Our Lord lifted up, calls His crucifixion His glory; how God loves; thus we see Jesus on the cross and there's nothing more beautiful to the eye. And the wounds He now bears for all eternity are not reminders of your sin, but of His love, your healing. You and Ava belong to Him. By His love, by faith alone, grace alone given to you -you see the Kingdom of God even now.