

4<sup>TH</sup> SUNDAY IN LENT - LAETARE SUNDAY 03/11/18

*Mt. Calvary, West View / Pentecost, Avella*

NUMBERS 21: 4-9, EPHESIANS 2: 1-10, JOHN 3: 14-21

Theme: Firmer Ground of Faith

**+ Grace be to you and peace from God our Father and from our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. AMEN +**

Our Text is taken from the Gospel of St. John, the 3<sup>rd</sup> chapter:

***And 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.***

“God loved the World, so that He gave His only Son the lost to save. That all who would in Him believe, should everlasting life receive.” Could not have said it better myself. In fact, I think that just pretty much wraps it up for this sermon don’t you think? Ah, no, I think there is a bit more we can discuss concerning this text we have for today.

In our text today, John is giving us the purpose of Jesus’ coming. It is for the express purpose of saving the whole world from its sin and death. It is most certainly true, that Jesus does not desire the death of the wicked, no matter how vile, and desires the salvation of all simply by faith. When Moses was wondering around the wilderness, not because he was lost, but because the people of Israel were being disciplined for not trusting God above all things, there were many opportunities for God to simply annihilate the people and start anew with more obedient children, but He always was ready to forgive and let the sins be forgiven if the people would just repent and believe His Word.

Take the time they left Mount Hor, setting out by way of the Red Sea to go around Edom. In the setting of our Old Testament lesson, it is chapter 21 of Numbers. If you study the book, you will recall there are only 36 chapters, so there must be much that has happened before this text. Since there are detesting this “miserable food” “*We loathe this worthless food*” says the ESV it

is obvious that this is the manna from heaven used to feed them in this wilderness. Wow. To call any gift from God worthless, *any* gift, as worthless that comes from the mighty hand of God, wow ó I just do not know what to say about that. Actually, I do. This has got to be the most selfish thing to ever say to the most generous God Who has given daily bread to those who need it. I do not want to be near someone who cannot be gracious enough to say, "Thank You" to almighty God for His generosity. He has saved them from the yoke of slavery, and yet, here is an entire people, crying to go back to where they came from ó no wait. Being that this is near the end of their wilderness wondering, these are the *descendants* of those first rescued from Egyptian slavery; they really have no idea how bad it was. Still they complain and grumble about dying in the wilderness. Your right. God saved an entire people just, so He could waste them away in the wilderness. That makes no sense, but the descendants do not care about making sense. If they did they would have remembered that God has given them food, given them water, given them victory over their enemies all this time and if they would just trust Him still, they will be in the promised land in no time.

But they cannot do that. Just like you and me, our sins make us complain of our station because we believe we deserve even more! I cannot tell you how many people I have come across that complain about their wage income because they "deserve more" whatever that means. Many have left paying jobs to sit on the dole simply because their pride tells them they deserve more if they are going to work so hard. I always try to recall the teachings of Martin Luther when he so rightly taught, "Indeed, we are worthy of none of the things for which we pray, neither have we deserved them." We do not deserve the goodness of God in any shape or form. The original curse was that we are going to have to work extremely hard for the little we receive. Yet, we are

bestowed grace to receive good things anyway, and we should receive them with unending thanks for what Christ has done for us.

For when God sent the serpents to those grumbling grumblers, they were dying left and right, north and south. Since they were astute enough to know that they were helpless to save themselves, they turned back to God and repented. *“We have sinned, for we have spoken against the Lord and against you,”* they said to God’s Pastor, Moses. Well it is nice that they figured that out. The shame is that it took the bad situation, it took death, before they could see this reality. Is this not the same with us? We look at the cross, and it takes a bad situation, a death, before we notice the love God has for us in this, that while dead in trespass, He makes us forgiven in the blood of Christ Jesus. It takes a bad situation, a death of a loved one, before we return to Christ to hear a sermon about life and service to God in thanksgiving to what His Son has done for us. Indeed, it is a shame.

Yet, even when the world is crumbling around us, it is the great opportunity to trust in God above all things. Indeed, as we just sang, *“If you are sick, if death is near, This truth your troubled heart can cheer: Christ Jesus saves your soul from death; That is the firmest ground of faith.”* Truly Christ has gone to the Cross and shed His blood. He has secured your salvation by taking the wrath of God the Father upon Himself alone, that you may have life and have it completely. Your eternal life is secured by what Christ has done for you, and there is now no more need to fret over past sins confessed. This is the firmest ground of faith. *For God so loved the world that He gave His only Begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life.* The Great comfort is that Jesus came *into the world, not to condemn the world, but that the world might be saved through him.* You who believe in Him and not in your own reason or strength, are *not condemned, because you believe in the name of the only Son of God.* There is

nothing that can give you better peace than this. It is the firmest ground, for it is the only ground that you can stand on that allows you to know you are saved.

So, this Lententide, as we face our situation of not being able to save ourselves as the Jews came to realize, let us look to the one Who has been lifted up, the Son of Man. Lifted high on a cross, so that all may see, and believe, and be saved. And if your fellow man cannot see, and still grumbles in the face of the great things God has done for them and will do for them in their time of need, show them where your faith lies. Not in the vain things of this world, but in the wonderful world to come. In His most Holy Name. **AMEN.**

+ AND NOW MAY THE PEACE OF GOD WHICH SURPASSES ALL UNDERSTANDING  
KEEP YOUR HEARTS AND MINDS IN UNION WITH CHRIST JESUS. AMEN+

Offering / Prayers

**There are only two days on my calendar...today and the day of judgment**

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<sup>i</sup> Hymn: TLH #245; LW #352; LSB #571;