

Australian Evangelical Lutheran Church
BETHLEHEM TOOWOOMBA, OUR SAVIOUR LOWOOD, ST JOHN'S AUBIGNY,
ST PAUL'S GREENWOOD, TRINITY MARBURG, TRINITY OAKEY
10 March Fourth Sunday in Lent

HYMNS: 79 171 852 148 847 754

INTROIT: Psalm 107:1-3, 17-22

Give thanks to the LORD, for He is good, for His mercy endures for ever. Let the people whom the LORD has redeemed say this. He has redeemed them from the hand of the oppressor, and He has gathered them from the lands, from the east and from the west, from the north and from the south...

Foolish people were tormented because of their rebellious conduct and because of their iniquities.

Their souls loathed all food, and they went close to the gates of death. When they cried out to the LORD in their distress, He used to save them from their afflictions.

He used to send His Word and heal them, and He rescued them from their pit.

Let them give thanks to the LORD because of His mercy, and for His wonderful deeds to the descendants of Adam.

Let them offer songs of thanksgiving as their sacrifices, and let them declare with a shout of joy what He has done.

COLLECT: Almighty God, our heavenly Father, Your mercies are new every morning; and although we deserve only punishment, You receive us as Your children and provide for all our needs of body and soul. Grant that we may heartily acknowledge Your merciful goodness, give thanks for all Your benefits, and serve You in willing obedience; through Jesus Christ, Your Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. Amen.

Welcome to all worshipping with us!

Pastor Ziebell can be contacted via phone/text at 0407 583922.

Please notify pastor of anyone who is unwell or in need of a visit.

Email him at paziebell@gmail.com or to the church office at ddaalc@gmail.com.

Pastor is usually in his office Tuesday-Wednesday for anyone who would like to call in. Other days of the week are set aside for visits.

READINGS:

Numbers 21:4-9 The snake of bronze in the desert.

Ephesians 2:1-10 We are justified by grace through faith.

John 3:14-21 Jesus brings life and light to the world.

Numbers 21:4-9

⁴ Then they journeyed from Mount Hor on the road to the Red Sea to go around the land of Edom, but the people grew impatient on the way. ⁵ 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 bread or water, and we detest this wretched food.”

⁶ Then the LORD sent poisonous snakes among the people. They bit the people, and many of the people of Israel died. ⁷ Then the people came to Moses and said: “We have sinned, because we have spoken against the LORD and against you. Pray to the LORD, that He may take the snakes away from us!”

So, Moses prayed for the people. ⁸ The LORD told **Moses**: “Make a fiery **snake** and **put it on** a pole! Anyone who has been bitten should look at it! Then he **will live**.”

⁹ Therefore, Moses made a bronze snake and put it up on a pole. Then, when anyone who had been bitten by a snake looked at the bronze snake, he lived.

Ephesians 2:1-10

¹ You also were dead in your trespasses and sins. ² You once led your lives in those sins, following the ways of this present world and the ruler who governs the air, the spirit who is now working in the people who disobey. ³ All of us also once lived among them in the lusts of our sinful natures, doing what our sinful natures and minds wanted to do. By nature, we deserved God’s anger like all the others. ⁴ However, God, who is rich in mercy, because of His great love for us, ⁵ also made us, even when we were dead in trespasses, alive with Christ. It is by grace that you have been saved. ⁶ Moreover, in Christ Jesus, God raised us with Him and seated us with Him in the heavenly realms, ⁷ to show, in the coming ages, the immeasurable riches of His grace by being kind to us in Christ Jesus. ⁸ For by grace you have been saved through faith. This is not of yourselves. It is the gift of God, ⁹ not of works, that no one may boast. ¹⁰ For He has made us what we are, creating us in Christ Jesus for good works, which God has prepared in advance, that we may live in them.

John 3:14-21

¹⁴ As Moses **lifted up the snake** in the wilderness, so the Son of Man must be lifted up, ¹⁵ that everyone who believes in Him may have eternal life. ¹⁶ For God so loved the world that He gave His only Son, that everyone who believes in Him might not perish but have eternal life. ¹⁷ For God has not sent His Son into the world to condemn the world but that the world may be saved through Him. ¹⁸ The person who believes in Him is not condemned, but the person who does not believe has already been condemned, because he has not believed in the name of God's only Son. ¹⁹ This is the verdict, that the Light has come into the world, but people have loved darkness rather than the Light, because they have been doing evil. ²⁰ For everyone who does wrong hates the Light and does not come to the Light, that his deeds may not be exposed. ²¹ However, he who practises the truth comes to the Light, that his deeds may be plainly seen to have been done in God."

JESUS LIFTED UP FOR US **Sermon for the 4th Sunday in Lent, 2024** **John 3:14-21**

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all. Amen.

The text for our sermon today is our Gospel from before John 3:14-21: **As Moses lifted up the snake in the wilderness, so the Son of Man must be lifted up, ¹⁵ that everyone who believes in Him may have eternal life. ¹⁶ For God so loved the world that He gave His only Son, that everyone who believes in Him might not perish but have eternal life. ¹⁷ For God has not sent His Son into the world to condemn the world but that the world may be saved through Him. ¹⁸ The person who believes in Him is not condemned, but the person who does not believe has already been condemned, because he has not believed in the name of God's only Son. ¹⁹ This is the verdict, that the Light has come into the world, but people have loved darkness rather than the Light, because they have been doing evil. ²⁰ For everyone who does wrong hates the Light and does not come to the Light, that his deeds may not be exposed. ²¹ However, he who practises the truth comes to the Light, that his deeds may be plainly seen to have been done in God."**

Lord God, heavenly Father, sanctify us through Your truth, Your Word is truth.
Amen.

Dear friends in Christ,

John 3:16 is a verse from the Bible that everyone surely knows by heart. **“For God so loved the world that He gave His only Son, that everyone who believes in Him might not perish but have eternal life.”** Because it sums up the Good News of Christ so succinctly, this verse is often called “the Gospel in a nutshell.” Of this text, Luther once said, *“Look at the words, I beseech you, to determine how and of whom He is speaking... No one is here excluded. God’s Son was given for all. All should believe, and all who do believe should not perish, etc. Take hold of your own nose, I beseech you, to determine whether you are not a human being (that is, part of the world) and, like any other man, [you] belong to the number of those comprised in the word ‘all.’”*¹

Yet, although we have the Gospel in a nutshell here, in our text today, we also see the Gospel on a pole. Where? It is contained in verses 14 and 15 of our text, where Jesus says, **“As Moses lifted up the snake in the wilderness, so the Son of Man must be lifted up,¹⁵ that everyone who believes in Him may have eternal life.”** The snake was lifted up on a pole; Jesus was to be lifted up on a cross. Everyone who would look in faith at Jesus would be saved from the bite of eternal death and have eternal life. The promise belongs to “everyone” who believes. It is universal. No one who believes is excluded. At the same time, the promise belongs to each one who believes. It is personal. God knows our names, and each of us has eternal life.

These words of Jesus take us back to the incident we heard about in the First Reading for today, from Numbers 21. Israel had come out of Egypt but was now wandering in the wilderness. As they were wont to do, the Israelites began to grumble against Moses: *“Why have you brought us up out of Egypt to die in the wilderness? For there is no bread or water, and we detest this wretched food”* (21:5). The Israelites grew impatient and complained, saying they would rather go back to the slavery they experienced in Egypt than to have to travel through the desert like they were to get to the Promised Land. They were sick of the “meals ready to eat” that the LORD was providing for them. Every day, it was manna on the menu. Same old, same old, every day. So, they grumbled and complained.

¹ Plass, Ewald M., comp. *What Luther Says*. St. Louis: Concordia, 1959. p.1859.

But this was manna *sent from heaven*. The LORD was providing for them, keeping them alive through the wilderness. They had to trust Him to provide for them on a daily basis. They had to trust the LORD to be faithful and to lead them eventually into the land He had promised. But the people of Israel did not fear, love, and trust in the LORD God above all things. Instead, they grumbled. They grumbled against Moses. But since Moses was simply the LORD's servant, doing what the LORD had told him to do, in effect, they were grumbling against Almighty God.

We are no better. As we continue our walk toward the Promised Land of Heaven, we grumble against God. Often, we complain about how hard we have it. It's all fine when things are going well, but when they go bad, then we complain. Where is God and His promise to provide for us? Oftentimes, we are no better than the Israelites, and our lack of trust in God is exposed.

This lack of trust in God and His goodness, the idea that God is somehow holding out on us, is the essence of what sin is. It goes back a long way, even before the time of the Israelites in the wilderness. Our first parents, Adam and Eve, in the Garden, thought God was holding out on them. The serpent tempted them to doubt God, to doubt God's Word and His goodness. You know how that turned out. Adam and Eve fell into sin, and with sin came the curse of death, and the rest is history. We've all been doing the same thing ever since.

The Lord had taken the Israelites to Himself to be His own people, but they too failed to trust in God. They too fell into sin, and with sin came death. "*Then the LORD sent poisonous snakes among the people. They bit the people, and many of the people of Israel died*" (Numbers 21:6). Notice the instrument of death here: snakes, serpents, just like the serpent in the Garden that had first tempted man to sin. The LORD here is drawing the connection between sin and death, the sin of failing to trust in Him and the consequence of death that follows as a result. And that is all you and I would have to look forward to if that were all there was to the story. We too are sinners, grumblers against God, people who do not trust God as we ought, and, as the Apostle Paul reminds us, "*the wages of sin is death*" (Romans 6:23).

But there is more to the story, praise God, and the story is hanging on a pole. Judgment and punishment and condemnation - as just and as well-deserved as that judgment is - is not all there is. There is also God's unmerited mercy, grace, and love. And out of that great love, God has provided a way of escape, a way of salvation, and He has hung it on a pole. "*The LORD told Moses: "Make a fiery snake and put it on a pole! Anyone who has been bitten should look at it!*

Then he will live. Therefore, Moses made a bronze snake and put it up on a pole” (21:8-9). This bronze snake, a symbol of the very sin that literally was killing them, became the means God provided for their healing. To look to that snake, lifted up on a pole, was to see and receive the salvation the Lord in His mercy had bestowed.

And that is the comparison Jesus makes in our text: “**As Moses lifted up the snake in the wilderness, so the Son of Man must be lifted up,** ¹⁵ **that everyone who believes in Him may have eternal life.**” What happened with that snake on a pole would be replayed in an even greater fashion. Jesus Himself must be lifted up as the means of an *even greater salvation*. And this story, too, is hanging on a pole.

Not just the children of Israel, but the whole world, including us, lay sick and dying, grumbling against God, doubting His goodness, and shaking our fist at Him. That is the world’s natural state, our lost condition. We were “*dead in our trespasses and sins,*” as Ephesians says (2:1). But God, being rich in mercy and love, provided the way of escape, the way of salvation. Just as that fiery snake, the very sign of the sin and death that was killing the Israelites, became the very means of their healing, so, in the same way, Christ Jesus took the sin that was killing us, thus becoming the means of our healing and salvation. Jesus literally embodied sin. “*He Himself carried our sins in His body to the cross,*” St. Peter says (1 Peter 2:24). St. Paul says it even more starkly in Corinthians: “*God made Him who did not know sin to be sin for us, that in Him we might become the righteousness of God*” (2 Cor. 5:21). **Jesus became sin for us.** He literally took it all in, doing this by being “lifted up.”

Now, one may think of Jesus being “lifted up” in terms of his being “lifted up” in glory - being exalted, being highly honoured. But not here. When Jesus says of Himself, “**the Son of Man must be lifted up,**” He is talking about His being lifted up on the cross - being lifted up in shame, being lifted up to die. In the strange paradox that is the Gospel, Christ is glorified precisely by dying on the cross. Christ is lifted up - and consequently, God’s grace and mercy and love are lifted up, glorified - by Jesus literally being lifted up, that is, being hoisted in the air, on the tree of the cross.

Dear friends, look to that pole, look to the cross, for your healing! Here is your only hope: Christ hanging on that cross! God has provided for your salvation - indeed, the salvation of the whole world! Look to Jesus, your crucified Saviour, in faith. This is what it is to believe. And this is no great work you are doing. This is no new demand, as though, well, you couldn’t keep the Ten

Commandments, but now you've really got to meet this new requirement and make your decision for Jesus, and it's all up to you. No. Faith is not some new demand. It's simply receiving the gift that God gives. Ephesians puts it like this: *"For by grace you have been saved through faith. This is not of yourselves. It is the gift of God"* (2:8). You see, even your faith is part of the gift. This whole "being saved by grace through faith" thing - the whole thing, the whole package, comes from God. Your believing is no great accomplishment on your part. It's just **receiving what God freely gives you.** It's like you learned in the Catechism: *"I believe that I cannot by my own reason or strength believe in Jesus Christ, my Lord, or come to Him; but the Holy Spirit has called me by the Gospel,"* and so on. We were helpless and hopeless and dead, by nature, children of wrath. But God in His mercy made us alive together with Christ. Faith, then, believing, is simply receiving. All the glory goes to God.

We look in faith to the cross, where our Saviour is lifted up! He is lifted up **"that everyone who believes in Him may have eternal life."** This is more than a snakebite we are being cured of. We are being given eternal life! Eternal life is new life, life with God, life restored to how it ought to be, life with no more sorrows or misery or separation or sin or death. Eternal life is the new life found only in Christ, and it lasts forever. It is life that will characterise the age to come when Christ returns in glory and leads His people home, at home in the promised land of the Kingdom of Heaven.

And yet, it begins *even now.* We have this eternal life now, being baptised into Christ and believing in His name. We have eternal life already now, and death will not stop it. Christ has died the Big Death for us; that's already taken place. And Jesus has risen from the dead, risen from the grave never to die again, because death could not hold Him. We have been joined to Christ in Holy Baptism. We have already died and arisen with Christ.

"As Moses lifted up the snake in the wilderness, so the Son of Man must be lifted up, ¹⁵ **that everyone who believes in Him may have eternal life."** In its own way, this passage expresses the good news of salvation just as well as John 3:16. It's not the Gospel in a nutshell, but it comes pretty close. It's the Gospel hanging on a pole. And here's what it tells us: ***Jesus Christ was lifted up on the cross for us and for all the other snakebit sinners of the world. Look to Him, look to Jesus in faith and be saved.*** Believe in His name, and have eternal life. It is this "Gospel on a pole" that will lift us up all the way to heaven! Amen.

The peace of God which passes all understanding, keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. Amen.

PRAYER FOR THE FOURTH SUNDAY IN LENT

Lord, We praise You for all Your loving kindness. We rejoice that You have rescued us from darkness and eternal death, and blessed us with Your love, light, and life. We thank You that You have not punished us as we deserve, or repaid us for our sins. In Your love You have given Your only Son to carry our sins and to suffer for our transgressions, that we may not perish, but have eternal life. We thank You that through Him we can approach Your throne, confident that there we shall find mercy and help in every need. Give us daily joy in Your free forgiveness for all our sins, and in all the endless blessings of the Gospel.

O Lord, You are mindful of the needs of all people. You give daily bread to both the godly and the ungodly alike. We praise and thank you for supplying all our bodily needs. Enable us to use the lives You give and sustain to show forth Your love and care. Grant us the continuing gift of health, that we may serve You with joy through Him who is the bread of life, even Jesus Christ.

Give us opportunities to proclaim the Gospel of Christ to others who do not know it. Keep Your Church in Jesus Christ in the one true faith. Enable each one of us to be individual lights that shine Your Gospel promises onto others that they may see the true Light of the world, even Jesus Christ.

Give wisdom, integrity, and Your direction to all who wield authority, that we may worship and serve You without hindrance and live in peace and righteousness. Protect us from the influence of wicked people, and preserve us in all dangers.

Give Your strength to all who suffer sickness, pain, disease, or any other trouble of body, mind, or spirit. Enable them to bear their cross with faith in Him who taught us to pray: “Your will be done”. In His glorious name, and for His kingdom’s sake, we pray these things. Amen.

Article: Women in the Church

On an online email forum with many so-called “conservative” LCA pastors and members, of which I am a member, one pastor recently made the claim that women reading lessons in church is an adiaphoron. That means it is neither commanded nor forbidden by God. There was no debate – everyone appeared to agree – almost everyone. I didn’t, and here is why....

God forbids women to speak the lessons in church (1 Timothy 2:11-15 and 1 Corinthians 14:34-38). Those who say that God doesn’t forbid women to speak the lessons in the church argue against the clear Scriptures, saying that it is not clear whether God forbids women to speak the lessons in the church. Here are a few of the arguments

they put forth. 1. That God's prohibition for women to teach and His command that they remain silent and learn in quietness and all submission refers only to preaching or only to the pastoral office itself. To this, they add that the church has had laymen speak the lessons to prove that it is not essential to the pastoral office. 2. That women singing in church or girls reciting Scripture at a Children's Christmas Service means they are also allowed to speak the lessons in church. 3. That letting women speak the lessons in church helps them get involved and gives them an opportunity to serve their Lord. 4. Our condemning of women readers is divisive and asserting personal opinions as the Word of God.

Let's look at each of these.

1. That God's prohibition for women to teach and His command that they remain silent and learn in quietness and all submission refers only to preaching or only to the pastoral office itself. To this, they add that the church has had laymen speak the lessons to prove that it is not essential to the pastoral office.

This denies the authority and clarity of the Word of God. The lessons that are spoken to the whole congregation are what is taught. It is not just a part of the teaching. It is the foundation of all the teaching the pastor does.

God's Word is clear that women are to be silent in the churches. No such prohibition is given to men. Having laymen speak the lessons is not sinful and not forbidden, and in fact reinforces the teaching of Scripture that men are the head of their homes and as fathers are specifically told to teach their children. The early Lutherans were free to train young men to lead devotions in their homes, as seminaries are free to have students read the lessons before they are ordained (Ephesians 6:4).

2. Women singing in church or girls reciting Scripture at a Children's Christmas Service means they are also allowed to speak the lessons in church.

This argument does violence to the Scriptures. Paul would not tell Mary not to sing her Magnificat, forbid Hannah and Deborah their songs of praise, or exhort Miriam to stop singing with Moses. Paul would not tell parents to stop teaching their children Scripture, as Moses commanded parents to do in Deuteronomy 6:6-9. Paul's words that women are to be silent and not teach, but learn in quietness and all submission, do not do away with Scripture. God's Word is clear, and it is only ignorance of the Scriptures that would confuse this issue.

3. That letting women speak the lessons in church helps them get involved and gives them an opportunity to serve their Lord.

This illustrates the exact problem very well. Women should be involved in their homes teaching God's Word, with the husband leading the devotions, as we see in Ephesians 6:4. Having the women read the lessons publicly contradicts this very order of creation that God has established.

We should not listen to those who tell us that this is a good way to make a woman feel welcome or to get her involved. It is not a good way because God tells women to learn

quietly and in all submission. A woman speaking the lessons is not learning quietly and in all submission. We have to repeat this Word of God to them. We have to speak God's Word in 1 Tim. 2 and 1 Cor. 14 out loud and not be ashamed of it. We need to say not ashamedly, but clearly, with gravity and with fear of God. We dare not explain God's Word away. You cannot hurt Christ's lamb by speaking Jesus' Word. Christ's sheep hear His voice and follow Him (John 10:27-28).

4. Our condemning women lectors is divisive and asserting personal opinions as the Word of God.

Pastors are not allowed to allow women to speak the lessons in church. It is not loving to allow them to speak the lessons. It can be cowardice, pride, apathy, or wrong affections, but it is not love. Hurting their feelings will not hurt their faith because the Word of God cannot destroy the faith of God's children. That is impossible. God telling wives to submit to their husbands doesn't destroy their faith any more than God telling Eve that her husband should rule over destroyed her faith (Gen. 3:16), or any more than God telling husbands to love their wives destroys theirs. God telling women to be silent in the church and not to usurp authority over men does not hurt their faith. Neither does it destroy the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace (Eph. 4:3). The unity of the Spirit is created by the Word of God. Destroying the unity of the Spirit happens when we disregard the Word of God, as when pastors do not obey their Lord when He tells them through His apostle that women are to be silent in the churches.

Those who have women teach and speak the lessons cause division by setting up a practice contrary to the doctrine we learn in the Bible. False doctrine and practice divide the church. And that raises the question, from where do these arguments come today?

They come from feminism, which denies the command which God gave to man when He spoke to woman, "Your husband shall rule over you." Some feminist theologians even argue that because the Son is subject to the Father when He submits all things to Him on the Last Day (1 Cor. 15:28), the word "submission" no longer means the willing service and obedience Sarah gave to Abraham when she called him her lord – (1 Peter 3:5-6) because this would apparently deny the equality of the Father and the Son. But Christ Himself came not to be served, but to serve and to give His life as a ransom for many (Mark 10:45). In making this argument, feminism assaults the final obedience of Christ when He hands all things over to His Father (1 Cor. 15:24-28). It assaults the lordship of Christ and the example He leaves for husbands and wives in how they ought to live with one another (Eph. 5:22-33).

These are the lengths some go to in order to deny the order of creation. Feminists assault the Unity of the Godhead and the Lordship of Christ all in order to avoid teaching the order of creation. And we see all over Christendom the results overturning this order has caused.

Children's Message:

Have you ever done something wrong and were afraid to tell your mum or dad about it because you knew you'd be in big trouble? Maybe you go and hide yourself so they can't find you! You might go into your bedroom and hide under the blankets. But then you find that hiding isn't any fun. It's dark and lonely, and you are still afraid! And guess what? Mum or dad find you anyway.



When you get caught out, you expect to be in big trouble. But what if you were to confess what you have done wrong, and then, expecting to be punished, your mum or dad instead says to you, "I forgive you." Wow! Suddenly, you are happy and don't have to hide anymore.

Have you ever wanted to hide after doing something wrong? The truth is, we all do wrong things sometimes. The wrong things are called "sin." We often want to hide our sin so we don't get in trouble. When we do wrong things, we are disobeying God. We deserve His punishment. We deserve to be hidden from God forever. Being away from God would be a very dark and very lonely way to be! It's way darker and lonelier than our trying to hide our sins from God - which, besides, we can't do anyway.

But there is good news! God sent His Son, Jesus, into the world to die on a cross to take the punishment for our sin. And because Jesus died for us on a cross, we can come out of hiding. The Bible says in John 3:16, "*God so loved the world that He gave His only Son, that everyone who believes in Him might not perish but have eternal life.*" Jesus didn't come into the world to get us into trouble but to save us. That doesn't mean it's okay to do wrong things. No! But when we do sin, Jesus takes us out of our dark hiding places and brings us into His light. He helps us say, "I'm sorry," instead of trying to keep our sins hidden. And Jesus always forgives us. So we won't be forever hidden away from God. We'll live with Him in the bright light of heaven forever. In short, that's the great good news!

Dear Jesus, when I wander into the darkness of sin, please seek me out with Your light of forgiveness. Amen.

WEEKLY ANNOUNCEMENTS

Wednesday, 13 March 5th mid-week Lenten Service	17 March 5 Lent	24 March Palm Sunday
7.30pm Oakey Hymns: 57 part 1, 171, 57 part 2, 48 v3	8.30am OAK LR 9.00am TMBA HC 9.00am GRN LR 10.45am AUB HC 9.00am LOWOOD LR Wednesday, 20 March 6th mid-week Lenten Service 7.30pm Toowoomba Hymns: 49, 64, 791, 48 v.3	10.00am MARBURG HC Parish Service followed by a shared lunch and then the Parish AGM.
Sunday, 17 March		
READINGS: Jeremiah 31:31-34; Hebrews 5:1-10; Mark 10:32-45		
HYMNS: 71 157 7 (53 80) 169		
Sunday, 24 March		
READINGS: Zechariah 9:9-12; Philippians 2:5-11; John 12:12-19		
HYMNS: 9 86 10 69 (284 285) 87		

Saturday, 16 March, 7.30pm. Youth at Trinity Oakey. All youth and young adults are invited to attend. Please bring something for a shared supper.

Thursday, 21 March, 10.00am. Bible Study at Lowood. We shall be looking at Amos 3&4.