

Lent 4
March 15, 2015

"The Only Cure for Sin Is Jesus"

JOHN 3:14-21

Just as Moses lifted up the snake in the desert, 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 one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. ¹⁷ For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him. ¹⁸ Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe stands condemned already because he has not believed in the name of God's one and only Son. ¹⁹ This is the verdict: Light has come into the world, but men loved darkness instead of light because their deeds were evil. ²⁰ Everyone who does evil hates the light, and will not come into the light for fear that his deeds will be exposed. ²¹ But whoever lives by the truth comes into the light, so that it may be seen plainly that what he has done has been done through God."

There are many things about the Christian faith that make it unique and different from other religions in the world. Foremost, we believe that Jesus Christ is our Lord and God. We believe that he is our Savior. That means we believe we are saved by what Christ has done for us, not by what we do. All other religions without exception teach you can merit something or gain acceptance or even have eternal life by what you do. The Christian faith says there is nothing I can do to save myself. Jesus Christ my Lord and Savior has done it all for me.

In this third chapter of John we see a very religious man named Nicodemus coming to Jesus for help. He wants Jesus to help him do a better job of saving himself by keeping the rules and regulations of the Jewish people. Jesus shocked him when he said, "No one can enter the kingdom of God unless he is born again." With these words Jesus is telling this man he needs to have a whole new life of not trusting in himself but trusting in him as his Lord and God and Savior. This is the only hope for entering the kingdom of God.

There are only two cures for sin in the world. There is the cure that does not work and there is the cure that works. The cure that does not work is trusting in yourself as Nicodemus was doing. The cure that does work is trusting in Jesus to do everything necessary to save you. Let's look more closely at these words of Jesus with this thought in mind: "The Only Cure for Sin in Jesus."

Human cures do not work

By pointing to Moses lifting up the snake in the desert, Jesus wants to show Nicodemus and the whole world they need to look up to his cross as the cure for sin. "Just as Moses lifted up the snake in the desert, so the Son of Man must be lifted up, that everyone who believes in him may have eternal life."

Let's go back to that day when Moses lifted up the brass snake so people could look at

it and be saved from snake bites. The people have been camping in the desert for forty years. The older generation was not the so called great generation. They constantly whined and complained against the Lord. But now a new generation is on the cusp of entering the promised land. As they go through a rough patch they complain to the Lord about not having enough food to eat and water to drink. They even complain about the wonderful manna from heaven that has sustained them for forty years calling it "miserable food." They accuse God of not caring about them or loving them.

The Lord had a cure for their grumbling and complaining. He sent venomous snakes that bit the people and many of them died. These were no ordinary snakes. They were everywhere. They were aggressive. They bit the people and they died. In desperation they called on the Lord for help. There was no way they could survive these terrible snake bites unless the Lord provided them with a cure. Oh, I am sure that some of them tried to come up with their best homemade remedies for snake bite, but none of them worked. Even grandma's secret potion and formula passed down for generations failed them.

How did the Lord cure them? He did not have Moses make a special salve that could heal the people or offer them a certain concoction of herbs and spices. Instead the Lord direct Moses to make a brass snake and put it up on a pole. Anyone who looked at this snake as God's cure would be healed instantly. When God offers a cure for people it always works perfectly.

Remember the old westerns. If someone was bitten by a rattlesnake, another person took a knife and cut where the bite was, and then sucked out the venom. That certainly would not have worked for the people of Moses' time and it does not work today. And it does not work for the problem of sin. You cannot do a little good here and there and think that will draw the sin out of you and take care of it.

When some snakes bite, they hang on with their fangs as long as possible and keep pumping venom into you. That is why they say that the little rattle snakes are more dangerous than the big ones because they do not know how to control their venom. They give you all they have. So it is with sin. When we are bitten by sin as Adam and Eve were, the sin keeps injecting itself in us, leading to more sin. When sin enters our lives, we cannot get it out of us. It will destroy our lives on this earth and it will destroy us eternally with hell. It doesn't do any work to put a few little Band Aids over this problem of sin to cover it up. It cannot be removed or forgiven by any good we try to do. That is why we desperately need a cure from outside of ourselves. That is why our heavenly Father has given us his Son Jesus.

Jesus provides us with a complete cure

Jesus makes it very clear to Nicodemus and to us and to the whole world that he is the only cure for sin. "Just as the Moses lifted up the snake in the desert, so the Son of Man must be lifted up that everyone who believes in him may have eternal life." Jesus is telling us about a cure that involves him being lifted up on a cross. He says that anyone who turns to this cure will have eternal life.

Don't you love this word "Anyone?" This means anyone who has been bitten by sin, and

that includes everyone, can look up to Jesus and live. Jesus is God's Son from all eternity. He is also the Son of Man who is fully human. Thus he is able to die for us, but also because he is the Son of God he is able to take what he does for us and offer it to us as the perfect cure for this problem of sin. The blood that was shed for us at the cross is the very blood of the Son of Man and also the very blood of God himself. Even a thief could turn to Jesus while dying on the cross. Jesus joyfully told him, "I tell you the truth, today you will be with me in paradise." This amazing cure is offered to all.

How do people enter into the kingdom of God? How are they born again? How are their sins forgiven? Jesus sums this up for us with these amazing words from John 3:16. "For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life." God does not want people to perish forever in hell. That is why he offers us the perfect cure. He gives us the gift of his Son. I cannot extract the poison of sin from life. But Jesus can. Jesus did. Isaiah 53 says that the Lord laid on him the iniquity of us all. 2 Corinthians 5 says that he became sin for us, even though he knew no sin. The cure is complete and though. It cost you nothing but it cost Jesus everything. He was wounded for our transgressions and crushed for our iniquities.

God does not want to condemn the world to everlasting punishment because it cannot come up with a cure for sin. Jesus makes that so clear when he says, "For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him. Whoever believes in is not condemned but whoever does not believe stands condemned already because he does not believe in name of God's one and only Son." There are people in this community, living next to you in your neighborhood, even your relatives and friends, who want nothing to do with this amazing cure for sin. They are people who are already dead, the walking dead if you will. Our God gave his Son so they can come to life just as we now have eternal life through him.

The death rate for sin is always the same. It is always 100%. The wages of sin is death. There is no human way to change that number or statistic. God in his love for us provides us with the only escape from death and that is Jesus. Those who believe have eternal life. They live their lives on this earth alive in Christ. Eternal life already theirs.

Some people don't want anything to do with this wonderful cure for sin that Jesus provides. "This is the verdict: Light has come into the world, but men loved darkness instead of light because their deeds were evil. Everyone who does evil hates the light and will not come into the light for fear that his deeds will be exposed." I cannot imagine the people who were bitten by snakes turning their back on the perfect cure that came when you looked at the brass snake. You think people would eagerly want to run to the cross of Jesus to be cured from their sin. That is not what happens. Light comes into the world and people love the darkness of sin and unbelief. They hate those who dare to speak about Jesus as the only way to be cured.

Why is it that you have come to accept this cure for your sin in Jesus? Why are you not among the many in the world who turn up their noses against what Jesus has done? Jesus gives the answer for us in verse 21 where it says, "But whoever lives by the truth comes to the light, so that it may be seen plainly that what he has done has been done through God." You have come to the light. You have come to the truth. You have the cure for your problem of sin. What has been done for you in your life has been done for you by God.

How blessed you are to treasure the cure you have found in John 3:16 "For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life." Amen.