

ST PAUL'S (RONDEBOSCH)

SERMON

FOURTH SUNDAY IN LENT (YEAR B)

14 MARCH 2021

NUMBERS 21:4-9// PSALM 107:1-3, 17-22// EPHESIANS 2:1-10// JOHN 3:14-21

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Let us pray

God of wisdom and love, source of all good things, teach us your truth and guide our actions in your way of peace and love. Lord open our ears that we may hear you Open our eyes that we may see you and open our hearts that we may accept you. AMEN

“For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in shall not perish (die) but have eternal life”

Is there any verse more familiar than this verse? John 3v 16 shows up in the strangest places on posters at sporting events, on jewellery, and bumper stickers on cars, even on tattoos. But separated from its, context, the power and the impact of this verse can easily get lost.

Today’s readings confronts us to reflect on an essential human problem that we don’t always want to talk about: **SIN**. Sin cannot be ignored it cannot be washed away, it cannot be hidden, it must be dealt with.

Because we are still in the season of Lent a time of reflection and repentance of our sins and our relationship with God. I would like us to reflect on the question **“How does God deal with our sin”**

I would like to highlight three aspect (points) from our Scripture readings that are so closely related and puts the key verse into context and give us some insight/understanding of **“How God deal with our sin?”**

- * The uplifted Christ. (Jesus Christ lifted up on the cross dying for our sins)
- * The Love of God. (His love for us)
- * The judgment or condemnation of those who do not believe in the Son.

1. The uplifted Christ (v 14-15)

In John 3V 14-15 we read ***“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”***

The story is from Numbers 21:4-9, and every Jewish child knows it. The Israelites sinned by grumbling against God for bringing them out of Egypt into the wilderness. God punished them with a plague of serpents, (snake) killing many Israelites. The Israelites confessed their sin and begged for mercy, so God told Moses to make a bronze serpent (snake) and hold it aloft on a pole. Whoever looked up at the bronze serpent (snake) was saved from the serpents (snake) —given new life—born anew.

Jesus use this story from the history of his people as a parable. Jesus says, just as Moses lifted up the serpent, so the Son of Man shall be lifted up. The serpent was lifted up so that the people might be saved. Jesus must be lifted up so that we might be saved.

How does God deals with our sins?

Jesus tells us early in John’s gospel that the price for our sins will be Jesus death on a cross. He dealt with our sins by lifting he son up to a cross to die for our sins

2. The Love of God (His love for us)

V 16 we read our key verse ***“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”***

When Jesus says that God loved the world ‘So much’ the word ‘so (Greek-houtos) means “just so,” or “in this way,” We could translate the verse as “This is the way God loved the world, with the result that he gave his only Son, in order that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life.” Luther said ***“How could God love such a world? “If I were as our Lord God, and these vile people were as disobedient as they now be, I would knock the world to pieces,*** but you see my friends God loves us because he is love and his motive is love and God’s objective is salvation (forgiveness of our sins) John 3:16 is not only about how much God loved the world (quantity). It is also about the way God loved the world. (quality).

(God's love is a love for *the unlovable the unlovely, the lonely, who have no one else to love them, the man who loves God and the man who never thinks of God the man who rest in the love of God and the man who spurns in the love of God – all are included in the vast inclusive love, the love of God. As Augustine said “God loves each one of us as if there was only one of us.”*)

Furthermore this verse says “whoever believes in me shall not perish but will have eternal life”. What does eternal lives mean? The word “have” is present tense, suggesting that believers possess it in the here and now rather than having to wait for some future inheritance. If you believe in Jesus Christ you will experience eternal life now already. It envelops every relationship in life with peace. It gives us peace with God. It gives us peace with our neighbour. If we have been forgiven we must be forgiving. It gives us peace with life. It gives us peace with ourselves.

How does God deals with our sins?

God deals with our sins by loving each one of us so deeply, so profoundly and so passionately that it is God's desire that the entire creation (the whole world) should be rescued from its bondage of sin and decay, that is why he send his Son so that we must have eternal life(that we must have peace)

3. God's judgment or condemnation of those who do not believe in the Son.

In v 17 we read **For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him.**

This verse states God's purpose in sending the Son. It is not to condemn the world, but to save it.

However Salvation might be free but it is not cheap. We dare not take the gift of God's Son lightly. It was an enormously costly gift for God to give, and if we ignore the gift we will surely be judged.

The one who fails to believe in the name of the Saviour has not accepted the salvation offered by the Saviour, and thus “has been judged already.”

Just as we had a clear statement of Jesus' purpose in v. 16—that he came to save the world—so we have a clear statement now of the problem—**“This is the judgment, that the light has come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than the light; for their works were evil”** (v. 19). Such a person **“hates the light and does not come to the light, lest his works would be exposed”** (v. 20).

How does God deal with our sins?

God loves us so much that he sent his Son who came as a light into the world and was lifted on the cross to die for our sins. But yet there are some of us who still rejected the light, who don't want to turn away from our sins, we want to stay in the darkness

We have a choice to choose life through Jesus Christ over the darkness and despair of sins.

CONCLUSION

Let me conclude with the following story

When electricity is finally made available to a small rural village in Lesotho local authorities soon notice that one elderly lady appears not to be using the electricity allocated to her home, her usage is much lower than the rest of the villagers. At first they suspected there may be a problem with her metre but when tested it appears to be in perfect working order. Eventually they decided to ask her directly if there is a problem. "No she says there is no problem. The electricity is wonderful. Every night when the sun goes down and it begins to get dark I am able to turn on the lights and find my paraffin lamp and matches. I can then light the lamp without fumbling in the dark. Once my lamp is lit I turn off the electricity—it has done its job. She had access to electricity at the flick of a switch but chose to continue to use her paraffin lamp

Is Jesus calling you out of the darkness, into the light of his saving grace? Are you ready to make him Lord of your entire life, not just the part that you think of as "belonging to church"? Are you ready to step out of the darkness, and into the light of God's love for you? ***For God loved you in this way: he gave his only Son, so that if you believe in him, you will not perish but you will have eternal life.***