

## The Second Sunday in Lent 2020

John 3; Romans 4; Genesis 12

Holy Spirit, Light Divine/Shine upon this heart of mine  
Chase the shades of night away/Turn the darkness into day.  
Let me see my Savior's face/Let me all His beauties trace.  
Show those glorious truths to me/Which are only known to Thee

3No one has ascended into heaven except he who descended from heaven, the Son of Man. 14And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of Man be lifted up, 15that whoever believes in him may have eternal life.

**16/Jesus said:/ “In fact, God loved the world, in the same way that I just said!”** He gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life.

17For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him.

In the Name of Jesus.

God HAS done the impossible work of Love! Impossible for a man; yet worked by the Son of Man! Hear the refrain the Spirit sings to us this day: Son of Man; Son of Man; His Son the One and Only; His Son!

God DOES attach Himself to the impossible—in our view!—STILL! WE, my dear ones, are part of the world, the ‘whoever’ who could stick their heads out of their tents, see the bronze serpent on the pole and be saved from serpent-death; the ‘whoever’ that the Spirit of Jesus raises from this, from what’s going on, to God, to Salvation, to Life!

The clearest synonym for the word LOVE in the Old and New Testaments is the word ATTACHMENT. GONE with the Wind of God is any ROMANTIC notion of love, love that finds its height and depth in the wicked HEART of wicked MEN who deserve nothing but condemnation and to perish.

HEAVEN’S attachment—God’s Love—is going on when and where God is GLAD to abide with men—Abraham, Paul, ‘whoever’!—and yet never FLATTERS anyone by any act of love!

‘Honey, do you love me?’ ‘Yes, dear; I love you.’ ‘Really? Tell me WHY? What is it, ABOUT ME, that you find so....’

Not the work of the Son of Man, the Son of God; His Glory!

Instead, the Spirit makes clear: condemnation makes sense; destruction too! But, instead, Love. NOT as Moses handed down the strictures of Love: Law, life-and-death, OUR hands liable to blame, our hearts, us.

The Love that is Grace and Truth: God GIVEN in such a way that WHATEVER...WHOEVER...does, thinks, trusts...

Ahh! Dearly beloved! Because of THIS Son, This Man, This Love—YOU...CANNOT...DISAPPOINT...HEAVEN...ever again.

‘Not a very flattering statement there, pastor!’ No need to thank me! Just doing the work that is mine to do as long as heaven spares me.

Dear friends: there are a couple ways to hear the word ‘Son’ in the Gospel. The Mystery of the Holy Trinity is in there: One God, yet the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit. Mystery: told us; revealed to us; GUARANTEED to US!—and yet The Mystery, for us to worship and sing about and spread around and love; but no more ‘GRASP-ABLE’ by the likes of us, than the second Mystery of our Faith: the Taking up of our human nature, of a MAN, by God.

Think, today, my dear ones, about the SON being God-now-and-forever-Man!

It’s a title NOT unique to the Bible, Old Testament or New! There are plenty of other cultures of antiquity for whom the leader, the pharaoh, the tyrant, the high priest, the mob-boss, the thug—

GOBS of names he is called—who fancied himself as the ‘chip off the old block,’ the OLDEST Block: Whatever is up there, benevolent, so often; but then, sending us viruses and hysterical reporters!

David was styled ‘son of God’ though HE was just a man, a son of Adam. And David was, the Book tells us, ALL...FOR...GOD! The real God; the true God; the Living God.

Thus David’s description as a ‘man of blood.’ Sooooo ‘FOR...GAW-AWDddd...,’ that Goliath types perished at his hand. His bloody hand even reached from the grave and served revenge as a very cold dish.

THAT’S why these verses—favorites of so many Christians!—have the strange words in them of judgment to gloom and doing away with the world!

What God and His Son had every justification that they OUGHT TO DO! And yet, God and His Son does something other than what WE are asking for, daily and much; and the world; whoever you meet!

Your poor pastor is going to be bold this morning and declare that there is a THIRD mystery here—kin to the Mysteries confessed in the Nicene Creed, Holy Trinity, Incarnation....ah! But the Gospel!!!!

The Good News of God’s love—forever free of flattery!—that a man may look to, believe—and yet never worry that HIS looking, HIS trusting, can ever be judged, condemned; or worry that God-with-us, God-for-us, will ever perish!

Saint Paul calls such a man, ‘the one who NOT working is yet believing, yet saved, brought to life, loved!’

Keep praying for your preacher. Doctor told me this week that I’m

just a tweak away from being labeled ‘morbidly.’ ‘Thanks, doc!’  
Your prayers are helping.

Pray with even more zeal that what I am so ready to turn into a lecture or a paper becomes for the children of God a soothing talk of Grace and Truth.

These words of Mystery and Believing, Son of Man and Son of God—these are not theories; not an intellectual exercise.

Jesus was ‘lifted up,’ ‘hoisted up,’ with His hands nailed and tied to a beam they hung on a pole crosswise. He suffered; He thirsted; He blessed with Love; and He declared His work ‘finished.’ Then He breathed His last; and they rammed a spear into His side—He was truly dead. He bears that scar still, the Book says! Hands are scarred still too!

But before it all went down, He spoke as if He was God Himself, that we may have a truth that is given and which WE can never take up and disappoint heaven.

“No man takes My Life from Me! THIS MAN, I, will lay down My Life; and This Man will take it up again. And when I am lifted up, I will draw ALL MEN TO MYSELF!”

You are part of all men; whoever; the world. And so, the Gospel tells you, ‘Condemnation and perishing are NOT in your hands; but in the hands that baptize you, the hands that break the bread and give the cup; human hands—still!—and thus a love that does not flatter, that the world cannot receive, not even His own People.

Yet He remains forever and for good FOR the world, for men, for whoever deserves no such gift!

I’m living from Luther’s comments on Psalm 32!

‘God does NOT WANT TO KNOW about your sins! He does

NOT WANT TO HEAR ABOUT THEM!’

And so, TELL Him your sins! And watch Him wipe them away and cast into the heart of the sea and remove as far as East is from West, as Break from Close of Day!

Law note, just before the End. The LAW says we can die still, face condemnation and perish. There is only one way, after the Son’s Work accomplish, that WE can still disappoint God. John’s Gospel is full of such episodes and people.

Blind men who claim they can see.

Lawless men, who trust in Moses.

Men boasting they are MOST ‘for-God;’ yet whose father is the original murderer.

Such men of the world cry out for you to join them; me too. DENY that YOU are a disappointment to heaven! Then, what has heaven to work away?

You are the children of God. Tell your Father what is tempting you. Tell Him how MUCH you want to give in to temptation. FILL His ears with what you have heard from Moses; and how a ‘real YOU’ is REALLY against loving God or loving your fellow man.

Tell Him—and leave rescue from sin and temptation in the Human Hands with scars!

And there’s no doubt that YOU are one of the ‘whoever,’ who looks to Christ, believes in Christ, is not condemned but saved. And you will never perish. Instead, you have Eternal Life. You have the God, in the Name of the Son of Man; in the Name of Jesus.