**Saginaw First Free Methodist Church**

**Fourth Sunday of Lent**

**March 14, 2021**



*“’And just 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.’”*

*(John 3:14-15)*

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*The mission of Saginaw First Free Methodist Church is to be faithful to God and to make known to all people everywhere God’s call to wholeness in Jesus Christ.*

**Prelude**

**\*\*Greeting/Announcements**

**\*Call to Worship** (*spoken responsively*)

L: Give thanks to the Lord, whose steadfast love endures forever

**P: God so loves us, and saves us from perishing**

L: Christ was lifted up to bring all mankind salvation

**P: We answer God’s call to bring people abundant life**

L: We have been saved by God’s amazing grace, through our faith

**P: We will not boast in ourselves, but in Christ alone**

L: Resist what is evil, and be drawn to the light of Christ

**P: We are created in Christ Jesus for good works, our way of life**

**\*Opening Hymn:** “Beneath the Cross of Jesus” #231 (vv.1,4)

**Beneath the cross of Jesus**

**I fain would take my stand**

**The shadow of a mighty Rock**

**Within a weary land**

**A home within the wilderness**

**A rest upon the way**

**From the burning of the noon-tide heat**

**And the burden of the day**

**I take, O cross, thy shadow**

**For my abiding place**

**I ask no other sunshine than**

**The sunshine of His face**

**Content to let the world go by**

**To know no gain nor loss**

**My sinful self my only shame**

**My glory all the cross**

**\*Invocation and Lord’s Prayer**

L: God who sustains life, in the glory of the cross your Son embraced the power of death and broke its hold over your people. Through Christ you make us a new creation, for with him we pass from sin to the new life of grace. We look up to you for wisdom to walk in the light, and compassion when we slip into the darkness. Help us to know the truth, as we pray the prayer that Jesus taught His disciples…

**P: Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be Your name. Your kingdom come; your will be done in earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread and forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors. And lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil. For Yours is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory forever. Amen.**

**\*Gloria Patri**

**Glory be to the Father​**

**And to the Son and to the Holy Ghost.**

**As it was in the beginning​**

**Is now and ever shall be**

**World without end**

**Amen. Amen**

**Old Testament Scripture Lesson:** Numbers 21:4-9

From Mount Hor they set out by the way to the Red Sea, to go around the land of Edom; but the people became impatient on the way. 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 food and no water, and we detest this miserable food.”

Then the LORD sent poisonous serpents among the people, and they bit the people, so that many Israelites died. The people came to Moses and said, “We have sinned by speaking against the LORD and against you; pray to the LORD to take away the serpents from us.” So Moses prayed for the people.

And the LORD said to Moses, “Make a poisonous serpent, and set it on a pole; and everyone who is bitten shall look at it and live.”

So Moses made a serpent of bronze, and put it upon a pole; and whenever a serpent bit someone, that person would look at the serpent of bronze and live.

**Prayer of Confession**

L: In this season of Lent, when we reexamine our lives and find our faith is tested, we may realize when we’ve walked in darkness. For the times we do not seek to walk in God’s light, let us pray…

**P: God who gives us breath, our world is surrounded in darkness. But You, in your rich love and mercy, sent Christ to be crucified and lifted up, so that we may look upon him and be saved. We have followed the passions our flesh, that have brought upon us death. We have succumbed to our wrath, that has cut off our supply of life from the Holy Spirit. We have been disobedient, following the course of this world. We were dead to our trespasses and sin, but you have rescued us from perishing and brought to us eternal life. Let us look to you and live, offering thanksgiving and telling of your deeds with joy. Amen.**

**Affirmation of Faith:** Psalm 107

**P: O give thanks to the LORD, for God is good; for God’s steadfast love endures forever. Let the redeemed of the LORD say so, those redeemed from trouble and gathered in from the lands, from the east and from the west, from the north and from the south. Some were sick through their sinful ways, and because of their iniquities endured affliction; they loathed any kind of food, and they drew near to the gates of death. Then they cried to the LORD in their trouble, and God saved them from their distress; God sent out God’s word and healed them, and delivered them from destruction. Let them thank the LORD for God’s steadfast love, for the wonderful works to humankind.**

**Hymn of Affirmation:** “Rock of Ages” #445 (vv.1-2)

**Rock of Ages, cleft for me**

**Let me hide myself in Thee**

**Let the water and the blood**

**From Thy wounded side which flowed**

**Be of sin the double cure**

**Save from wrath and make me pure**

**Could my tears forever flow**

**Could my zeal no languor know**

**These for sin could not atone**

**Thou must save, and Thou alone**

**In my hand no price I bring**

**Simply to Thy cross I cling**

**New Testament Scripture Lesson:** Ephesians 2:1-10

You were dead through the trespasses and sins in which you once lived, following the course of this world, following the ruler of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work among those who are disobedient. All of us once lived among them in the passions of our flesh, following the desires of flesh and senses, and we were by nature children of wrath, like everyone else.

But God, who is rich in mercy, out of the great love with which he loved us even when we were dead through our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ--by grace you have been saved and raised us up with him and seated us with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, so that in the ages to come he might show the immeasurable riches of his grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus.

For by grace you have been saved through faith, and this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not the result of works, so that no one may boast. For we are what he has made us, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand to be our way of life.

**Passing of the Peace**

**Prayers of the People**

L: Lord in Your Mercy…

**P: Hear our prayer.**

**Gospel Lesson:** John 3:14-21

And just 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. “For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life. Indeed, God did not send the Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him.

Those who believe in him are not condemned; but those who do not believe are condemned already, because they have not believed in the name of the only Son of God. And this is the judgment, that the light has come into the world, and people loved darkness rather than light because their deeds were evil.

For all who do evil hate the light and do not come to the light, so that their deeds may not be exposed. But those who do what is true come to the light, so that it may be clearly seen that their deeds have been done in God.”

**Sermon**

**Prayer of Response**

**Hymn of Response:** “My Song is Love Unknown” Handout (vv.1,5)

**My song is love unknown, my Savior’s love to me**

**Love to the loveless shown, that they might lovely be**

**O who am I, that for my sake**

**My God should take frail flesh and die?**

**My God should take frail flesh and die?**

**I sing my plain belief, one song my heart outpours**

**Never was pain nor grief, never was love like yours**

**This is my friend, in whose sweet praise**

**I all my days could gladly spend**

**I all my days could gladly spend**

**Invitation of Offering**

L:God has delivered you from destruction and seated us with Christ in the heavenly places. God has shown us immeasurable riches of grace and kindness, so that we may pass on to others what we’ve experienced firsthand. Let works of giving be our boast in Christ, as we collect this morning’s tithes and offerings.

**\*Doxology**

**Praise God, from whom all blessings flow**

**Praise Him, all creatures here below**

**Praise Him above, ye heavenly host**

**Praise Father Son, and Holy Ghost.**

**Amen.**

**\*Prayer**

**\*Hymn:** “Love Divine, All Loves Excelling” #507 (vv.1,3-4)

**Love divine, all loves excelling, Joy of heav'n to earth come down**

**Fix in us thy humble dwelling, all thy faithful mercies crown**

**Jesus, thou art all compassion, pure, unbounded love thou art**

**Visit us with thy salvation, enter ev'ry trembling heart**

**Come, Almighty, to deliver, Let us all Thy life receive**

**Suddenly return and never, Nevermore Thy temples leave**

**Thee we would be always blessing, Serve Thee as Thy hosts above**

**Pray and praise Thee without ceasing, Glory in Thy perfect love**

**Finish, then, thy new creation, pure and spotless let us be**

**Let us see thy great salvation, perfectly restored in thee**

**Changed from glory into glory, 'til in heav'n we take our place**

**Til we cast our crowns before thee, lost in wonder, love, and praise**

**\*Benediction**

L: Almighty God came and delivered us from death and darkness. Let us all receive the life the Holy Spirit brings. Pure and blameless, glory in God’s perfect love. Pray and praise without ceasing, as you go in peace to love and serve. Amen.