

# Listening for the Promise

WEEKLY DEVOTIONAL

March 14, 2021 – Fourth Sunday in Lent

*“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.’” – Numbers 21:8*

How many of you like snakes? I know some people who have them as pets, and some people who are terrified of them. Yet in our scriptures, snakes are a symbol of evil from Genesis through Revelation. It was the snake who tempted Eve in Eden, and in Revelation, Satan is called the “serpent.”

In Numbers, it says God sent serpents into the camp of his people, Israel. When you look at what preceded this terrible event, it’s not hard to understand why. The Israelites were traveling toward the land God has promised them. The journey is difficult, and they are beset by lack of food, polluted water holes, epidemic diseases, and dissension within their ranks, and so they begin to grumble. Mind you, it hasn’t been that long since they crossed the Red Sea – hardy time to forget what God could do with water.

They grumble and complain that they had it better back in Egypt. How quickly they forget the slavery, the forced labor, the beatings when the hot sun forced them to slow the pace of their work. God has fed them, given them water, and even speaks to them through Moses from the mountain. And they make all kinds of promises and seal it with blood. Then, just as soon as Moses is out of sight, they forget about all that God has done for them. They get drunk, make an idol and worship it while partying all night.

Sometimes things need to get worse before they get better. Sometimes it takes a crisis to help us understand that life with God is not about getting what we want but wanting what we’ve got. They forgot that God freed them from captivity, saved them from Pharaoh’s soldiers, brought them victory in battle, and gave them just laws to live by. He fed and watered them daily, protected them and led them by cloud and pillar of fire. But now God sends them serpents because they refuse to be a people of praise.

Fact is, many of us are snake-bitten for the same reasons. We’ve forgotten how to be a people of praise. This story from Numbers reminds us to look up and live. To look up with adoration to a God who is faithful in all his promises. To look up in confession, repenting of our ungrateful ways, and to look up in thanksgiving for all the blessings we take for granted. Amen.

# Listening for the Promise

WEEKLY DEVOTIONAL

March 14, 2021 – Fourth Sunday in Lent

*“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.’” – Numbers 21:8*

How many of you like snakes? I know some people who have them as pets, and some people who are terrified of them. Yet in our scriptures, snakes are a symbol of evil from Genesis through Revelation. It was the snake who tempted Eve in Eden, and in Revelation, Satan is called the “serpent.”

In Numbers, it says God sent serpents into the camp of his people, Israel. When you look at what preceded this terrible event, it’s not hard to understand why. The Israelites were traveling toward the land God has promised them. The journey is difficult, and they are beset by lack of food, polluted water holes, epidemic diseases, and dissension within their ranks, and so they begin to grumble. Mind you, it hasn’t been that long since they crossed the Red Sea – hardy time to forget what God could do with water.

They grumble and complain that they had it better back in Egypt. How quickly they forget the slavery, the forced labor, the beatings when the hot sun forced them to slow the pace of their work. God has fed them, given them water, and even speaks to them through Moses from the mountain. And they make all kinds of promises and seal it with blood. Then, just as soon as Moses is out of sight, they forget about all that God has done for them. They get drunk, make an idol and worship it while partying all night.

Sometimes things need to get worse before they get better. Sometimes it takes a crisis to help us understand that life with God is not about getting what we want but wanting what we’ve got. They forgot that God freed them from captivity, saved them from Pharaoh’s soldiers, brought them victory in battle, and gave them just laws to live by. He fed and watered them daily, protected them and led them by cloud and pillar of fire. But now God sends them serpents because they refuse to be a people of praise.

Fact is, many of us are snake-bitten for the same reasons. We’ve forgotten how to be a people of praise. This story from Numbers reminds us to look up and live. To look up with adoration to a God who is faithful in all his promises. To look up in confession, repenting of our ungrateful ways, and to look up in thanksgiving for all the blessings we take for granted. Amen.