

Lent 4 – Ephesians chapter 2, verses 1 – 10 and John chapter 3, verses 14 - 21:-

Traditionally the 4th Sunday in Lent is kept as ‘Mothering Sunday’ with appropriate Readings. However for our Bible Study we look at the set Church Lectionary readings as part of our preparation for Easter.

The words in Ephesians chapter 2 contrast life ‘before’ and ‘after’ our coming to faith in our Lord Jesus Christ. The passage from the Gospel of John gives us the ‘why’ and ‘how’ it is offered.

Ephesians chapter 2, verses 1 – 3:- These verses highlight the condition of sinful men and women. This is what we were like and this is the condition of most of humanity! Note the key words in verse 2 - *“following the course of this world”*. There is a link to our previous studies on The Temptations - *“the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience”* (verse 2).

Verses 4 – 10:- Notice the *“great love”* of God the Father for us, even when we were still *“dead through our trespasses”* - before we came to faith God loved us! Because we are his workmanship created in Christ for good works we are called to be different! *“Do not be conformed to this world but be transformed by the renewal of your mind . . .”* (Romans chapter 12, verse 2). Sadly the temptation is always to yearn for the apparent advantages given by modern ways of living. It is all too easy to look at the way others live and wish we could be like that – and still be Christians of course! The challenge for the Church is not to be like the world, but to show how to live and love in the world within the will of God the Father.

Gospel of John, chapter 3, verses 14 – 21:- This passage includes one of the best known verses of scripture *“For God so loved the world that he gave his only (begotten) Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life”* (verse 16). Again an emphasis on the *“love”* that God the Father has for his creation.

The question as to how it is made available is here in these verses. *“And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of Man be lifted up”*. Read Numbers chapter 21, verses 4 – 9.

Here in the Gospel of John, the Lord Jesus uses the example of *“the serpent on a pole”* as a picture of himself on the cross. Sin, the ‘bite of the serpent’, Satan (see Genesis chapter 3 verses 1-15), affects everyone of us. Look to Him (Jesus) and live!

Belief in the sacrificial death of the Lord Jesus Christ brings eternal life.

Here we have the promise of the Lord himself!

“whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life”.

Do you believe this? If you do why not share it with someone else during this Lent?

1. O my Saviour, lifted
from the earth for me,
draw me, in thy mercy,
nearer unto thee.

2. Lift my earth-bound longings,
fix them, Lord, above
draw me with the magnet
of thy mighty love.

3. Lord, thine arms are stretching
ever far and wide,
to enfold thy children
to thy loving side.

4. And I come, O Jesus:
dare I turn away?
No, thy love hath conquered,
and I come today.

5. Bringing all my burdens,
sorrow, sin and care,
at thy feet I lay them,
and I leave them there.

William Walsham Howe 1823 - 1897