



Gospel Jn 3:14-21

God sent his Son into the world that we might be saved through him.

Jesus said to Nicodemus:

'The Son of Man must be lifted up as Moses lifted up the serpent in the desert, so that everyone who believes may have eternal life in him.

Yes, God loved the world so much that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not be lost

but may have eternal life.

For God sent his Son into the world not to condemn the world, but so that through him the world might be saved.

No one who believes in him will be condemned; but whoever refuses to believe is condemned already,

because he has refused to believe in the name of God's only Son.

On these grounds is sentence pronounced: that though the light has come into the world men have shown they prefer darkness to the light

because their deeds were evil.

And indeed, everybody who does wrong hates the light and avoids it, for fear his actions should be exposed; but the man who lives by the truth

comes out into the light,

so that it may be plainly seen that what he does is done in God.'

Reflection by Greg Sunter

To fully understand this week's gospel passage, it is important to take the first reading into consideration as well. The account from 2 Chronicles describes the way in which the people began to neglect their relationship with God. Despite prophets and messengers being sent to them, they turned their backs on God. At about this time the Israelites were conquered, the Temple in Jerusalem destroyed and the survivors taken into exile in Babylon. For many, this was seen as a punishment from God because of their neglectful and selfish behaviour. But the reading demonstrates God's infinite patience with humankind. God gives the people another chance and calls on them to rebuild the Temple in Jerusalem. God is willing to wipe the slate clean and start afresh. It is in this context that we must understand the gospel passage. In yet another attempt to demonstrate love and forgiveness, God's only Son – the Word made Flesh – is sent into the world to lead the people from darkness to light. Despite the many, many attempts by God to demonstrate love and foster a relationship with humankind, the people have repeatedly rejected the relationship with God and preferred to live a life of selfishness and darkness. Yet we see through both of these readings the unquenchable nature of God who keeps giving humankind one more chance.

In our day to day relationships, it is true that we often seek to test the limits of the love that is expressed. Young people in particular often test the boundaries of their parents' love and the boundaries of others who care for them. It is often a test to reassure themselves of this love – will you still love me, even if I do this? Today's readings portray the people of God as adolescents constantly testing out the limits of God's love. In a remarkable act, God's own Son is sent into the world to die as a sign of the lengths to which God will go to assure humanity of the love that is theirs for the taking.

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The Living Word

Fourth Sunday of Lent, Year B

14 March 2021

First Reading 2 Chr 36:14-16, 19-23

The wrath and the mercy of the Lord are revealed in the exile and liberation of his people.

All the heads of the priesthood, and the people too, added infidelity to infidelity, copying all the shameful practices of the nations and defiling the Temple that the Lord had consecrated for himself in Jerusalem. The Lord, the God of their ancestors, tirelessly sent them messenger after messenger, since he wished to spare his people and his house. But they ridiculed the messengers of God, they despised his words, they laughed at his prophets, until at last the wrath of the Lord rose so high against his people that there was no further remedy.

Their enemies burned down the Temple of God, demolished the walls of Jerusalem, set fire to all its palaces, and destroyed everything of value in it. The survivors were deported by Nebuchadnezzar to Babylon; they were to serve him and his sons until the kingdom of Persia came to power. This is how the word of the Lord was fulfilled that he spoke: through Jeremiah, 'Until this land has enjoyed its Sabbath rest, until seventy years have gone by, it will keep Sabbath throughout the days of its desolation.'

And in the first year of Cyrus king of Persia, to fulfil the word of the Lord that was spoken through Jeremiah, the Lord roused the spirit of Cyrus king of Persia to issue a proclamation and to have it publicly displayed throughout his kingdom: 'Thus speaks Cyrus king of Persia, "The Lord, the God of heaven, has given me all the kingdoms of the earth; he has ordered me to build him a Temple in Jerusalem, in Judah. Whoever there is among you of all his people, may his God be with him! Let him go up."'

Responsorial Psalm

Ps 136. R. v.6

*(R.) Let my tongue be silenced,
if ever I forget you!*

1. By the rivers of Babylon there we sat and wept, remembering Zion;

on the poplars that grew there we hung our harps. (R.)

2. For it was there that they asked us, our captors, for songs, our oppressors, for joy. 'Sing to us,' they said, 'one of Zion's songs.' (R.)
3. O how could we sing the song of the Lord on alien soil? If I forget you, Jerusalem, let my right hand wither! (R.)
4. O let my tongue cleave to my mouth if I remember you not, if I prize not Jerusalem above all my joys! (R.)

Second Reading Eph 2:4-10

When we were dead through sins, he brought us to life.

God loved us with so much love that he was generous with his mercy: when we were dead through our sins, he brought us to life with Christ - it is through grace that you have been saved - and raised us up with him and gave us a place with him in heaven, in Christ Jesus.

This was to show for all ages to come, through his goodness towards us in Christ Jesus, how infinitely rich he is in grace. Because it is by grace that you have been saved, through faith; not by anything of your own, but by a gift from God; not by anything that you have done, so that nobody can claim the credit. We are God's work of art, created in Christ Jesus to live the good life as from the beginning he had meant us to live it.

Gospel Acclamation Jn 3:16

*Glory and praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ!
God loved the world so much, he gave us
his only Son,
that all who believe in him might have
eternal life.
Glory and praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ!*