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Trinity Lutheran Church  
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**“THE CURE LOOKS LIKE THE DISEASE”**

God’s PEACE is ALWAYS YOURS in Jesus.

Hear the Word of God from Numbers 21 and John 3,

“The people were impatient on the way (to the Promised Land). They spoke against God and Moses saying, ‘Why have you brought us out of Egypt to die in the desert? There is no bread! There is no water! And we detest this miserable food!’

Then the Lord sent venomous snakes among them. They bit the people, and many Israelites died. The people came to Moses and said, ‘We sinned when we spoke against the Lord, and against you. Pray to the Lord to take the snakes away. So Moses prayed for the people.

Then the Lord said to Moses, ‘Make a snake and put it on a pole. Anyone who is bitten can look at it and live.’ So Moses made a bronze snake, and put it on a pole. Then, when anyone was bitten by a snake, and looked at the bronze snake, he lived.

To which John 3 adds, ‘As Moses lifted up the snake in the wilderness, so it is necessary that the Son of Man be lifted up, that everyone who believe in Him will have eternal life.’”

DEAR FRIENDS IN CHRIST,

The Israelites were snake-bitten. Venomous snakes were let loose in camp. The people were in agony and dying. Why? They had spoken against God and against His servant Moses. And if you don't want God in your life, He won't force Himself on you. But without Him there's only death; and to impress this on the people, God sent a plague of fiery, poisonous snakes.

The people confessed, Moses interceded, and God provided a sacrament – a bronze serpent on a wooden pole. A sacrament is a visible sign with a promise, and God promised, ***'Anyone who is bitten can look at it and live.'*** It's a strange sign, isn't it? The cure looks like the disease. A serpent – of all things – an image of that deadly enemy who tempted Eve in the Garden, a bronze snake on a pole. In Leviticus God said, ***"Don't make images."*** But now He has them make an image. Why? An image becomes a deadly idol, without the command and promise of God, such as the Golden Calf. And sadly, later on, even this bronze serpent on a pole became an idol too, so that God had to destroy it, along with Aaron's miraculous staff. You see, whenever a sign, that God gives, becomes unbuckled from God's Word and promise, then it becomes idolatry.

But with the Word of God and His promise, the sign is a sacrament – the serpent on the pole is the means by which God saves His snake-bitten people. ***"Anyone who is bitten by a snake, can look at it and live."*** Now, if you were snake-bit, burning up with fever, and delirious with poison, you didn't say, ***"Why should I look to the serpent on the pole, and believe God's promise? I want something more tangible."*** You didn't say, ***"I don't like snakes. They give me the creepy crawlies. So I'm not going to do it."*** NO! If you wanted to be healed, you did what the Lord told you to do. ***"Whoever is bitten, have them look to the bronze serpent on the pole, and they will be healed."*** You would go out of your way to glue your eyes on that bronze snake, because it was the only way to survive. And when you did, you lived.

Jesus says, ***"As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so the Son of Man must be lifted up, that everyone who believes in Him may have eternal life!"***

What's happening in Numbers 21 is that the Lord is foretelling His own death on the cross, lifted up for the life of the world, so that everyone who is snake-bitten by the devil, and injected with the poison of sin and death, can look to Jesus and live.

Like the Israelites in the wilderness, we're all "snake-bitten". It happened in the Garden when the devilish serpent tempted Eve, and injected the poison of his lie – the lie that God is not true to His Word. The lie that God can't be trusted. The lie that God doesn't really love you, because He's holding out the best from you. The lie that you can sin against God without any consequences. The lie that you can disobey God, and you won't die. And the lie that the center position in your life belongs to yourself and not to God. Those are venomous lies. Nevertheless, Eve bit. Adam bit. You bit. And I bit, and through our sinning that devilish serpent bit us, and injected his venom of death into us. When Genesis says, "***The day you eat of it, you will surely die,***" what it really says in Hebrew is: "***The day you eat of it, you will begin dying, and you will keep on dying, until you're finally dead.***" In other words the devil's venom is not a quick death. It's a life of dying, followed by an eternity of dying. The poison not only entered Adam and Eve's blood stream, it infected the whole of them; so that every child born to Adam and Eve is infected with the serpent's venom, and is born in a "***dying condition***". No generation is skipped. Not you. Not me. Not our children or grandchildren. Each of us is born with the poison of sin and death, coursing through our veins, and the whole of us.

Ephesians 2, "***You were dead as a rigormortis corpse in your transgression and sins, and were by nature an object of wrath.***" Not only sick. Not just weak. Not even hanging on for dear life. We are born down-right, dog-dirty, snake-bitten dead.

So what's the cure for your snake bite? You don't just put a bandaid on it, and say, "*Serenity now*"! When you're snake-bitten, you pray to God AND you make a bee-line to the hospital for a shot of anti-venom. So where does anti-venom come from? Anti-venom is produced in a person who has been exposed to the snake's venom, and yet survived. God exposed Jesus to the serpent's bite and venom when it says, "***God made Him Who had no sin, to be sin for us.***" Jesus was cursed with the curse of the serpent's bite – sin, death and hell. Jesus want hung out to die. Hebrews 2, "***He (Jesus) took on flesh and blood, so that by His death, He might destroy the one who held the power of death, that is the devil.***" And yet, miraculously, Jesus survived the serpent's bite and deadly venom. He checked into His grave dead, from the venom of sin, death, hell, and the devil, but He checked back out alive.

Matthew 28, '***Why are you looking for the living among the dead? He is not here.***' And now that Jesus has survived the serpent's bite and venom, He is now the anti-venom for sin, death, hell and the devil, for anyone and everyone who is bitten. **Pg3**

John 3, ***“As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so the Son of Man must be lifted up, so that everyone who believes in Him will have eternal life!”***

Now imagine you were an Israelite in the wilderness, and you were bitten, and injected with poison, and you were dying an agonizing death. But you realized that the cause of your death, was your own sin, so you turned to the Lord in repentance, and then you took Him at His word, so you looked to the serpent on the pole, and you were instantly healed, and survived. But now you notice that your spouse, your best friend, and your children have all been bitten, and they’re lying on the ground in agony, and they’re dying. What do you do? Do you wish them good luck, and walk away? Do you ignore the snake-bitten dying ones, but keep going to church?

If you’ve already been healed, and you’re a survivor, and you now know that it is only by the grace of God, and the anti-venom of His promise given to you by looking to the serpent on the pole, that you survived, wouldn’t you point your spouse, your children, and your friends to the same solution? Or would you just let them die? If necessary, wouldn’t you even drag them over to the place where they could see the serpent on the pole and live? And you would urge them with intensity, *‘I don’t care if you think it sounds crazy. Don’t tell God how He can or can’t heal you. This death has come from God, because of your sin against God, so if anyone has the anti-venom it’s God. If He tells you to look to the serpent on the pole and live, then check your brain at the door, repent, and look to the serpent on the pole and live. I took God at His Word, and it works. And you need to take Him at His word too, and live!’* You wouldn’t take “NO” for an answer. You’d be urgent – even forceful. You wouldn’t worry about hurting their feelings or *“not respecting their beliefs”*, or all the other bologna we slice up for not sharing the anti-venom of Jesus with our loved-ones, or not inviting them to the hospital of God’s house for the cure. They’re dying, for crying out loud, and there’s only one anti-venom-Jesus.

Your spouse and mine, all of our children, all of our grandchildren, all of our friends, and everyone in our circles of influence are snake-bitten, and devil’s venom of sin, death, and hell, is coursing through their veins. But we’ve got the cure. ***“As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so the Son of Man must be lifted up, that everyone who believes in Him may have eternal life!”*** Page 4

Not only do you have the cure, you also have access to where the cure is dispensed. In fact, you yourself are a dispensary, but you can also take them to the hospital of God's house, which is the main dispensary for the cure for demonic snake bite. You know the cure, because you've already been cured, and you have the cure: the blood of Jesus carries the anti-bodies that forgives all of our sins, and conquers our death and hell. The Lord's Supper gives us and all sinners the Medicine of Immortality.

Sure, you're friends and relatives may look at Jesus, and God's promise of rescue from sin, death, and the devil, by merely trusting in Jesus' forgiving death on the tree of the cross, as being as weird as some snake-oil salesman, or as useless as useless as raising a boa-constrictor on a pole, and they might say to you, "*You've gotta be joking! This is how you live forever? Just trust in Jesus and God will forgive everything I've ever did wrong? Eat the body and blood of the One who rose again, to conquer death?*" Remember, when people are sick, they don't always think right. But while they think you're crazy for believing in Jesus as the cure to sin and death, the tomb of Jesus is still empty, and Jesus is alive and kick'in. You've got the cure, and your friends and loved ones need it. It's that simple. You've got the anti-venom, "*the Lord laid on Him the iniquities of us all, and by His stripes we are healed,*" either be the dispensary of the cure, or take them to the dispensary of God's house. You've got the cure for snake-bite, "*Whoever believes in Jesus already has eternal life.*" either dispense the medicine, or at least drive them to the hospital of Christ's church. You have the medicine of immortality, "*Whoever believes in the Son will not perish, but have eternal life....and whoever believes in Him will not be condemned.*" You have the sacred remedy by which we conquer death in the blood of the lamb, and the death of God's Son; either give the prescription, or take the snake bitten to God's pharmacy to receive it.

God's cure to snake bite is simple. '*As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so the Son of Man must be lifted up, that everyone who believes in Him may have eternal life!*' There's enough medicine to save everyone. They just need someone to get them to the cure, or get the cure to them. Would you help your children, grandchildren, and best friends get a CoVid shot? Then why not the anti-venom of Jesus' forgiving blood and victorious resurrection –the sacred remedy by which we die not? You're already saved, and their lives are on the line! **Page 5**

It wasn't a bronze serpent that God put on a pole to save us from sin and death, but it was His own Son, in the flesh, fastened to the tree of the cross – that instrument of death, with Jesus hanging dead on it. The world says, “*What kind of joke is this?*” But God says, “*You're saved from death, because the Son of God bled to death on a cross one Good Friday.*” There's your cure – hanging dead on a cross to forgive your sins, and checking back out of His grave alive, to conquer your death. Don't argue with God's grace, just enjoy it.

In the end, it was not a bronze serpent, but a flesh and blood lamb, that was hung on the cross for our salvation. Which raises a question. If the episode from the Old Testament is a picture of our Savior, Jesus, hanging on the cross, to save us from the serpent's bite, and it is, then ‘Why did God tell the Israelites to hang a serpent on the pole?’ If Jesus' death on the cross saves us, and it does, and if Jesus is the LAMB of God, Who takes away the sin of the world, and He is, then why didn't God have Moses attach a bronze LAMB to the pole, instead of a bronze serpent? Could it be that God told Moses to hang a bronze serpent to the wooden pole, rather than a LAMB, for even though it was the Lamb of God Who was crucified on Good Friday, it was actually the satanic serpent THAT GOT NAILED!!!! Snake bite cured! All in Jesus. AMEN!