

TODAY WE HAVE THE GOSPEL IN A NUTSHELL. FOR GOD SO LOVED THE WORLD, THAT HE GAVE HIS ONLY SON, THAT WHOEVER BELIEVES IN HIM SHOULD NOT PERISH BUT HAVE ETERNAL LIFE. WE ALSO HAVE THE GOSPEL ON A POST - JUST AS MOSES LIFTED UP THE SNAKE IN THE DESERT, SO THE SON OF MAN MUST BE LIFTED UP, THAT WHOEVER BELIEVES IN HIM MAY HAVE ETERNAL LIFE.

THE GOSPEL STORY OF GOD'S GRACE HANGS ON A WOODEN POST IN BOTH THE OLD TESTAMENT AND THE NEW. GOD LIFTS UP GRACE ON A POLE AND IT'S NOT ONLY SALVATION FROM DEATH; IT'S THE ONLY WAY TO BE SAVED.

...ISRAEL HAD COME OUT OF EGYPTIAN SLAVERY AND WERE MEANDERING AROUND IN THE SAND DUNES AND TUMBLE WEEDS OF EDOM. AND, SURPRISE, SURPRISE... THEY GRUMBLED; THEY WERE APPARENTLY VERY GOOD AT THAT.

WE WANT BREAD AND WATER! WE'RE SICK OF MANNA! - MANNA WAFERS, MANNAScone AND BAMANNA BREAD! HOW ABOUT SOME MANNASHEVITZ? WE WERE FINE BUILDING PYRAMIDS. OH, FOR A BOWL OF EGYPTIAN COBRA SOUP!

MANNA FROM HEAVEN'S KITCHEN WASN'T GOOD ENOUGH, SO GOD SENT COBRAS, LOTS OF COBRAS, WITH POISON IN EVERY BITE. GOD MADE HIS POINT; DEATH WOULD COME JUST LIKE THE SERPENT BROUGHT DEATH INTO THE GARDEN.

GOD WANTED THEM TO SEE THEIR FAITHLESS AND PUNY HEARTS. THAT'S WHAT BROUGHT SIN INTO THE WORLD IN THE FIRST PLACE. IT STILL SLITHERS UP TO BITE EVERY ONE OF US!

YOU GRUMBLE ABOUT GOD'S MEAL PLAN. YOU WHINE ABOUT HOW TOUGH LIFE CAN BE. YOU COMPLAIN ABOUT THE PEOPLE HE PUTS IN YOUR LIFE. YOU'RE NO BETTER THAN THE ISRAELITES; YOU DESERVE FIERY SNAKES.

LIKE ISRAEL, YOU'RE IN THE LORD'S HEART, ADOPTED INTO HIS ETERNAL FAMILY; AND YOU STILL COMPLAIN ABOUT HOW HE DOES THINGS. YOU KNOW THAT THE GOOD LIFE IS WITH HIM IN THE DESERT EATING MANNA; YET, YOU KEEP DREAMING OF EGYPT. YOU THINK GOD COULD MAKE IT EASIER.

IF NOT FOR GOD'S FAITHFULNESS TO YOU, THE CONSEQUENCE OF DEATH WOULD COIL UP AND STRIKE YOU. YOU'RE A SINNER - A CARD-CARRYING MEMBER OF 'GRUMBLERS UNITED'. YOU DON'T TRUST GOD WITH ALL YOUR HEART! YOU OFTEN ACT LIKE YOU'RE DEAD IN YOUR TRESPASSES AND A CHILD OF WRATH.

YET, GOD HANGS THE GOSPEL ON A POST FOR YOU. HE CAN'T HELP BEING MERCIFUL. HE NEVER STOPPED LOVING ISRAEL AND HE CAN'T - WON'T - END HIS LOVE FOR YOU. GOD PROVIDES A WAY OF RESCUE.

MOSES: PUT A BRONZE SERPENT ON A POLE. WHOEVER IS BITTEN CAN LOOK AT IT AND LIVE. THE CURSE OF SIN WAS REMOVED SIMPLY THROUGH... FAITH! THE SNAKE SYMBOLIZED THE SIN THAT WAS KILLING THEM. IT HAD TO BE WEIRD THAT GOD CHOSE A SERPENT AS SAVIOR.

2 GOD DOES THE GOSPEL ON A POST AGAIN. **THE SON OF MAN IS LIFTED UP AND WHOEVER BELIEVES IN HIM HAS ETERNAL LIFE.** AND, THOUGH THIS, TOO, IS WEIRD, FAITH LOOKS AND SEES THE INCREDIBLE LOVE OF GOD FOR SINNERS.

JESUS TAKES THE WORLD'S SIN ON HIMSELF. HE BECOMES SIN! AS IT SLITHERED INTO THE GARDEN AND SEDUCED ADAM AND EVE; AS IT SLITHERED INTO THE GRUMBLING HEARTS OF ISRAEL; IT IS MANIFEST IN GOD'S INNOCENT SON.

HE DIES KNOWING YOU'LL CONTINUE GRUMBLING. HE DIES BECAUSE YOU CONTINUE TO WHINE. **BUT GOD, BEING RICH IN MERCY AND LOVE, PROVIDES YOUR ESCAPE.** JESUS LITERALLY EMBODIES YOUR SIN. HE IS LIFTED UP SO YOUR FAITH SEES YOUR FORGIVENESS AND YOUR EVERLASTING LIFE!

JESUS IS LIFTED UP IN SHAME AND DISHONOR AND YET, YOU SEE THE GLORY OF LOVE! WHAT A STRANGE PARADOX YOU SEE IN THE GOSPEL – CHRIST'S GREATEST POWER IS SEEN AS HE DIES ON A CROSS. AS HE IS LIFTED UP, YOU ARE LIFTED UP INTO GOD'S MERCY AND LOVE. THE STORY OF GRACE HANGS ON A POST.

THIS GOSPEL HAS NEVER CHANGED. GOD HAS ALWAYS MADE HIS LOVE VISIBLE. FAITHLESS SINNERS AND SNAKE-BITTEN GRUMBLERS SAW HIS PARDON IN BRONZE SERPENTS AND CIRCUMCISION AND BLEEDING LAMBS.

WE ARE, BY NATURE, HELPLESS AND HOPELESS AND BOUND FOR DEATH. GOD, IN HIS MERCY, MAKES US ALIVE TOGETHER WITH CHRIST. IN BAPTISM WE ARE LIFTED UP ON THE CROSS WITH JESUS. WE DIE TO SIN THERE, SO WE CAN BE LIFTED UP TO HEAVEN WHEN WE STOP BREATHING.

JESUS DOES THE WORK, MAKES THE SACRIFICE, HE IS THE GOSPEL ON A POST. THIS IS MORE THAN A SNAKEBITE HEALING. YOU'RE BEING GIVEN ETERNAL LIFE INSTEAD OF DEATH FOREVER. AND ETERNAL LIFE IS MORE THAN JUST THIS SAME WORLD EXTENDED FOR A GAZILLION YEARS.

EVERLASTING LIFE IS MAXIMUM QUALITY AS WELL AS MAXIMUM QUANTITY. IT'S LIFE WITH GOD - TOUCHABLE, BREATHABLE, COMPLETELY ENVELOPING YOUR FLESH AND EMOTIONS AND MENTAL FACULTIES AS WELL AS YOUR SPIRIT!

YOU WILL FINALLY LIFT UP YOUR SAVIOR IN A WORTHY MANNER BECAUSE YOU WILL BE WORTHY, WITHOUT SIN AND FULL OF LOVE. FOR NOW, YOU LIVE BY FAITH – ALSO GOD'S WORK IN YOU. YOU SAY **THANK-YOU** BY LIFTING HIM UP. YOU LIFT HIM UP BY HUMBLING YOURSELF AND GIVING HIS LOVE TO OTHER SINNERS.

THE SNAKE LIFTED UP IN THE DESERT EXPRESSES THE SAME GOSPEL AS THE GOSPEL IN A NUTSHELL - IT'S THE GOSPEL HANGING ON A POST. YOU SEE THE SAME SAVIOR IN CONSECRATED BREAD THIS MORNING.

I KNOW YOU WISH FOR JESUS' SMILING FACE AT THE TABLE WITH YOU; BUT DON'T BE GRUMBLING FOR A DIFFERENT MEAL. THERE'S NOTHING BETTER ON EARTH THAN THIS MANNA! THIS IS SALVATION IN, WITH, AND UNDER THE BREAD.

LOOK AND LIVE! THE GOSPEL ON A POST LIFTS YOU UP INTO HIS PRESENCE.

AMEN

8-Prepare & PRAY
9-affortory 192 (Prepare)