A.M.D.G.! 4th Sunday in Lent - B Texts: Numbers 21: 4-9

 March 11th, 2018 John 3: 11-17

**Numbers 21:4-9** From Mount Hor they set out by the way to the Red Sea, to go around the land of Edom; but the people became impatient on the way. The people spoke against God and against Moses, ‘Why have you brought us up out of Egypt to die in the wilderness? For there is no food and no water, and we detest this miserable food.’ Then the Lord sent poisonous serpents among the people, and they bit the people, so that many Israelites died. The people came to Moses and said, ‘We have sinned by speaking against the Lord and against you; pray to the Lord to take away the serpents from us.’ So Moses prayed for the people. And 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.’  So Moses made a serpent of bronze, and put it upon a pole; and whenever a serpent bit someone, that person would look at the serpent of bronze and live.

**民数记21:4-9**

他们从何珥山起行，往红海那条路走，要绕过以东地。百姓因这路难行，心中甚是烦躁，5就怨渎　神和摩西，说：“你们为什么把我们从埃及领出来，使我们死在旷野呢？这里没有粮，没有水，我们的心厌恶这淡薄的食物。”6于是耶和华使火蛇进入百姓中间，蛇就咬他们，以色列人中死了许多。7百姓到摩西那里说：“我们怨渎耶和华和你，有罪了，求你祷告耶和华叫这些蛇离开我们。”于是，摩西为百姓祷告。8耶和华对摩西说：“你制造一条火蛇，挂在杆子上，凡被咬的，一望这蛇，就必得活。”9摩西便制造一条铜蛇，挂在杆子上，凡被蛇咬的，一望这铜蛇，就活了。

**John 3: 11-17**  ‘Very truly, I tell you, we speak of what we know and testify to what we have seen; yet you do not receive our testimony. If I have told you about earthly things and you do not believe, how can you believe if I tell you about heavenly things? No one has ascended into heaven except the one who descended from heaven, the Son of Man. And just as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of Man be lifted up, that whoever believes in him may have eternal life. For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life. Indeed, God did not send the Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him.我

**约翰福音3:11-17**

實實在在的告訴你，我們所說的是我們知道的；我們所見證的是我們見過的；你們卻不領受我們的見證。我對你們說地上的事，你們尚且不信，若說天上的事，如何能信呢？除了從天降下、仍舊在天的人子，沒有人升過天。摩西在曠野怎樣舉蛇，人子也必照樣被舉起來，叫一切信他的都得永生（或作：叫一切信的人在他裡面得永生）。神愛世人，甚至將他的獨生子賜給他們，叫一切信他的，不致滅亡，反得永生。因為神差他的兒子降世，不是要定世人的罪（或作：審判世人；下同），乃是要叫世人因他得救。

***抬起你的双眼* Lift Up Your Eyes!**

Fear of one sort or another is an ever-present reality in our lives. On a global scale - violence and tension in many places around the world and posturing on the political stage like we have seen recently from Russia, the United States and North Korea, have many people in a state of anxiety. In this part of the country, the escalation of gang violence leaves us feeling unsafe, afraid and vulnerable. And warnings about climate change, visible to us through things like the melting ice caps at both the North and South poles, and the acceleration of the extinction of many species of animals, have a lot of us wondering about the future of our world.

对这种或那种的恐惧是我们生活中永远存在的现实。 在全球范围内 - 全世界许多地方的暴力和紧张局势，以及我们最近从俄罗斯，美国和北朝鲜看到的政治舞台上的姿态，让许多人处于焦虑状态。 在这些国家的这一地区，帮派暴力的升级让我们感到不安全，害怕和脆弱。 气候变化的警告，可以看到的北极和南极冰盖融化以及许多动物物种灭绝的加速，让我们很多人对世界的未来感到疑惑。

Some of us have a fear of death or dying; others a fear of getting sick or being alone. As parents, we secretly fear that something may happen to our children or our grandchildren. Sometimes it is the fear of feeling useless or unproductive that comes at such times as unemployment, retirement or a debilitating illness - while for still others it is the process of

getting older that we fear.

我们中的一些人害怕死亡; 其他人害怕生病或孤独。 作为父母，我们暗中担心我们的子女或孙辈可能会遇到什么事情。 有时候害怕在失业，退休或者使人虚弱的疾病的时候感觉到无用或者没有价值 - 而对于其他人来说，这是我们害怕变老的过程。

More and more, however, it seems our hearts are gripped by fears that leave us feeling confused, uncertain, anxious and paralysed. We find ourselves playing the ‘what if’ game .... “What if such and such happens”, we ponder - living in the anxiety of the worst case scenario. Some of us become so consumed by worry that we get ulcers, have hearts attacks, or suffer

migraines.

然而，我们的心似乎越来越被恐惧所束缚，这些恐惧让我们感到困惑、不确定、焦虑和瘫痪。我们发现自己在玩“万一”的游戏...。“如果这种情况发生了怎么办”，我们思考着--生活在最糟糕的恐惧之中。我们中的一些人会因为担心而变得如此焦虑，以致于溃疡、心脏病发作或偏头痛。

And by fearing that the worst will happen - our own thoughts may sometimes help to bring about the very thing we fear. Someone once wrote, *“Fear is the wrong use of imagination. It is*

*anticipating the worst - not the best that can happen.”*

我们担心最坏的情况会发生--我们自己的想法有时会帮助我们实现我们所害怕的事情。有人曾写道：“恐惧是对想象力的错误使用。它是在预测最坏的情况--而不是可能发生的最好的情况。“

The story is told about a salesman, driving on a lonely country road one dark and rainy night, who had a flat tire. He opened the trunk - no lug wrench. The light from a farmhouse could be seen dimly up the road. He set out on foot through the driving rain. Surely the farmer would have a lug wrench he could borrow, he thought. Of course - it was late at night - the farmer could be asleep in his warm, dry bed. Maybe he wouldn’t answer the door. And even if he did, he might be angry at being awakened in the middle of the night. The salesman - picking his way blindly in the dark, stumbled on. By now, his shoes and clothing were soaked. Even if the farmer did answer his knock, he thought - he’d probably shout something like, “*What’s the big idea waking me up at this hour!*” This thought made the salesman angry. What right did that farmer have to refuse him the loan of that lug wrench?! After all - here he was - stranded in the

middle of nowhere - soaked to the skin. That farmer was a selfish clod - no doubt about it.

故事讲述的是一个推销员，在一个漆黑的雨夜，他在一条偏僻的乡间道路上开车，他的轮胎爆了。他打开行李箱-没有扳手。从农舍发出的光可以在路上隐约看到。他在大雨中步行出发。他想，农夫肯定会有一个可以借的扳手。当然--已经很晚了--农夫可以在他温暖干燥的床上睡觉。也许他不会开门。即使他这么做了，他也可能会因为半夜被叫醒而生气。推销员在黑暗中盲目地摸索着敲门。这时，他的鞋子和衣服都湿透了。即使农夫确实响应了他的敲门声，他也想--他可能会喊出这样的话：“你真能想出来竟然这是时候吵醒我！”。这个想法使推销员生气了。那个农夫凭什么拒绝他借那把扳手？！毕竟--他已经在这了—无处可去了--浑身湿透了。那个农民是个自私的家伙--毫无疑问。

He finally reached the house and banged loudly on the door. A light went on inside, and a window opened above. A voice called out, “Who is it?” His face white with anger, the salesman answered, “You know darn well who it is! It’s me! And you can keep your blasted lug wrench. I

wouldn’t borrow it now if you had the last one on earth!”

他终于到了农夫的家，大声地敲门。里面亮着灯，楼上开了一扇窗户。一个声音喊道：“是谁？”。他的脸因愤怒而变白，推销员回答说：“你知道的！是我！你可以留下你那该死的扳手。如果这是世界上的最后一个扳手，我

现在就不借了！“

Sometimes we spend so much time anticipating the worst - that we become our own worst enemy! Fear or anxiety can be debilitating - and for those of us who are people of faith - can serve to block out a sense of the presence of God with us - leaving us feeling abandoned and

bereft - left to the whims of a cruel world.

有时候，我们花了那么多时间来预测最坏的情况--以至于我们变成了自己最坏的敌人！恐惧或焦虑可能会削弱我们的力量--对于我们这些有信仰的人来说--可以帮助我们阻挡上帝与我们同在的感觉--让我们感到被遗弃和失去

—只留下一个残酷世界的奇想。

Which is exactly where we find the ancient Israelites as we join them this morning. The book of Numbers relates for us this rather bizarre story. Once again - as the people are wandering in the desert under the leadership of Moses - they begin to moan and complain about their life. From the beginning - the story of the escaped Hebrews is full of reports of trouble and suffering, accompanied by constant complaining - or ‘murmuring’ as the King James translated it - against Moses and Aaron. The people did not like the bitter water of Marah in Exodus 15. They complained about the lack of food in Exodus 16. In Exodus 17, they murmur that they are thirsty - and Moses strikes the rock at the LORD’s command and water gushes forth. When the march resumed around Sinai, they were back at it again, asking for meat to eat - we are told in

Numbers 11.

在今天上午我们所读的经文，这正是我们发现古代以色列人所做的。‘民数记’对我们来说是一个相当离奇的故事。当人们在摩西的领导下徘徊在旷野时，他们又一次开始呻吟并抱怨自己的生活。从一开始—希伯来人逃离埃及时就充满了麻烦和痛苦，他们不停地抱怨，或者如同King James版本的圣经中翻译成嘟囔。他们反对摩西和亚伦。在‘出埃及记15章‘他们不喜欢玛拉的苦水。在‘出埃及记’16章他们抱怨缺少食物。‘出埃及记’第17章，他们嘟囔地说他们渴了，摩西就照耶和华的命令打那磐石，水就涌出。当继续前行到西奈山，在民数记第11章中他们又

重新开始抱怨，他们要求吃肉。

Now today’s reading records the final complaint of the people. We are told, *“The people became impatient on the way. And they spoke against God and against Moses. ‘Why have you brought us up out of Egypt to die in the wilderness?’ they cried. ‘For there is little water - and we detest this miserable food!’* It is at this point they ran into a nest of poisonous snakes or serpents - and many people died. God told Moses to make a serpent of bronze and put it on a pole - so that whenever someone was bitten - by looking at the bronze serpent in their midst, they would be reminded of God’s presence with them and they would be healed.

今天的阅读记录了以色列人最后的抱怨。我们从经文中读到：“*百姓因这路难行，心中甚是烦躁，他们开始反对神和摩西，说：’你们为什么把我们从埃及领出来，使我们死在旷野呢？这里没有粮，没有水，我们的心厌恶这淡薄的食物。’* 就在这个时候，他们碰到了毒蛇或毒蛇的巢穴，许多人都死了。神吩咐摩西用铜做一条蛇，放在柱子上，无论何时那些被咬的人只要望一眼他们中间的铜蛇，就会想起神与他们同在，他们就必痊愈。

Notice that when the people ask God to take the snakes away - God doesn’t do that. Instead - God gives the people a new chance at wholeness. In order to be healed, the people have to look up from their own shadows, lift their eyes from their own complaints, and see - face to face - the very thing that has caused so much pain and grief. Only by confronting it head on, can they move from the darkness to the light. The bronze serpent didn’t cure anyone - but by looking up at it, the Israelites could see beyond themselves to a loving, merciful God. It was only by facing their fears and reaffirming their faith and trust in God .... by moving their attention downward from that which caused them anxiety and looking up to God’s possibility of healing - that they

were healed and saved.

请注意，当人们要求上帝把蛇那走的时候，上帝不会这样做。相反，上帝给了人们一个新的完整的机会。为了痊愈，人们必须从自己的阴影中抬起头来，从自己的抱怨中抬起眼睛，去面对造成如此多痛苦和悲伤的事情。只有直面它，它们才能从黑暗走向光明。铜蛇没有治愈任何人--但是抬头看，以色列人可以看到一个慈爱仁慈的上帝超越了他们自己。只有面对他们的恐惧，重申他们对上帝的信心和信任，才能把他们的注意力从引起他们焦虑的

事物中转移下来，并仰望上帝治愈他们的可能性--他们才得以痊愈和得救。

And often, it is only when we face our fears, our brokenness, our need – that can we move through and beyond them to healing. When we keep our eyes focussed downward on that which troubles us - our vision becomes narrowly focussed and our world tends to close in on us. But when we can lift our eyes up - we can often see God offering to us a fresh perspective, other

options and a new direction.

通常，只有当我们面对我们的恐惧，我们的破碎，我们的需要，我们才能通过和超越他们来得治愈。当我们的眼睛向下聚焦于困扰我们的事物时，我们的视野就会狭隘地聚焦，而我们就更只看到眼前世界。但是，当我们能够

抬起我们的眼睛时，我们经常能看到上帝给我们一个新的视角，新的选择和一个新的方向。

This story and life-lesson became so deeply ingrained in the hearts of the Jewish people - that centuries later, as the Christian church spoke of Jesus and the crucifixion - they saw a parallel. By looking to the One lifted up on a Cross, they felt - we are given the courage to face our fears, and to know God’s healing love and grace. In the beautiful and beloved passage of scripture we hear today from the 3rd chapter of the gospel of John: *“Just as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of man be lifted up, that whoever believes in him may have eternal life. For God so loved the world that He gave His only son, that whosoever believes in him may not perish, but have eternal life. Indeed, God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world - but in order that the world might be saved through him.”*

这个故事和生活的教训在犹太人的心中根深蒂固--几个世纪后，当基督教会谈到耶稣和受难时，他们看到了一个相似之处。仰望那位被挂在十字架上的人，他们感到--我们有勇气面对我们的恐惧，并知道上帝的爱和恩典。今天，我们在约翰福音第三章中，在那美丽可爱的经文中听到：*“正如摩西在旷野举起蛇一样，人子也必被举起来，叫信他的人得永生。因为神爱世界，以致赐给他的独生子，叫凡信他的人不灭亡，却得永生。上帝差派他的儿子*

*不是定世人的罪，乃是叫世人因他的得救。“*

As Christians, we are assured that whatever fears keep our lives paralysed and our hearts bound - by looking to Jesus in trust - we are given the strength and the courage to let go of any

crippling anxiety that prevents us from living in the abundance of God’s amazing grace.

作为基督徒，我们确信，任何恐惧都会使我们的生命瘫痪，我们的心也会受到束缚--通过信任耶稣--我们将获得力量和勇气，让我们摆脱任何令人沮丧的焦虑，这些焦虑会使我们无法生活在上帝的丰盛恩典中。

It is significant that the English word ‘*worry*’ is derived from an old Anglo-Saxon word ‘*worien*’ - which means ‘to strangle’ or ‘to choke’. With God’s help, by facing our fears and lifting up our eyes in trust - we can break the choke-hold that anxiety puts on our life. And as we do, we

may find some amazing things happen:

重要的是，英语中的“担心”一词源自一个古老的盎格鲁-撒克逊词“worien”，意思是“窒息”或“窒息”。在上帝的帮助下，面对我们的恐惧，抬起我们信任的眼睛--我们可以打破窒息--抓住焦虑给我们的生活带来的痛苦。当我们

这样做的时候，我们可能会发现一些令人惊奇的事情发生了：

As we lift our eyes - we may see others in similar situations, and find mutual comfort in knowing that we are not alone in our struggles.

当我们抬起眼睛，我们可能会看到其他人在类似的情况下，并找到共同的安慰，我们就能知道在我们挣扎的时候

我们并不孤单。

Or we may gain some perspective - as we see the pain or challenges of another - that ours is

really not as bad as we thought.

或者我们可能会获得一些视角--就像我们看到他人的痛苦或挑战一样--我们的想法并不像我们想象的那么糟糕。

But most of all - facing our fears and lifting up our eyes in trust - opens us up to God’s grace, God’s presence, God’s possibility for our lives, and God’s healing love.

但最重要的是--面对我们的恐惧，在信任中抬起我们的眼睛--让我们接受上帝的恩典、上帝的存在、上帝对我们生命的可能性，以及上帝的疗愈之爱。

Our scripture today reminds us that even in our worst failures and disappointments,

God provides. God offers healing for our wounds, relationship for our loneliness, and faithfulness for our lack of trust. God doesn’t always remove the sources of our suffering - but God journeys with us - providing what we most deeply need - if we keep our eyes focussed in

the right direction.

我们今天的经文提醒我们，即使在我们最失败和最失望的时候， 上帝会提供给我们 - 为我们的创伤提供治疗，为我们的孤独提供关系，为我们缺乏信任提供忠诚。上帝并不总是消除我们痛苦的根源--但上帝与我们同行--提

供我们最需要的东西--如果我们把目光集中在正确的方向上。

Lift up your eyes, we are urged this morning by the voice of God, speaking to us through the living Word. In joy and in sorrow, in life and in death - may God give us courage and hope. Amen

今晨，神的声音使我们举目观看，藉着活生生的道，对我们说话。在欢乐和悲伤中，在生中，在死亡中--愿上帝给我们勇气和希望。阿门。