

“Lifted Up”

March 11, 2018

Our Savior’s Way
Worshiping Sundays 8:00, 9:30, & 11:00 AM
Pastor Justin Kumfer

Lifted up. In the Old Testament reading assigned for today and the gospel reading we just heard there is a theme contained within them about what is lifted up. Though the stories are different they both point to the same things. I want you to think through this sermon and focus on one question as we walk through the biblical text, “what are you lifting up?”

The Old Testament reading for today focused on Moses and the Israelites in the desert. They had been in the wilderness for a while now and the people had had enough. Here was God’s chosen people who had been led out of Egypt after 400 years of slavery and they started complaining. Numbers 21 v. 4 says, “But along the way the people became so impatient that they complained against God and said to Moses, “Did you bring us out of Egypt, just to let us die in the desert? There’s no water out here, and we cannot stand this awful food.”

Talk about ungrateful. Here they were a chosen people that God had blessed in number during their time in Egypt. They had grown into a nation. And then after growing and blessing them, God freed them from the slavery they faced. He used Moses to lead the people out of Egypt. Out of slavery! And what were they lifting up as the most important things....food and water.

It wasn't even that they didn't have food but they didn't like what they were given. "This awful food" is how the ESV translates it. God's people, the people He had rescued and chosen to be His people, who were set apart before all nations; these people were lifting up food and water over their God.

Well as you can imagine God wasn't too happy about this and so He "sent poisonous snakes that bit and killed many of them." Chaos and crisis went throughout the Israelites. Snakes coming through and biting whomever they could, some even died from their wounds. Suddenly, as if a miracle had happened, the people saw their mistake... They went to Moses and admitted, "It was wrong of us to insult you and the Lord. Now please ask him to make these snakes go away."

And Moses prayed for the people. God's answer was to lift up something in their place. Moses was told to create a bronze snake and lift it up on a pole. Then whomever looked at the snake lifted up would be saved from the poison.

What are you lifting up? There are things we lift up and complain about to God. We lift up the lack of money that we have. I couldn't buy this, or I can't go here because I don't have enough money. We lift up stuff. If only I had this I would be content. We lift up jobs. If I had a better job I would be better off. We lift up family. If I get married things will be better. If my husband loved me more we would be happy. If my wife respected me more I would be kinder. We lift up our children. I would go to church but the kids have sports on Sunday morning. I can't miss that. We lift up appearances. If I look like I have it all together no one will notice that I don't. If I have what they have, people will think I'm better. We lift up acceptance. If I accept what they're doing, people will accept me.

We are constantly lifting ourselves up.

How is that working for you? Are you feeling happier? Are you more satisfied? Are your relationships better?

My guess is that things aren't getting better. In fact things may be getting worse. A quick glance at the world around us makes me think that things are indeed getting worse. We saw how this thinking didn't work for the Israelites and it won't work for us. The more we put ourselves in the place of God, the more we will feel depressed, the more we will suffer and be discontent. That's not the life our God wants for us. Our God wants a life of fulfillment and joy.

But to have that we need to lift Him up.

Before us is always the option of faith or disbelief. To know Jesus is to have faith in him, who he is, what he did, and what that means for our lives. This means lifting up Christ and not ourselves.

Many of you might be thinking, ok. Now that I know what I need to do, give me the steps. What do I need to do to know Christ better? And it would be fairly easy for me to do that. I could tell you to read your bible more or come to worship every week. Spend time in prayer, etc...etc..etc.. All of those things are good and could help you with this but the whole point of the Gospel reading for today is that it isn't about you.

Our Gospel reading for today contains John 3:16, perhaps the most famous verse in the whole Bible, "For God so loved the world that He gave His only son, that whoever believes in Him shall have eternal life." God lifted His Son for us. Lifted Him up on a cross. This is the place where the sin of the whole world was lifted up and carried away, through the death of Christ.

But it wasn't the lifting up of the sins alone that shines through in that week. That week God did another lifting up. He lifted His son

up from the grave and brought him to new life. You did nothing. But you receive all the rewards. One of those rewards is new life.

This life is offered to all who would know Christ, lifted up for their sake, to receive the gift of eternal life that He offers. God's purpose was to lead everyone to His Son so that every person in this world might know Him and join Him in eternity.

Knowing Him allows us to find contentment. Knowing Him leads us to joy. Knowing Him is deliverance for us. Deliverance from envy and pride. Deliverance from jealousy and hate. Deliverance from the sin that is destroying our world. It's there before us. So whether you're reading your Bible or worshiping, or praying, whatever you do lift up Christ and know Him because He is the only one who can fill your greater need. The need for a Savior.

In Jesus' name, Amen.