

OUR CURSED CURE – Sermon for March 22, 2009

By Pastor Vern Oestmann

Medicine – what would we do without medicine? Medicine is very important when we are sick. However, not all medicines are what we need. If I have a headache, I certainly would not want to take something for my kidneys. Not all medicines are for all sicknesses. We know that.

However, when it comes to the cure for our sin, many people think that there are different ways to find relief. There is only one cure for our sickness of sin – Jesus Christ.

In the Old Testament, Moses was faced with a situation where the children of Israel were suffering from snake bites. In the Old West, medicine men went around trying to sell Snake Oil as a cure-all for all different kinds of ailments, including snake bites.

Moses was instructed by God to place a bronze serpent on a pole so that people could look upon it to receive healing from the snake bites. I don't think the AMA would approve, but God did. And it worked for everyone who looked upon that bronze serpent.

Jesus used that event to have his disciples to focus on him as being the one lifted up so that all who were inflicted with the poison of sin that would cause death, would be forgiven and have life. That is God's amazing grace at work.

Let's take a closer look at what that means for our personal life. When we hear the phrase "God so loved the world," place your name in there instead of the word world. Say that now with your name in place of the world. "God so loved Vernon." Now it becomes personal, as if God sent Jesus into the world just for you.

How much does God love you? Think of Jesus on the cross and say, "He loved me enough to die for me." Jesus died for my freedom and your freedom from sin, death, and the power of the devil.

There are men and women today who are over in Iraq and Afghanistan who are dying for our freedom and the freedom from tyranny for those people. Evil shows itself all around the world. That is why God sent His Son into the world – to deal with the old evil Foe – Satan. Without Jesus, we would be dead in our trespasses.

That is what St. Paul wrote the Ephesians in our Epistle Lesson. Look at it again. (Ephesians 2:1-10)

¹ And you were dead in the trespasses and sins ² in which you once walked, following the course of this world, following the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience— ³ among whom we all once lived in the passions of our flesh, carrying out the desires of the body and the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, like the rest of mankind. ⁴ But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us, ⁵ even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ—by grace you have been saved— ⁶ and raised us up with him and seated us with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, ⁷ so that in the coming ages he might show the immeasurable riches of his grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus. ⁸ For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, ⁹ not a result of works, so that no one may boast. ¹⁰ For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.

You see, God so loved you, me, the whole world that He was willing to send His only-begotten Son to die for us. Now, the catch is this. “Whoever believes in Him should not perish, but have eternal life.” The catch is the action of faith. Why is this a catch? Because, “we cannot by our own reason or strength believe in Jesus Christ or come to Him” (Luther’s explanation to the Third Article of the Apostle’s Creed).

God does not want anyone to be condemned, but it is only by God’s grace through faith that we can be saved. As the Gospel Lesson for today from John 3:14-21 reminds us, especially verse 18, “Whoever believes in Him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only Son of God.”

God so loved you that He sent Jesus into this world, so that if you believe in Jesus, you will not perish but have eternal life. That’s the Good News. That’s God’s amazing grace. That’s the cure for our curse.

The cursed cure Moses used was the serpent on a pole. The cursed cure God uses is Jesus on the cross. When we look to Him, we will be saved from our sin disease and will have not just healing, but eternal life. Thanks be to God! And all God’s people said – AMEN!