**Numbers 21:4-9 (ESV)**

From Mount Hor they set out by the way to the Red Sea, to go around the land of Edom. And the people became impatient on the way. [5] And 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 loathe this worthless food." [6] Then the Lord sent fiery serpents among the people, and they bit the people, so that many people of Israel died. [7] And the people came to Moses and said, "We have sinned, for we have spoken against the Lord and against you. Pray to the Lord, that he take away the serpents from us." So Moses prayed for the people. [8] And the Lord said to Moses, "Make a fiery serpent and set it on a pole, and everyone who is bitten, when he sees it, shall live." [9] So Moses made a bronze serpent and set it on a pole. And if a serpent bit anyone, he would look at the bronze serpent and live.

**Ephes. 2:1-10 (ESV)**

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.

**John 3:14-21 (ESV)**

And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of Man be lifted up, [15] that whoever believes in him may have eternal life." [16] For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life. [17] For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him. [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. [19] And this is the judgment: the light has come into the world, and people loved the darkness rather than the light because their deeds were evil. [20] For everyone who does wicked things hates the light and does not come to the light, lest his deeds should be exposed. [21] But whoever does what is true comes to the light, so that it may be clearly seen that his deeds have been carried out in God.

**“The Curse, The Cure”**

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ, who gave himself for our sins to deliver us from the present evil age, according to the will of our God and Father, to whom be the glory forever and ever. Amen. (Gal 1:3-5) Israel in the Old Testament times had three main transitions. The first and greatest was deliverance by God from slavery in Egypt. The second was their time of wandering with God forty years in the wilderness of Sinai. Last of all was how God gave victory and settlement to His people in the Promised Land. It was not their helplessness against mighty Pharaoh or fear over those dwelling in the land of Canaan, but having to wander in the wilderness that showed the better grace of God at work.

Lent reminds us that we, as the Church, are in that time of transition like Israel in the wilderness. Christ has delivered us from the hands of Satan who holds all captive as sinners. St. Paul proclaimed, “But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us, even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ— by grace you have been saved…” God has made us saints in Christ, but we are not yet in the Promised Land of heaven. We are still very much sinners wandering in the wilderness of this world needing the better grace of God to be at work for us. As the bronze serpent, so now all bitten by sin and death have the Son of Man, Jesus Christ, to look to for their salvation.

1. **Israel saw no good with being a people in the wilderness.**
2. A one-way trip to the Promised Land was not in the plans for God’s people.

* They had to face another detour with having to “go around” Edom.
* Almost close to forty years, their impatience denied how God already provided.
* The people wanted more accusing God and Moses of being murders.
* Even the miracle of mana from heaven was called, “Worthless food.”

1. Detours remind us that we are wandering with God in this sinful world.

* There is no straight course, no convenient way out of the wilderness on our terms.
* Instead of identifying how God shelters us at the present, we become restless.
* Ignoring His grace already at work only leaves us to picture God as a murder.
* Then our demands end up despising God’s Holy Word and Sacrament that bread from heaven.

1. **God in turn removed the miracle of life that He had provided.**
2. You could say the people of Israel were left to fend for themselves.

* They did not do very well when the fiery serpents came.
* There was only death and judgment slithering through the assembly.
* The poison coursing through their veins was out of their control to find a cure.
* No more demands on the table only repentance and the petition for God to take away the snakes.

1. Lent reminds us how without God in the wilderness of this world we are dead in our sin and trespasses.

* Jesus said those who do not believe in the only Son of God are condemned already.
* The bite from Satan with our first parents we can feel flow through our veins by our sin.
* More than wrongs in life, the greater truth that hurts is no works of ours can save us from death.
* Only repentance looks with prayer for the better grace of God that would deliver us from evil.

1. **Yet, the miracle of God’s grace was glory of life lifted up for His people.**
2. Israel saw this promise in the image God said for Moses to put on a pole.

* What they saw was not the glory people who were in pain and suffering were going to find impressive.
* Luther says, “No doubt there were many Jews who laughed at Moses and made fun of his bronze snake. They wanted to be able to comprehend with their reason, and so they tried to accomplish their goal with all kinds of medicines, but they failed” (Postils Vol. 6, 214).
* God took what was judgment and proclaimed His justice for the bronze serpent held no poison but the promise for any to see and believe.

1. In the wilderness, God proves His love as He puts it before our face and all people.

* Rather than God taking away the snakes, He answers prayer by His Will breaking all plans of Satan, the world and our sinful nature so we must look to Jesus.
* What does this mean? The truth of Jesus lifted up gloriously as God’s sacrifice judged in our place justifies sinners.
* It is to face how judgment is real, but also how God graciously has stopped sin and death in their tracks for us.
* What can guilt over sin, fear of death, questions over the future, or hell itself do against any who look in true faith to the crucified Jesus?
* The Law lifts up the Gospel, and Christ is lifted up in the Sacrament as promised by His Word.

How do we find protection in the wilderness of a sinful world? How will the church remain steadfast in these chaotic times? How does God turn dead people into living saints even able to serve their neighbor with love? As the bronze serpent, so now all bitten by sin and death have the Son of Man, Jesus Christ, to look to for their salvation. Amen. Now the peace of God, which passes all understanding, be with your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus to life everlasting. Amen.