

11 March 2018 - Fourth Sunday in Lent

Readings: Numbers 21:4–9; Psalm 107:1–3, 17–22; Ephesians 2:1–10; John 3:14–21.

Theme: *Lift Jesus higher* – John 3:14, “And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of Man be lifted up.”



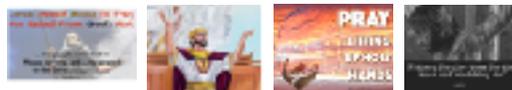
I. LIFT UP OUR NEED (LOWER OURSELVES).

Num. 21:7, “The people came to Moses and said, ‘We have sinned.’”

1 Corinthians 10:6-10, “These things took place as **examples for us**, that we might not desire evil as they did. Do not be **idolaters** as some of them were; as it is written, ‘The people sat down to eat and drink and rose up to play.’ We must not indulge in **sexual immorality** as some of them did, and twenty-three thousand fell in a single day. We must not **put Christ to the test**, as some of them did and were destroyed by serpents, nor **grumble**, as some of them did and were destroyed by the Destroyer.” v. 7, “we have spoken against the LORD and against you.” Cf. Breaking the 4th & 8th commandments.

Jesus, “If your brother (pastor, leader, etc.) sins...” (Mt. 18:15).

Philippians 2:7-8, “Made himself nothing.” “I can do nothing on my own.” (Jn. 5:19, 30). “Apart from me you can do nothing.” (Jn. 15:5).



II. LIFT UP OUR PRAYER/PRAISE (worship).

Numbers 21:7, “**Pray** to the LORD, that he take away the serpents from us.” So Moses **prayed** for the people.”

1 Ki. 8:54, “arms stretched upward” **1 Tim. 2:8**, “lifting holy hands.”

Luke 23:34, “Father, **forgive them**, for they know not what they do.”



III. LOOK TO OUR HEAD; LIFT UP OUR BODY.

Numbers 21:9, “if a serpent bit anyone, he would **look at the bronze serpent** and live.” **John 3:15-16**, “whoever **believes in him** may have eternal life. For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever **believes in him** should not perish but have eternal life.”

John 3:21, “But whoever **does** what is true comes to the light, **so that it may be clearly seen** that his works have been carried out in God.”

Ephesians 2:6-7, 10, “(God) **raised us up** with him and seated us with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, **so that** in the coming ages **he might show** the immeasurable riches of his grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus... For **we are his workmanship**, created in Christ Jesus for **good works**, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.”

Cf. Lift up your leaders! 1 Timothy 5:17, “Let the elders who rule well be considered worthy of double honour, especially those who labour in preaching and teaching.” **Cf. Lift up your followers!**

Michael W. Foss, *From Members to Disciples*, 52-54.

How do we embrace the unstoppable power of God’s people in mission? First, we must de-credential our ministries. As long as only the ordained or officially licensed can truly witness to the gospel, we will be stuck in Jerusalem... I am not suggesting that we do not have an ordained or trained clergy. I am suggesting that the content of that training has to change in order to achieve a new outcome for our new era. Those ministries where the pastoral leaders join with lay leaders to empower the whole church for actual ministry in real life will grow deep and wide... De-credentialing our ministries begins when the ordained see their training as equipping them to be equippers of the missionaries of our time: our disciples. Discipleship always and necessarily leads to apostolic witness... The Holy Spirit and the teaching of the apostles were the only boundaries of their witness. I believe we need to discover such heavenly freedom in our churches. Pastors equip disciples to understand that all of us have a calling from God to bear witness to the risen Saviour, Jesus. The how of that, as well as where and with whom of that, will be discovered as we are open to the leading of the Holy Spirit. We return to church to worship, recover, and be renewed so that we can re-enter into the world God loves so much.

I was teaching a Bible study class on Monday night. I looked out at those who were in attendance and saw Sharon. She wore a colourful scarf around her head because she was undergoing chemotherapy for cancer of the uterus. And she was alone because her husband, Dale, was home recovering from treatment for his leukemia. After the lesson she approached me and hugged me. “Thank you so much for tonight’s teaching, Pastor Mike,” she said....

CONCLUSION: Sing: *I’m no longer a slave to fear; I am a child of God.* So may we lift Jesus higher, in His name. Amen 😊