

# SUNDAY MESSENGER



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.

## Whoever Believes

A traveling circus caught fire. The manager sent the clown, who was already dressed and made up for performance, into the neighboring village to get help. There was a danger that the fire would spread across the fields to the village itself. The clown hurried to the village and requested the people to help to put the fire out. But the villagers took the clown's shouts for advertising. They laughed till they cried. The clown tried his best to convince them that there was a real fire, but the more he tried the more they laughed. When they realized that he was telling the truth it was too late. Both circus and village were burned to the ground.

### Correcting God

The above tale has a lot to do with the ending of Chronicles. God daily warned his people about the coming disaster but they did not listen to his messengers. They mocked, disdained and taunted His prophets "until the wrath of Lord against His people grew beyond remedy" (2 Chr 36:16). The outcome was a national tragedy. The Babylonians burned the temple, tore down the walls of Jerusalem, and took the surviving population into exile. "By the rivers of Babylon"

"For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life. 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. 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.

And this is the judgment: the light has come into the world, and people loved the darkness rather than the light because their works were evil. For everyone who does wicked things hates the light and does not come to the light, lest his works should be exposed. 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.

(John 3:16-21)

they sat and wept, unable to forget and unable to sing (Ps 137:1-4).

My friend commented that the manager of the circus sent a wrong person. How about God? Was he also sending wrong people to convince the Israelites about their "many trespasses and abominable practices" (2 Chr 36:14)? Why is it so difficult for us to believe God's word? Why cannot we see the danger that sin brings to our lives?

Two weeks ago, I received an email in which someone was suggesting that God could find a better way to save the world. It would not involve the crucifixion of His Son. Jesus would come to teach us how to live and what to believe, and then he would go back to heaven. So, no cross neither resurrection. What a fine invention! For some not only did God send wrong people but He even did not get right his entire plan of salvation. My dad often says: "every time we try to correct God we get ourselves into mess".

### His Grace

If there is anything that stands out in Christianity it is the message of grace. The story of Jesus - coming to us, living among us, and dying for us - reveals God's grace. It is astonishing that God never gives up on us. We despise his messenger, we correct His plan of salvation, and we disbelieve His existence, yet He continues to offer us his favour. No wonder that Paul describes our God as rich in mercy (Eph 2:4).

Loaded with mercy, God is ready to forgive and transform. This process is outlined in the letter to the Ephesians. We were dead because of our sins but God had pity on us and together with Christ brought us back to life. Created anew in Jesus Christ, our new life is characterised by good deeds that God has afore prepared for us to do (Eph 2:4-7). The conclusion is clear: all is God's grace. We do not save ourselves and the good deeds that we do also come from God. "For by grace have ye been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; not of works, that no man should glory. For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for

good works, which God afore prepared that we should walk in them" (Eph 2:8-10).

"Rich in mercy" is a fitting description of our God. The three examples of his favour that I particularly like are in Genesis, Deuteronomy, and the Gospel of John. In Genesis, God acts as a tailor making clothes for Adam and Eve (Gen 3:21). In Deuteronomy, He himself buries his best friend, Moses (Deut 34:6). Finally, in John's Gospel, the risen Jesus, like a caring mother, made breakfast for his cowardly disciples (John 21:9). Simple acts and yet they mean a lot. The Creator of heaven and earth, who has the right to be disappointed and angry, puts aside His feelings and cares for our needs. That is charity in action.

### Conclusion

A professor of philosophy came to a priest to argue that faith is an opium for the masses. So far nobody could match his arguments. He found the priest walking back and forth in a garden lost in thought. Then suddenly he stopped in the front of the professor and pointing at the cross standing in the middle of the garden said: "But perhaps it is true after all". The scholar was terrified. This terrible "perhaps" shattered all his arguments.

"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" (John 3:14-15). What would have happened if the Israelites trusted God's prophets? What would have occurred if the villagers believed the clown? What can take place when we accept God's plan of salvation? God, rich in His mercy, offers us His Son as the way to life and light. Do not allow unbelief to destroy you.

*May God bless all of us*