

2008 February 17th Salvation History

I want to share with you a couple of cute prayers from kids.

This one fits where we are in the calendar > Dear God: Please put another holiday between Christmas and Easter. There is nothing good in there now. Ginny

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This one is about love> Dear God: I bet it's very hard for you to love all of everybody in the whole world. There are only 4 people in our family and I can never do it. Nan

Today if we put all the readings together we see pieces of a love story puzzle. Usually we look at one of the readings the old testament, the new testament or occasionally the psalm but usually the gospel reading. We look at the whole reading, part of the reading, one verse or sometimes just part of a verse or a word. We usually look at that part of scripture and dig as deep as we can for a sermon. And we try to see what it is that God has to say to us today.

Today we are going to do things a little different. Today we will look at thousands of years in the time of the sermon. So we are going to take about 3 weeks for this sermon, hope you brought some food and a pillow. Seriously we are going to do a bit of a survey of salvation history. Even though we will be surveying I hope it will open up some of the depth of our faith.

Salvation history could be called a love story. The story of a lover in pursuit of his long lost love. To make things just a little more interesting and confusing we are going to do this backwards. I was inspired but a television show I saw recently where they would show you a scene that didn't make much sense, then they went back 10 minutes earlier and showed what lead up to the first scene. Then they went back in time to what happened before that scene. You kept going backwards in time, At the end of the show you saw the original scene. When you saw the original scene the whole things made sense. Well that's the goal. Are you ready?

In our New Testament reading which happened last out of all of our readings today, We find Paul writing to the church in Romans, probably Romans Lutheran Church, just kidding. Paul writes to the Romans concerning a controversy. Originally all the Christians were Jews first, Children of Abraham. Now people were becoming Christians with no Jewish background. The question was, Should the Church accept people as Christians who have no Jewish back ground. People who never followed the laws and traditions of the faith. And should they have to follow those laws and traditions now. **Kind of like if we have people who want to join Urland but they don't know anything about Urland history, it's traditions maybe they aren't even Norweign. In order to become a member of Urland will they have to do things the way Urland has always done it?**

One of the big things at issue for the Jewish Christians and the Non- Jewish Christians was circumcision. As a sign of his faith Abraham was to be circumcised along with his family and servants and slaves. Is this still necessary for those Christians who were not coming from Judaism? In order to be righteous that is right with God is circumcision or following any of the other traditions and laws necessary?

Paul pretty much says no. The reason he says this is, is that he says "God saw Abraham's faith and it was reckoned to him as righteousness." It wasn't the circumcision, it wasn't the kosher food, it wasn't the things he did or didn't do that made him righteous in God's eyes. It was his faith in God.

We go back in time about 20 or 30 years. A religious teacher Nicodemus comes to visit Jesus. Some people call him Nick at night, after the tv channel Nicolodeon. Jesus and Nick get into this conversation well they really don't. It is one of those conversations where one person really doesn't understand the other.

Page | 2 Nick says to Jesus we know you're from God, no one can say and do what you do who isn't from God. Jesus says you really don't know. No one can know unless they are born again, born from above.

As if to prove Jesus' point Nick shows his ignorance by asking how can one be born after they have been born? Can they go back inside their mother. **At this every mother that heard that made a painful sound.** Jesus wasn't talking about physical birth, physical things. It isn't the things we do that open our eyes to the Kingdom of God. Only the spirit can open that for us.

It's like being in love. Have you ever known someone in love? They see things no one else can see. We might look at their beloved and says yuk, What do they see in him or her? The beloved sees the beauty of that person, that no one else can see. It's like a mother's love.

The point is not doing things to be made righteous, right with God. You didn't have anything to do with your first birth, your physical birth, you won't have anything to do we your second, your spiritual birth. You have a physical mother and a spiritual mother. Just have faith, trust and love that's what God is looking for.

Just as Moses lifted up the Serpent in the Wilderness so must the Son of Man, Jesus be lifted up. Anyone who believes in him, in Jesus may have eternal life. Look up to Jesus just like the serpent in the wilderness.

We go back about 1100 years. Moses was leading the Hebrews in the wilderness after God freed them from slavery in Egypt. Soon after being liberated and seeing the might works of God the people faced with the struggles of freedom, of living in the wilderness lost faith in God. God sent poisonous snakes. People were getting bit and dying, they called out to God for help. He told Moses to lift up a snake on a pole. The people had to look up at the snake and they won't die from the snakes. But it really wasn't the looking up at the snakes that saved them. It was their trust in God. Looking up at a snake to protect you from poisonous snakes sounds crazy, especially since then you wouldn't be able to avoid getting bit. It takes faith, faith, trust and love. Faith, trust and love when life doesn't make sense, even when God doesn't seem to make sense. We go back 7 – 800 years.

God comes to Abram soon to become Abraham. God has created the world including people. God had set up and loving, trusting relationship with people. But his beloved had turned away. God came to Abram. In an effort to restore his relationship with the world his whole creation, all people who he loved he came to work through Abram.

Here's the deal God said, Leave your family, friends, your home town, everything. Leave everything and go where I tell you and I will bless you. I will bless you and I will use you to bless the whole world. You just got to trust me. "Deal or no deal". Abraham said, Deal. Abraham kept his deal. And God kept his. Abraham wasn't perfect, there were hard times, times he didn't know what he should do. Times when God had to get him back on track, times when God tested him but he trusted God. And God reckoned it to him as righteousness. Abraham was right with God through his faith, love and trust of God. Because that's what God is looking for.

We move thousand of years to day. Abraham trusted God. Go and do likewise. Amen.