

BLESSINGS ALWAYS

March 10, 2021

Association Minister Message

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POLE. "Make a poisonous snake and place it on a POLE" Numbers 21:8. The forty-year journey through the wilderness, which could have been done in eleven days, was both treacherous and liberating. Moses was reluctant to be the leader. Then as leader, the people grumbled and protested to Moses about accommodations, food and leaving comfort to go to an unknown place. It was the stubbornness of the people and their unwillingness to take the land immediately that became forty years of wandering. In that time a new nation would evolve that would not have direct ties to captivity in Egypt.

One event during the Hebrew Exodus in the Book of Numbers is about poisonous snakes attacking the people because they were *"impatient"* and *"spoke against God and Moses: 'Why did you bring us up from Egypt to kill us in the desert, where there is no food or water. And we detest the miserable bread!'"* Poisonous snakes were sent to bite the people, and it was at this moment that the people realized they had sinned. Moses put an image of a snake on the *POLE* and when the people were bitten they would look at the snake image and be saved. It was not a graven image but a symbol of God saving the people.

Poisonous snacks are all around us making our lives miserable. We, too, are impatient and like to grumble that things are not like we want them to be. We have *"Covid fatigue"* along with *"isolation fatigue."* These *"snakes"* interfere with what is thought to be normal. However, there are other snakes that distort the goodness of God's Creation when Creation is thought of as our own personal asset. It is time to view the poisonous snakes for what they are, face them and deal with them.

POLE. During this time of Lent, we are reminded of Jesus' suffering, death AND resurrection. Jesus, too, was placed on a cross—a *POLE*—on which we look for forgiveness and hope. Words from a hymn declare, *"...so I'll cherish the Old Rugged Cross..."* that is the empty cross of Easter proclamation: *"Christ is risen...Christ is risen INDEED."* Lent is not an end in itself; Lent points to victory over evil, sin, hate and inhumane acts perpetrated against one another. Many know John 3:16, but the words following it declare, *"God didn't send the Son into the world to judge the world, but that the world might be saved through him."* (v. 17) When we look at the cross, we see God's love that offers forgiveness and hope. The journey the Hebrew people experienced is also the journey we take from captivity of all that would destroy our minds, bodies and spirits, to a place of freedom that gives meaning and purpose to abundant living. *"Give thanks to God, because God is good, because God's faithful love lasts forever!" (Psalm 167:1)* As the Hebrew people were asked to look at the *POLE*, let us look to the author and finisher of our faith, Jesus Christ, giving thanks what is done in God is for us and the world.

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