Christ lifted up as the serpent

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Preacher: Rev W.Macleod

[0:00] We shall now turn to the passage of scripture which we read. The Gospel of John chapter 3.

Our text for this morning is verses 14 and 15. John chapter 3 and at verse 14.
And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life.
I wonder, do you worry that you're not saved?
You pray, you seek the Lord, yet nothing happens. You're growing older.
[1:20] The years are passing. And still there's this uncertainty about your state. Death is near.

Last Sunday morning, death came into this church and took one of our members. You don't know when death will come again.
And it reaches young people as well as old people. Last February, I was up in Stornoway doing some services there and met a young fellow.
Handsome young lad, 20 years of age. Today, he's struggling for his life with cancer. Thankfully, that boy knows the Savior.
If he dies, he's going to be with the Lord. But what about you? You say, I want to be saved, but nothing seems to happen.
[2:27] Maybe I've had my chances. There have been times when I did feel moved and concerned and worried about my soul.

And then I sort of forgot about it. And I've been hardened. Maybe I'm not one of God's elect.
Maybe there's no hope for me. And yet, we have here a verse which tells us that there is hope for you. Whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life.
Who is that? Who is this whosoever? It's everybody. And it's you. Whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life.
It's a great invitation. And it addresses everyone. It calls to each one of you. Whatever your past. Whatever your present.
[3:52] Whatever your situation. Whatever your sins. Whatever your sins. And whatever. The times that you have hardened your heart in the past.

God's word says to you today. Whosoever believeth in him. Shall not perish, but have eternal life.
There's just one essential. And that is. That you must believe. First today. I would like us to think about.
Your need. And you're a needy person. Because a serpent. Has bitten you. The Bible tells us about that old serpent.
The devil. And Satan. Do you remember how he came to our first parents. In the garden of Eden. The first human couple. Adam and Eve.
[5:00] And Satan. In the form of a serpent. Slithered up to Eve. And said to her. Hath God said.

You may not eat of every tree. That is in the garden. Has God really said that? Trying to cast a doubt. You shall not surely die.
Don't worry. You won't die. But you'll be like God. And you'll know good and evil. And then you'll be something that you're not.
And God is trying to keep something good from you. And the devil is whispering in Eve's ear. That serpent the devil. Stretch out your hand and take this fruit.
It looks good. It'll taste good. And it'll make you like God. Subtle.
[6:05] Poisonous. Eve listened. Took the fruit. And gave to Adam. And he also ate. And what was the result?

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Sin. Misery. And death. Sin. And ever since then. Men and women have been dying. The poison. Of Satan. The serpent. Has been put into the human race. So that ever since then. We're dying. And from the moment that we're born. We're dying people.
And it's just a matter of time. Some a little bit longer. Others shorter. But we're all dying. Your need. If we go on a little bit.
In the history of God's revelation. In the Bible. We find the children of Israel. Leaving the land of Egypt. God has taken them out.
[7:09] Of this place. Where they were in bondage. And in captivity. Where they were slaves. He has delivered them. And he's leading them. Through the wilderness. To the promised land. And at a certain point.

Going through the wilderness. They're finding the way. Very difficult. And there's no water. And there's no bread. No food. Apart from this. Manna. They're getting fed up.
Of this manna. This light bread. This bread. That God was sending down. From heaven to them. This light bread. This manna.
And there's no water. And the way is hard. God. Why has God done this to us? And why did he take us out of the. Out of the land of Egypt.
To die in the desert? God's so hard. And God's so cruel. And God's so nasty. And God has done this to us. And he's leaving us here. To die in the desert.
[8:12] What a miserable existence we have. And we were far better. When we were in Egypt. Even although we were slaves there. Why God are you doing this?

You're cruel to us. And God heard their grumblings. And their discontentedness. God who had been so good to them.
And what did he do? He sent fiery serpents amongst them. He was angry with their disobedience. With their grumbling and discontentedness.
Just as he gets angry with our discontentedness too. And these serpents bit them. And many of them died.
And others were sick and dying. And they realised how wrong they were. And how at the end of the day. How dependent we are on God.
[9:16] We can shout in his face. And we can spit in his face. But at the end of the day. What are we? We're in his hand. And we have no rights of our own.

That we can claim. We are the creatures he has made. And he's made us to glorify him. And if we rebel against him. He has every right to punish us.
The Israelites realised how vulnerable their position was.
And they realised how wrong it was to grumble in this way against the God. The God who had been so good to them too. Who was delivering them from bondage.
Who was providing them with their essentials. And delivering them from their enemies. And would one day take them into the promised land. So they came to Moses and said.
[10:14] We're sorry. Pray for us. They began to repent. And Moses began to pray for them too. And together they turned to the Lord.

And pleaded with the Lord for mercy. And God is merciful. God is love. God is so good. God said to Moses. Make a serpent of brass.
Just like these serpents that are biting you. And put it on a pole. In the middle of the camp. So that every Israelite who is bitten.
Will be able to turn. And to look. At the serpent on the pole. And the moment they look. They shall be healed. The Israelites.
They were in need. They were bitten. In the wilderness. And then you come on to us.
[11:18] Today. We too are attacked by the serpent. He's so cunning. He slithers up behind us. He whispers in our ears.

We don't notice them coming. And he's tempting us. And he's saying to us. Eat some forbidden fruit. Do something.
And we know we shouldn't. And our conscience says. Don't do it. And he's whispering. And he's saying. Do it. Do it. Do it. And he's saying to us.
No one's watching. No one will see you. It's all right. You're in secret here. You're private. There's nobody looking on. But God is looking on. And God sees. And he says.

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[12:12] You'll enjoy it. It'll be a good experience. You'll feel good. It'll make you happy. Come on. Do it. Do it. Do it. Do it. Do it.

Do it. Do it. But it's forbidden. And it's sin. But then he says. It's not really sin.
There's nothing wrong with it. It's quite justifiable. It's all right really. It's not really a sin. You know how you argue away.
In your own mind like that. And the devil's encouraging you. In the argument. It's not really sin. God doesn't mind. Or he whispers in your ear.
And he says. It's just a little sin. So what a little sin. Nobody's perfect. It's just a little sin. Yes. But there's no such thing as a little sin.
[13:14] Against a great God. You can only get a little sin. If it's against a little God. But our God's a great God.

So even to break one of the least of his commandments. It's an enormous sin. But then he says. Satan says. But other people do it.
And it's quite a common thing. And even good people do it. And I know so and so.
Who did this. And that other person did that. Good people do it. It's common. It's alright. But the fact that good people.
As Rabbi Duncan put it. Good people have crooked legs. And good people have. Stiff joints. But that doesn't make crooked legs.
[14:13] And stiff joints. Something desirable. Something good. The fact that good people sin. Doesn't. Make sin any better. The fact that it's a common sin.

That will not excuse us either. Then the devil's great argument is. Well. Even if it is a sin.
Jesus died on the cross for sinners. All you have to do is ask for forgiveness. And it'll be alright. The blood of Jesus Christ.
God's son. Cleanses us from all sin. Doesn't the Bible say that? Let us continue in sin. Let grace me abound.
There's always forgiveness. God is love. He doesn't mind. He'll forgive us. And so. The grace of God. And the love of God.
[15:16] Is turned into an excuse for sin. And that's terribly wicked. It's terribly blasphemous. To take God's love and his grace.

And to use it as an excuse. For our own sin. For our own sin. And wickedness. The serpent is there.
And every one of us in this church today. Knows the serpent. He comes to each one of us. With his temptations. And he knows how to get into our mind.
And to whisper. And to whisper. In the inner recesses of our heart. And you and I. Have to beware of him. We're needy.
Because we've already been bitten by the serpent. We've already sinned. Poisoned. Dying.
[16:19] Perishing. That's the situation of man. In this world. Secondly. I want us to think of God's provision.

First we saw God's need. First we saw our own need. And now. God's provision. In the garden of Eden. God said.
To the woman. The seed. Your seed. The seed of the woman. Shall bruise. The head of the serpent. You're going to have a son.
Do you know what he's going to do? He's going to stand on the snake's head. And crush it. And that's what our Lord Jesus Christ did.
At Calvary. The seed of the woman. Will crush. The serpent's head. God's provision. The children of Israel.
[17:22] Were going through the wilderness. Grumbling against God. God sent his. Firey serpents amongst them. They were bitten.

They were sick. They were dying. God said. Make a serpent of brass. Put it on a pole. And the Israelite. Every Israelite.
Who looked to the serpent of brass. Was immediately healed. God's provision. Providing a way of escape. You and I getting into a mess.
But God. He provides the way out of the mess. In his grace and love. God's provision. But if the Israelite. Wouldn't look to the. To the serpent of brass.
The Israelite. Wouldn't be healed. And so we come. To the Lord Jesus Christ.

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[18:19] Another serpent. Just as Moses lifted up. The serpent in the wilderness. Even so must the son of man.

Be lifted up. That whosoever believeth in him. Should not perish. But have eternal life. Christ must be lifted up.
On a pole too. And he says. I. If I be lifted up. Will draw all men unto me. If I'm lifted up.
Just as Moses lifted up. The brazen serpent. I will draw people. Away from their sin. And away from their misery. And their hell.
To salvation. Jesus. Compared to a serpent here. That's very strange.
[19:19] We think of Jesus. As more like a lion. The lion of the tribe of Judah. The lion that will fearlessly face. His enemies. We think of him as a lamb.

A lamb. Meek and lowly. Led as a lamb to the slaughter.
And as a sheep. Dumb before her shearers. So he opened not his mouth. We think of him as a suffering lamb. The sacrificial lamb. Dying on the cross.
But here Jesus is spoken of. As a serpent. And yet. Not a poisonous. A nasty and vicious serpent.
But rather. As the serpent of brass. A picture. Of the healing one. The one. Who wrestles. With that old serpent.
[20:21] The devil and Satan. And who takes the poison. Out of Satan. Who himself. Knows what it is. To have the fangs of Satan. Put into it.

Who died on the cross. And so. Has taken. The poison. Out of Satan. And.
Has provided a way of escape. And of salvation. For you and me. Through death. He destroyed him. That had the power of death.
That is the devil. And delivered them. Who through fear of death. Were all their lifetime. Subject to bondage. He delivers.
And he destroys. The devil. And his power. God's provision. The Lord Jesus Christ.
[21:17] God's provision. God's provision. God's provision. Finally. Your privilege. And your responsibility. When God said.

To our first parents. In the garden of Eden. The seed of the woman. Shall bruise. Or crush. The head of the serpent. God was giving.
A lifeline. To mankind. And God was saying. To them. I'm throwing you out. Of the garden. You've listened. To the serpent. You're dead.
Spiritually. And you're going to die. Eternally in hell. But. I give you a lifeline. There's one going to be born. One who's going to destroy.
The power of Satan. Put your faith. In this. Seed of the woman. In this child. Will be born. To a woman. To the Virgin Mary.
[22:14] And. You will be saved. When the Israelites.

Were dying. In the desert. And God gave them. The serpent of brass. God was saying to them. You have sinned. And you deserve.
To perish. But I'm a God of love. And in my mercy. I give you a way of escape. And this serpent on the pole.
This brass serpent. It's a picture for you. Look to it. But not just. Look to it. But look.
To the one of whom it speaks. The great Messiah. Who will save men and women. And now. At the beginning of the gospel.
[23:12] Jesus says. To this man. Nicodemus. This teacher of the Jews. Just as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness.

Even so must I. The son of man be lifted up. But whosoever believeth in him. In me. Should not perish.
But have everlasting life. Look to Christ. And you won't perish. Despite. Having listened to Satan so often.
And being bitten by him. And poisoned by him. And despite being on the broad road to a lost eternity. And by nature.
Without God. And without hope. Jesus is lifted up on the cross. And if you look to him. You'll be healed. Where are you to look?
[24:14] Look at the cross. But the cross is an empty cross. And the tomb is an empty tomb. Christ is no longer on the cross. And Christ is no longer in a grave in Palestine.

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He's in heaven. At God's right hand. And he's saying. Look unto me and be saved. All ye ends of the earth.
Wherever you are. Even in the most distant corners of the world. Look to me. And be saved. And how do we look to Jesus.
When we look in prayer. And when we look in. Asking and seeking from him. Salvation. Praying to him. And trusting in him.
In him who had victory. Over Satan. And who destroyed the devil. Through his death on the cross. That whosoever believeth in him.
[25:16] Should not perish. Do you want to be saved? Do you want to get to heaven? Do you want to be at peace with God? Do you want your sins forgiven?

Do you want to be healed. From the poison of Satan? Whosoever believeth in him.
And that's very wide. Whoever you are. Whatever your past. Criminal. A thief. A murderer.
A child abuser. Doesn't matter what you were. Or what you are. Whosoever. Even if you are the worst of sinners.
Whosoever. Oh but you say. I have had so many privileges. And I have had such a good upbringing. I think maybe the time has passed for me.
[26:16] I am too late. So often I have hardened my heart in the past. Whosoever. Even you.

Could you say. I am a Pharisee. I am so self righteous. And doesn't Jesus say in his word.
That he came not to call the righteous. But sinners to repentance. Whosoever. Whoever you are. Whoever you are. Whoever you are.
Who are aware of your need. Whoever you are. Who are aware. Of the desperate situation you are in. Christ came. To seek and to save.
That which was lost. And you are lost. Today. Then you say. He doesn't answer me. And I pray to him.
[27:14] And I ask him to save me. And nothing happens. Maybe I am not of the elect. Maybe there is no hope for me. That whosoever.

Believeth in him. Should not perish. But have eternal life. That whosoever. Means you.
Whoever you are today. And whatever your situation. If you look to Jesus. If you pray to him. If you ask him into your heart.
If you cast yourself. Upon him. He was raised up on the cross. Just as Moses lifted up the brass serpent.
In the wilderness. So that you would look to him. And be saved. And every single person. Who looks to Jesus. And who prays to Jesus.
[28:15] And who puts their trust in him. Shall be saved. Whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord. Shall be saved. And that includes you.

So friend. Why don't you look to Christ today. And call upon him. And ask of him. Salvation. And when you pray.
Remind God. That it says in this verse. Whosoever. And that means you. And God will save you. Because he's promised.
Let us pray. Let us pray. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.
Reouland. Help us to appreciate the gospel that is put before us in thy word, the way of salvation that is so clearly enunciated there.
[29:20] Thou hast given us a saviour, unworthy though we are, rebels though we be, followers of the devil by nature, and belonging to his kingdom and to his religion.

Yet there is hope even for rebels like us, transgressors. There is hope because Jesus died on the cross.
He was raised up there so that we might look to him and trust in him, so that we might pray to him and experience healing for our own souls.
O Lord, come and do thou heal us of the poison of sin and of Satan, and grant to us that we would know something of the surge of health going through our veins, that we might know something of the peace of God, the peace that passes knowledge in our own hearts and conscience and experience, that assurance of God's love that thou dost give, God's spirit witnessing with our spirit that we are the children of God, enabling us to cry, Abba, Father, pardon us our sins for Jesus' sake.

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Amen. Amen.
[31:12] Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

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