

## GOSPEL ACCLAMATION

Jn 3: 16

Glory and praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ! / God loved the world so much, he gave us his only Son, / that all who believe in him might have eternal life. / Glory and praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ!

## GOSPEL

Jn 3:14-21

A reading from the holy Gospel according to John.

*God sent his Son into the world that we might be saved through him.*

Jesus said to Nicodemus:

‘The Son of Man must be lifted up as Moses lifted up the serpent in the desert, so that everyone who believes may have eternal life in him. Yes, God loved the world so much that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not be lost but may have eternal life. For God sent his Son into the world not to condemn the world, but so that through him the world might be saved. No one who believes in him will be condemned; but whoever refuses to believe is condemned already, because he has refused to believe in the name of God’s only Son. On these grounds is sentence pronounced: that though the light has come into the world men have shown they prefer darkness to the light because their deeds were evil. And indeed, everybody who does wrong hates the light and avoids it, for fear his actions should be exposed; but the man who lives by the truth comes out into the light, so that it may be plainly seen that what he does is done in God.’

■ The Gospel of the Lord.

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# Breaking Open the Word



# THE SAVING WORD

FOURTH SUNDAY OF LENT / B

14 MARCH 2021

## LOVING IS GIVING

Some years ago, a young married man asked me to try and put the story of the Scriptures into a sentence or two. My reply was that the story that the Scriptures tell is a love story, a love that always provides us with a new beginning, especially when we least deserve or expect it. He then exclaimed; ‘There you are, why did you have to bring sin into it?’ I took his point about the need to be positive, but the Scriptures teach that a reality we can’t seem to avoid is that our choices are not always what they might be.

The point I was trying to make was that God does not avoid us, even if we cannot seem to avoid sin. The first reading is a classic example of a new and unexpected life offered to the people of Israel in the midst of exile. The Chronicler has no doubts that the exile was fully deserved. The wonder is that there is another opportunity at all! The Gospel passage could not state it more beautifully: ‘God so loved the world that he gave his only Son’. God’s will for us is always that we come into the fullness of life. While we may fear God’s judgement, the real judgement to fear is the one that we make ourselves. Paul speaks of each of us as a work of art. The challenge of Lent is: What kind of work of art do we wish to be?

Christopher Monaghan CP

## FIRST READING

2 Chron 36: 14-16, 19-23

A reading from the second book of Chronicles.

*The wrath and the mercy of the Lord are revealed in the exile and liberation of his people.*

All the heads of the priesthood, and the people too, added infidelity to infidelity, copying all the shameful practices of the nations and defiling the Temple that the Lord had consecrated for himself in Jerusalem. The Lord, the God of their ancestors, tirelessly sent them messenger after messenger, since he wished to spare his people and his house. But they ridiculed the messengers of God, they despised his words, they laughed at his prophets, until at last the wrath of the Lord rose so high against his people that there was no further remedy.

Their enemies burned down the Temple of God, demolished the walls of Jerusalem, set fire to all its palaces, and destroyed everything of value in it. The survivors were deported by Nebuchadnezzar to Babylon; they were to serve him and his sons until the kingdom of Persia came to power. This is how the word of the Lord was fulfilled that he spoke through Jeremiah, ‘Until this land has enjoyed its sabbath rest, until seventy years have gone by, it will keep sabbath throughout the days of its desolation.’

And in the first year of Cyrus king of Persia, to fulfil the word of the Lord that was spoken through Jeremiah, the Lord roused the spirit of Cyrus king of Persia to issue a proclamation and to have it publicly displayed throughout his kingdom: ‘Thus speaks Cyrus king of Persia, “The Lord, the God of heaven, has given me all the kingdoms of the earth; he has ordered me to build him a Temple in Jerusalem, in Judah. Whoever there is among you of all his people, may his God be with him! Let him go up.”’

■ The word of the Lord.

## RESPONSORIAL PSALM

Ps 136. R. v. 6

R. Let my tongue be silenced, if I ever forget you!



1. By the rivers of Babylon / there we sat and wept, / remembering Zion: / on the poplars that grew there / we hung our harps. R.
2. For it was there that they asked us, / our captors, for songs, / our oppressors, for joy. / ‘Sing to us,’ they said, / ‘one of Zion’s songs.’ R.
3. O how could we sing / the song of the Lord / on alien soil? / If I forget you, Jerusalem, / let my right hand wither! R.
4. O let my tongue / cleave to my mouth / if I remember you not, / if I prize not Jerusalem / above all my joys! R.

## SECOND READING

Eph 2: 4-10

A reading from the letter of St Paul to the Ephesians.

*When we were dead through sins, he brought us to life.*

God loved us with so much love that he was generous with his mercy: when we were dead through our sins, he brought us to life with Christ – it is through grace that you have been saved – and raised us up with him and gave us a place with him in heaven, in Christ Jesus.

This was to show for all ages to come, through his goodness towards us in Christ Jesus, how infinitely rich he is in grace. Because it is by grace that you have been saved, through faith; not by anything of your own, but by a gift from God; not by anything that you have done, so that nobody can claim the credit. We are God’s work of art, created in Christ Jesus to live the good life as from the beginning he has meant us to live it.

■ The word of the Lord.