

Images of Light and Brightness

Gracious Father, whose blessed Son Jesus Christ came down from heaven to be the true bread which giveth life to the world: Evermore give us this bread, that he may live in us, and we in him; who liveth and reigneth with thee and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. *Amen.*

Numbers 21:4-9	Moses lifts up the deadly serpent; look on it and be saved	
Psalm 107:1-3, 17-22		
Ephesians 2:1-10	By grace you have been saved	
John 3:14-21	The Son of Man must be lifted up as Moses did with the serpent	

Eucharist A (361)

NA—Rite I

So Moses made a serpent of bronze and put it upon a pole, and whenever a serpent bit someone, that person would look at the serpent of bronze and live.

Images of Brightness and Light.

{Pause} Please be Seated. {Pause}



For me, the imagery of today cascades forward & back,

Forward & back, with amazing color, vibrancy, and clarity,

From darker tone purples:

- Mount Hor (It just sound big, desolate, and foreboding to me)
- The Red Sea ... The impatience of the people ...
- Death, Wilderness, (No Food, No Water),
- Detestable! Miserable food;
- Awful serpents (It only gets worse when they complain)

To a strange sudden glimmer of light; the adding of addition light

From the darker purple suddenly is revealed a bright rose:

- The people gazed at a simple object and lived (the OT)
- God redeems us from the hand of the foe (the psalm)
- We are made alive through Christ who saved us; we are made whole through God's love; by grace we are saved (the epistle)
- For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, to the end that all who believeth in him shall not perish but shall have eternal life!

To us who have been given the GIFT OF GOD'S GRACE,

Not through our own works, for in our own works, we would

(No sooner than the Israelites) be establishing our own

'Take us back to the meat pots of Israel' Committee

And detesting the miserable food,

(Yuch! It tastes like dried out cardboard!)

(Why must I eat this thing to survive? Why must we be baptized?)

(Why must we believe in a resurrection?)

(How do you reconcile free will and God's Sovereignty)

(Why does evil exist? Why did Jesus have to die?)

(But we have always done it this way? → →

(Changing will cause problems & strife...)

Those were just a few examples; but I think you get the point!

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From the perspective of a people SAVED THROUGH GRACE

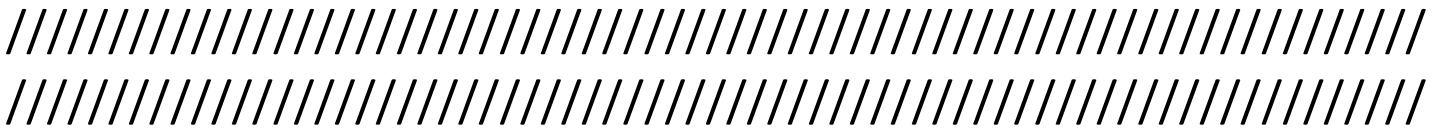
Through the action of our God upon a cross

On calvary's hill, almost 2000 years ago,

And filtered through other sayings and readings, →

Those of this week, the readings of all our scripture today,

Those dating back 3300 years, those of 3000 years & 2000...



Through all this knowledge and all of our filters,

Especially through the very words of Christ Jesus, that:

“Just as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness,

“So must the Son of Man be lifted up,

“That whosoever believes in him may have

“Eternal Life.”

Through all of this, it all seems quite obvious, TO US, today...

That God was simply testing the Israelites to prepare them

For what he had planned for them in the Promised Land.

Oh, you just have to read this scripture through the lens of

The crucified Christ and surely you can see that

The serpent on the pole was a mere foreshadowing

Of the Light of the Word, Christ Jesus, who

Through His Light and through his resurrection

Would bring Everlasting life and life

Into a dark and foreboding world. →

You must see it; it is so obvious: As obvious

As the rose colored sign the Priest is wearing today,

Slowly, somehow, the dark shades of Lent are lifting...

Soon there will be abundant light,

White and gold & bright easter joys are ahead!

But wait. No, I really can't see it. I am sad right now...

My wife, or my mom, or my dad, or my daughter,

Or my sister, or my brother, or my aunt, or my friend

Has died, or is in pain, or has no money, or has

No clothes, or is pregnant, or is troubled, or

Is just trying to make it through this Lent,

OR... Maybe it is me, my very self who is ill, or sick, or dying.

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With the illumination of over 3000 years,

The situation can seem a lot different,

Especially (for us) who have Christ's words to guide us.

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What 'pray tell,' will the illumination of another 3000 years,

Or 10,000 years, or a million, or an infinite and everlasting

Number of eternal years, with Christ by our side, illuminate?



God does understand and we too will one day understand,

One day, 3000 or more years from now, we will look back,

Through the lens of Christ's return to us to bring us

Into the joys of everlasting, eternal, & righteous life.

One day, we will look back at our own dark and purple moments,

To see the greater shades of rose, and light, white and gold.

In our Lenten moments, when wandering through the desert,

It is hard to see the light of a mere bronze serpent on a pole,

(Which if we knew a bit more, than we wished we knew

(About the biblical narrative, & about human nature

(We would know would become yet another

(Cause for idolatry & stumbling ... sigh).

As is our human nature...there will be some idolatry in the future,

At least if we are to believe the account in 2 Kings Chapter 18,

Where Hezekiah destroyed the bronze serpent,

That appeared to become an idol to the people.

And I want to assure you that as sure as on Lent IV,

Someone will ask, "Why you wearing pink, Father Rick..."

(The color is 'Rose' by the way...)

And as sure as the Blue Shades of Advent are followed

By the Brilliant Whites and Golds and Brightness,

Of the Nativity of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ

And of the Grand Epiphany-tides and foreshadowing

Blinding whiteness of the transfiguration.

The dark purple shades of Lent will be followed once again,

By Brilliant Whites and Resplendent Golds,

As we celebrate the one true light of Christ's resurrection

Before entering—once again—our green growing times

Of the season of Pentecost!

We are beautiful Easter people, even when enduring the Exodus,

Even when experiencing the pains of our earthly rebellion,

We are deeply loved by our God who knowing

We cannot possibly save ourselves

Through our own works,

Has given us grace upon grace, even taking our own form,

Living and suffering, and dying, and rising

From the **dark grave** of death, in resplendent light.

EVEN. When we cannot see that light in today's darkness,

EVEN. When we rebel against the changes,

EVEN. When we detest the ways God acts as he saves us

EVEN. When we cannot see the light,

Because we are stuck in our present situation.

God is there, Christ is there, the Holy Spirit is there.

They have been there guiding the world from the first words

Of the creation story found in the book of Genesis.

They are there in the final chapter, the final story, Revelation,

When the curtain will be drawn, the lights will be undimmed,

And all shall be revealed.

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This, my dear friends in Christ IS the story of the Bible,

God's bright and abundant love for each of us. A story...

That proclaims that "Everyone who believes in him,

"Shall not perish but shall have eternal life."

A story that endures and is enriched by the test of time.

As story as true as seasons of Advent, Christmas, Epiphany,

Lent, Easter, and Pentecostal trials, will one day

Be followed by the everlasting joys of resurrection!



In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the HS. Amen.



Our service will continue with the words of the Nicene Creed,
Found on page 326 of the Book of Common Prayer.