

The fourth Sunday in Lent. The scripture text is taken from John 3:14-21

The only way, we can see the stars in the sky, is during the night-time hours, in the darkness. You can't see the stars during the day light hours.

Like the stars of the night-time sky, God has way of illuminating Himself. Sometimes when we think things are going great, it becomes really difficult for us to see, God's hand, His presence, at work in our lives, because our eyes are blinded by the darkness of our sin, the sin of pride.

So when do most people turn to God, pray to God, want to see God involved in their lives, well, when things are not going very well, when life seems to be headed south, right down the toilet.

And, sometimes, God does allow certain things to happen to us, so that we realize Who He is, so that we can realize what He can do; then we can realize what He is all about.

And not just in our own minds, or in how we feel at the moment, but through His Word. The Bible, The Word of God, is His instruction to us, it is God's story to us.

It is God's history, His story, that allows us to read back in time and then reflect on past works, past faiths, past hopes, past dreams, past anything and everything humanity has ever gone through.

God has laid it all out in the Bible, in His Word. Our task as Christians, now, is to read His Word, Study His Word, devote time to His Word, and ask God's Holy Spirit to enlighten us, to help us understand His Word.

God, (out of His love for us) gives His Word, and by hearing His Word, God gives us faith. God's love for us is by His grace, and His grace alone. You and I can't earn, achieve, or merit, God's love, (in other words, His grace). It is a free gift.

God's love is by sheer grace, that calls us to realize just how powerful He is. It's not a matter of what we can do, or where we can go, it's not a matter of our own strength, or our own ability, because in reality, we have no real power. We don't.

For example, we can't predict the future, control the weather, control earthquakes, control solar flares on the sun, nor can we control certain things that happen in life, in which tragedy occurs. We are not God.

So when it comes to matters of the eternal, we are at the mercy of God Almighty. We have to understand, that this world we live in, is just temporary. It is not forever.

All things will pass away, all earthly things will come down, in the end, God will make all things new. He will redeem all things, God has the power to do this, we don't.

We have to understand that there is hope in God, and no other. It is a hope, that you can't muster on our own.

It is a hope that you can't do on your own. It is impossible to have any hope of eternity, without God and His plan of salvation for every human being through faith in Jesus Christ.

God's only begotten Son, who came down from heaven, who stepped into this world, who took on human flesh, who died on that Roman cross on Golgotha's Hill, outside of Jerusalem over 2,000 years

ago. Whom God raised from the dead on the third day, who ascended into heaven, and who now lives and reigns in heaven with God the Father.

It is impossible to muster that type of faith, of will, of hope, and of joy, in the midst of chaos, on your own.

I want you to think about this, God, the creator of all that is, all that has been, and of all, that will ever be, loves you enough, so as to come you and to me in person. Think about that! God, wants a relationship with you.

God has come into our lives to be part of our lives, and to give us hope in our hearts, so that in the end, we realize, who He is.

As human nature would have it, often times we get confused or we don't understand, then God lays it out through revelation, in other words, His Word.

The verse that we have heard for today, the verse that Jesus quotes, is powerful, as Luther once said, this is the gospel in a nutshell: "For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish, but may have eternal." John, chapter 3, verse 16.

When Jesus (God in the flesh) said those words, when Jesus Himself said, that "God so loved the world", meaning that, God loves all of us. He has a place, a plan and a purpose for each and every one of us.

God has a plan for everyone and everything. But the sum result is, when all is said and done, it is God that is still loving us, long before we ourselves, realized we needed a Savior.

Long before we realized who Jesus Christ was, long before we realized, what Christ Jesus can do for us, when we give ourselves to Him. That's the joy that comes out of being blessed.

God is love, God says that He is here for you. Do you want to see God fellow Christians, then let Christ be seen through you. Let Christ be seen through your words. Let Christ be seen through your actions.

For instance, care for people, serve one another, pray for one another, bear one another's burdens, work to build up the Body of Christ here and now. Be an example of Christ towards others.

Ask God for forgiveness, repent of your sins, be set free from that which keeps you from being the person, God wants you to be, let God use you to be His faithful instrument in the world.

Jesus said: "For God so loved the world", meaning that God is not doing the work of love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, and justice all by Himself.

God uses people, God uses everyday, ordinary people just like you and me, God uses our spouses, our friends, our children, and all of us in here, to encourage one another, lift up one another, bear the burdens of those who are hurting, and to build up the Body of Christ.

As believers in the Body of Christ, through faith in Christ, we are anchored to God's Word. Through that Word, we are anchored to His hope, His peace, His joy, His grace, and His justification.

The prophet Jeremiah wrote: “For surely I know the plans for your welfare and not for harm, to give you a future with hope.” (Jeremiah chapter 29, verse 11)

Those plans have not faded. The same God, who was here before you and I were even born, is the same God, yesterday, today and tomorrow.

That does not end, nor does it change. God has a place for you, God has hopes for you, and God wants the best for you.

Jesus said in Matthew’s Gospel: “You are the salt of the earth; You are the light of the world.” (that is from Chapter 5 verse 13)

Jesus didn’t say those things to hear himself talk, Jesus said those things because He meant it. God wants you and I to reach out to those who are hurting and speak God’s Word of love, to bring about healing.

God wants you and I to reach out to those who are living in darkness and speak God’s Word of light and truth to them, to save them from an eternity of darkness.

God has poured out, and will continue to pour out His blessings upon you and I, but these blessings don’t mean that we are free from discouragement, or pain, or hardship, or the trials of life that will come our way.

To be blessed, means simply that in the midst of life’s chaos, confusion, and when your world is falling apart, God is still with you, He has not left you, or forsaken you.

When the enemy (that would be the devil) throws everything he can at you, to try and get you to renounce your faith and to give up, God is there, and God still continues to be there for you, to love you, encourage you, affirm you, and point you away from the world and to look toward the cross of Christ.

Jesus said: “For God so loved the world.” That is the hope we hang on to. God gave His one and only begotten Son, for the sake of this sinful, fallen and broken world.

God gave His Son, so that we would not be lost for all eternity, because nothing is free. Something had to give. God will save you, His Son has paid the price for our sin, our rebellion. He has saved you by His grace.

God has a way of making things right, God has a way of redeeming all, God has a way of loving His people. God has a way of encouraging us, His crown of creation.

God has made us, we were created in His image. God has created our souls, our bodies, our gifts, our talents, and all that we are.

So what does this mean? Never forget, God has care for you, God has compassion for you, and God has love for you.

He knows your failings, He knows your mistakes, He knows what gets you down, He knows you have missed the mark and He knows that you have fallen short.

As a close out the message for today, “For God so loved the world, that He gave His only Son, so that everyone who believes in him, may not perish, but may have eternal life.”

Folks, that life does not end, through faith in Christ, when all is said and done in this world, you and I will not be cast aside, but we will receive that crown of glory in God’s eternal Kingdom. Amen.

Let us pray:

Heavenly Father, We come before You this day, thanking You for your love, your encouragement, for the hope that You give us, as we face a world that is hostile to You and to your message of hope found in Christ. As we continue our Lenten journey, give us the strength, the courage, and the compassion to share the love of Christ with those who do not know Him as Lord and Savior. All these things we humbly pray, in the name of the Father and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. AMEN.