



Sermon

'The Son of Man Lifted Up'

Year B 2018 Lent 3



I don't know about you, but here at Saint Peter's, of all the stain glass windows that are here, the one to which I find my eyes most drawn to, is the one depicting the crucifixion of Christ, in the eastern window behind you. Jesus is the Son of Man lifted up. In him is eternal life.

In the Old Testament, God lifted up a bronze serpent on a pole, and all who looked up to it, lived. Now, in the New, God lifted up Jesus Christ on a pole, and all who look up to it, after their death, will live.

'For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may have eternal life.'

Jesus is the Son of Man lifted up. In him is eternal life. For all who choose to follow, in their earthly life, in his way. The way of the cross.

Says one writer, 'The central point is the complete obedience of Jesus to the Father. This theme, stressed again and again, alone makes possible the revealing of God which takes place in his ministry.'

In Lent we are reminded of the meaning of repentance. From the Greek word, *metanoia*, it means, to turn around completely. To stop what you were doing before, to turn around completely, and to begin again, this time in the opposite direction. It explains the inner meaning of our baptism – in which we are called to die to our selves, that we may live to God alone.

This is the invitation of Lent. To choose life. To choose, along with the church in Ephesus, the way of Jesus Christ. The way of life that leads to eternal life. The invitation of the Apostle Paul this morning

To live in the way of Jesus Christ, to live a life under the sign of the cross, is to reveal in one's life, the glory of God. The glory of God, to a world in need of him.

A revelation of the glory of God, it is a revelation of the glory of God who in eternity is one God, in three persons. In which the second person, the Son, in eternity gives glory to God. An eternal life of the Godhead, now revealed in Jesus of Nazareth, the Son of God.

In a world of disobedience, under the sway of temptation, centrally the temptation of political sovereignty, the temptation, to have the power of God, Jesus lived his earthly life in singular obedience to the will of God. Even to the point of an agonising, a humiliating, a demoralising, death on the cross. As a final refusal, to take into himself, to take for himself, the glory that belongs to God alone.

The Son of Man lifted up. In him there is eternal life. For all who follow him, who imitate his life of complete obedience to God, they, too, God will raise up on the last day. And receive them in eternal life.

The title the Son of Man comes from the Jewish apocalyptic literature. Where, in the book of Daniel, there would one day come ‘one like a Son of Man upon the clouds of heaven’. In the midst of the ongoing merely human kingdoms of the world, there will come one day the Son of Man. In him will be the kingdom of God himself. In him there will be executed, the divine salvation, and the divine judgment, of the world.

‘And this is the judgment, that the light has come into the world, and people loved darkness rather than light because their deeds were evil. For all who do evil hate the light and do not come to the light, so that their deeds may not be exposed. But those who do what is true come to the light, so that it may be clearly seen that their deeds have been done in God.’

According to the famous Johannine commentator, C. K. Barrett.

‘None of the Synoptic Gospels presents a developed and systematic Christology...It was intolerable..that the person of Christ remain undefined ...’

John goes much further than the synoptic tradition in his presentation of the person and work of Jesus Christ (John 21.24). An evangelist, his purpose in writing is that people might come to believe that Jesus is the Christ, and through believing to have eternal life in his name.

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Jesus is the Son of Man lifted up. In him there is eternal life. For all who follow him, who imitate, in their earthly lives, his way: the way of faithful obedience to God; his way of the cross.

The Lord be with you