

CHRISTIAN EDUCATION DEPARTMENT

A Devotion During This Time of the Coronavirus Pandemic Fourth Sunday in Lent, March 14, 2021

Look Up!

John 3:14-21

3:14 And just as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of Man be lifted up,

3:15 that whoever believes in him may have eternal life.

3:16 "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.

3:17 "Indeed, God did not send the Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him.

3:18 Those who believe in him are not condemned; but those who do not believe are condemned already, because they have not believed in the name of the only Son of God.

3:19 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.

3:20 For all who do evil hate the light and do not come to the light, so that their deeds may not be exposed.

3:21 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."

The young people were a bit scattered and unfocused and were not making much progress on their common task. Then with authority and care combined, the scout den mother commanded, "Look up!" And they all did. Somehow that change in posture changed everything else. Some folks more cautious or more concerned about appearances might have advised otherwise lest others might perceive that the young people thought more highly of themselves than they ought; but, the den mother's constant refrain was, "Look up! Hold your heads up!" In a society that wanted black heads bowed, young and old, she wanted them to have an alternative posture as they worked together to achieve their common goals.

In Numbers, the grumbling, ingratitude, and lack of faith of the Israelites costed lives; but, when they turned in repentance, God instructed Moses to make a bronze serpent and place it on a pole so that when anyone bitten by serpents would look up at this symbol, they would be healed.

The world has endured a wilderness experience for over a year. Lives have been threatened; and, many have been lost. Some have almost given up. Others have looked up; and the change in posture has changed outlooks and perspective.

We are called to look up. This time not to a serpent but to a savior. We are reminded that God loves the world. In a time when divisions are pronounced, chasms are wide, and unity feels near impossible, we do well to remember the nature of God's love. God's love is larger, deeper, and wider than we can imagine and sometimes care to remember. God's love is not limited to me or mine or those who think, believe, live, and love like me. God so loved the world. Because of that love, God gave God's son, Jesus, as healer and savior of the world. He was raised high on a cross. What wondrous love is this, O, my soul? Look up! It is a prayer posture, Look up! It is a posture of thanks and praise. Look up! Look to Jesus now and live!

TALK: Take a moment to be silent, reflect, and share (write down)—Reflecting on the scripture, share a time/instance when looking up to Jesus changed your perspective or outlook of the situation?

PRAY:

Gracious God,

For the healing of the nation, you raised up your son on the wood of the cross and exalted him as Lord of all creation. For this we give you thanks. AMEN

This week is the National Week of Prayer for the Healing of AIDS (USA) March 7-14, 2021

For more information: <https://www.balmingilead.org/nwpha/>

ACT:

1. Based on your reflections from the TALK section, who do you know who needs to be encouraged to look up? Encourage them to do so today. In this Lenten Season, do what you can to protect the health of others and yourself by practicing social distancing as much as possible, washing your hands often, and wearing face covering to help prevent the spread of COVID-19—See: <http://www.amechealth.org>.

2. See also the activity that accompanies this devotion.

3. 2021 Liberation and Unity Lenten Devotional: <https://www.amazon.com/LIBERATION-UNITY-Lenten-Devotional-Meditation-ebook/dp/B08TGHQ3TX/ref=sr/1/1?crd=2PZK8J6YGY2LB&dchild=1&keywords=2021+lente+n+devotional+liberation+and+unity&qid=1612922064&srefix=2021+liberation+and+unity,aps,159&sr=8-1>

Song:

I've a Message from the Lord
AMEC Hymnal, #215

1. I've a mes-sage from the Lord, Hal-le-lu-jah!
The mes-sage un-to you I'll give;

'Tis re-cord-ed in His word, Hal-le-lu-jah!
It is on-ly that you "look and live."

Refrain:

*"Look and live," ("Look and live," my broth-er/sis-ter, live, "Look and live,")
Look to Je-sus now and live;
'Tis re-cord-ed in His word, Hal-le-lu-jah! It is on-ly that you "look and live."*

2. I've a mes-sage full of love, Hal-le-lu-jah!
A mes-sage, O my friend, for you;
Tis a mes-sage from a-bove, Hal-le-lu-jah!
Je-sus said it, and I know 'tis true.

Refrain

3. Life is of-fered un-to you, Hal-le-lu-jah!
E-ter-nal life thy soul shall have,
If you'll on-ly look to Him, Hal-le-lu-jah!
Look to Je-sus, who a-lone can save.

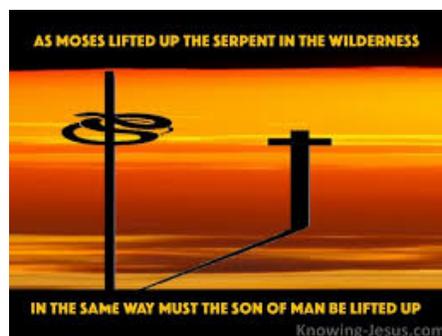
Refrain

4. I will tell you how I came, Hal-le-lu-jah!
To Je-sus when He made me whole;
'Twas be-liev-ing on His name, Hal-le-lu-jah!
I trust-ed, and He saved my soul.

Refrain

Physical space—You may wish to create a dedicated space for your time of devotion. You may choose to place a candle, bible, and special symbols or material/fabric to help you focus and center during this time of reflection and prayer.

If you use this meditation and exercise in a time of family or group devotion, share in the leadership; allow different persons to read or lead different parts of this meditation.



The Christian Education Department will continue to develop resources that can be used as times of personal and collective devotion and study during this pandemic to help us all sustain and strengthen our faith and resolve.