

24 February 2010
Lent 1 Midweek

St. Athanasius Lutheran Church
Vienna, VA

Jesu Juva

“Snakes, Water, and Blood”

Text: Exodus 7:1-25; 1 John 5:1-12; Passion Harmony, Part 1

When Adam and Eve ate the forbidden fruit in the Garden of Eden, it was a meal never finished. They did not eat the fruit, fill their bellies, and rest satisfied. They started a meal they could never finish. For sin is never satisfied. When you swallow it, you always want more. With sin, a little is never enough. For sin always leaves you empty, not full. It does not satisfy your desires, but always makes you hungry for more. Tiger Woods and Bernie Madoff are perhaps two more recent notorious examples. But it is not only them, but you and me as well. For in truth, when we indulge in sin, it is really sin that swallows us.

That's what happened that day in the Garden of Eden. Adam and Eve were not really the swallows, but the swallowed. They were consumed by sin, death, and the devil, and it was a meal never finished. Our enemy is never satisfied, but keeps coming back for more. For the young and the old, for the rich and the poor. And so sin continues to bite and devour - why are we surprised when it does? And if you want job security, the funeral business is the place to be. For there will never be enough graves or rooms in hell to satisfy the hunger of that slithering serpent of sin.

So it is significant that the story of God's deliverance of His people from Egypt begins with what? *Swallowing*. And what is swallowed? *Serpents*. For what is happening here in Egypt is not just God rescuing His people from their slavery, but is giving us a picture and a foreshadowing of God's ultimate deliverance - when on the cross, Jesus would turn the tables on satan.

For when satan took the fruit of the tree of the cross and sank his teeth into that tasty treat, it was a meal he never finished. Instead, the consumer was consumed, as Jesus used satan's own weapon - death - against him. So that, just as Moses' rod-turned-serpent swallowed up the serpents of the Egyptian magicians and their satanic arts, so Jesus swallowed up sin, death, and the devil with the victory of His death and resurrection. So that just as when the people of Israel left Egypt, when our Lord left the tomb, He led us out to freedom and life.

But as you know, it was not an easy deliverance. Neither Pharaoh nor satan will go quietly into that good night. Pharaoh cares not for the supremacy of Moses' serpent, but hardens his heart. And so comes the first plague: the life-giving waters of the Nile are turned to blood. But not only is this a miracle to show us the power of

God, but we are reminded that it is by the water and the blood that flowed from the side of Jesus on the cross that we are delivered from our bondage. The life-giving waters of Holy Baptism give us life as children of God, and the blood of our Lord's Holy Supper gives us the life of the Son of God through the forgiveness of our sin. And our Saviour bids us not to harden our hearts, like Pharaoh, but to hear the Word of the Lord and repent. And repenting of our sins and turning to our Lord in faith, we receive - as St. John told us tonight - the victory that has overcome the world. The victory of Christ.

And so during this season of Lent, as we ponder the work of our Lord Jesus for us and for our salvation, it is good to consider what is consuming you, and what you are consuming that does not satisfy, and repent of these things. Repent, and instead of swallowing the lies of Satan and craving the things of this world, to swallow the Word of God made flesh. To eat His body and drink His blood, and so receive His victory and life. For then we are swallowing what fills us and satisfies our greatest need. That we hunger and thirst no more, but live as the people God created us to be.

In the Name of the Father and of the (+) Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Office Hymn: "Lord, You Are Our Deliverer"
Tune: King's Lynn (LSB #517)

- 1 Lord, You are our Deliverer,
our only hope and stay
against our cruel oppressor
when we in bondage lay.
You came in meekness lowly
to crush the serpent's head,
to free us from our slavery
and raise to life the dead.

- 2 The rod of Aaron shows us
how You would swallow death.
The blood flowed as a river
the Pharaoh's heart to test.
Upon the cross extended
we see Your heart of love,
and blood and water flowing forth
give the life of heav'n above.

3 Then homage let us give to God,
the Father, Spirit, Son.
The same today and ever,
th'eternal Three in One.
Who saved us from our Egypt
and slavery to sin,
that we may live in freedom
and heaven for us win.