

10 March 2010
Lent 3 Midweek

St. Athanasius Lutheran Church
Greenspring Village, Springfield, VA

Jesu Juva

“Flies, Pestilence, and Boils”

Text: Exodus 8:20-9:12; 2 Peter 2:1-10a; Passion Harmony, Part 3

In the Scriptures, a three day journey is never *just* a three day journey. When you hear those words - whether in the reading we heard tonight, or in other places in the Scriptures - your mind should immediately think of the three day journey of our Saviour through death and the grave. That three day journey delivered us from our bondage to sin and set us free to worship the Lord. And so it would be with the people of Israel.

That is why when Pharaoh tried to negotiate with Moses - and so with God - to let them worship first, in the land, and then second, not very far away, Moses said “No deal!” For there is no substitute for this three day journey; no compromise; no “part of the way is better than none of the way.” Either you are delivered and set free by God your Saviour, or you are still in bondage to sin.

The good news is that you *have* taken that three day journey to freedom, on the day when you were baptized. For in baptism, you are joined to Jesus and His three day death and resurrection journey, and set free in the forgiveness of your sins. And free you are: free to live, free to worship, free to serve. No matter how the devil may rage and fight, he cannot have you.

But Pharaoh hasn’t learned that lesson yet. He continues to harden his heart and try to hold God’s people captive. He will not win. He cannot win. But he is going to fight - like the devil - to the bitter end. And so great swarms of flies come upon them, robbing them of peace with their constant buzzing and biting. The livestock of Egypt is struck down with a severe plague, taking away their food, their wealth, their strength, and their sacrifices. And then all the people of Egypt are afflicted with painful boils, removing from them any chance to help themselves. The magicians cannot even stand before Moses.

And as if all that wasn’t enough, though all this has befallen Egypt, nothing - absolutely none of it - has come upon God’s people. God has preserved His people in safety and peace. A demonstration of His might. A demonstration of His love. It is as Peter spoke to us tonight: **“the Lord knows how to rescue the godly from trials.”** He has done so from the beginning, and will do so until the end.

Though it may not always seem so. It may not seem so when you are going through

sorrow and trouble and pain. When it seems as if the Egyptians are winning. But do not be fooled, and do not harden your heart - God is at work, in you, for you, and through you, accomplishing His good and gracious will, to deliver you. For as He has made you His child, He will watch over you and bring you to Himself.

For only He can do it. Israel could not free herself, and neither can you. The grip of sin and death is too strong. But Jesus came to do what we could not. To go to the cross and have all the plagues of sin that we deserve heaped upon Him, and to die. That in His death, the wages of our sin be paid. The wages of you and me and all people - none excepted. For God wants all people to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth (1 Timothy 2:4). All people, no matter who they are - even Pharaoh, even Judas, even you and me. So great His love.

And so He goes to the cross to lay down His life. For there is no negotiating with God. He must drink this cup for you and me. He must take this three day journey for you and me. He must be betrayed into the hands of sinners for sinners, and die a sinners death. For there is no other way to set us free. And so Jesus goes, willingly. A demonstration of His might. A demonstration of His love.

And so during this season of Lent, as we ponder the work of our Lord Jesus for us and for our salvation, see in His bondage your freedom; in His death, your life; and in His sacrifice, your salvation. For in Him, your journey is complete. And when you finally lie down in the sleep of death, you will awaken in the joy of heaven.

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 Forth on a three-day journey
was Israel to go.
Three days unto the mountain
of God, His love to show.

But only when our Saviour
spent three days in the tomb,
were we set free from bondage,
from judgment, and from doom.

- 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.