

# WEEKLY SERMON

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## Show to others the generosity, gift and grace of God

### Sermon – John 3.1-17 (Lent 2)

***Jesus said, 'Just as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of Man be lifted up, that whoever believes in him may have eternal life.'*** (John 3.14-15)

Last October I was standing on the summit of Mount Nebo in Jordan, with a group of pilgrims from the diocese and beyond, looking out across the Jordan valley to the promised land.

As we took in the last view which Moses saw before he died, we gazed up at a beautiful metal sculpture inspired by these words from John's Gospel.

It picks up the story recorded in Numbers 21.8-9, where a bronze serpent was set up in the middle of the camp, so that any Israelite bitten by a serpent only had to look to the bronze serpent to be healed and saved from death. The sculptor has depicted the serpent on a pole in such a way as to evoke Jesus hanging on the cross.

Jesus' words were spoken to Nicodemus, a wise and sympathetic Jewish leader, who came to see him by night. Jesus clearly saw the bronze serpent as foreshadowing how his being lifted high on a cross would bring healing and life to all who looked to him.



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He begins this private conversation in the cool of the evening by telling the respected rabbi that if he is to see the kingdom of God he needs to be born all over again 'from above'.

Since the time of Jesus many people who have been converted to Christ in their adult years have described the experience as being like 'being born again'. I rejoice in the vivid reality of their experience, even though my coming to Christ happened so young that I cannot remember life without Christ.

Jesus' words to Nicodemus remind me that the precious life I have in Christ is a gift from a loving God, given at great personal cost. The most famous verse in the Bible, which follows next (v.16) speaks of the generosity, gift and grace of God: 'For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but have eternal life.'

As we respond to God's generous gift, let's ask ourselves each evening as we journey through Lent, 'Have I lived this day in such a way as to show to others the generosity, gift and grace of God? Have I been **generous** to someone in need? Have I given anything away as a **gift**? Have I treated anyone with **grace** today who has been hostile to me?

**Mark Ireland, Archdeacon of Blackburn**