



CAYMAN ISLANDS REGIONAL MISSION COUNCIL

WEEKLY UPDATE

March 10, 2021

VOLUME 6 ISSUE 10

UCJCI 42nd SYNOD THEME 2021 – Rooted, Resilient: Responding in HOPE (Health, Opportunity, Peace, Evangelism)

The Way of Healing

by Rev. Otto Menko

Please read Numbers 21:4-9

One of the deadliest natural poisons known to humankind is the venom of a snake called Black Mamba. The Black Mamba lives in Africa. According to records, the bite of the Black Mamba first feels almost nothing, just a slight sting. The sensation soon turns into a tingling. So far, so good, we may say. After all, a slight sting and tingling is not the end of the world. Unfortunately, it is just the beginning of a very swift end for many. Within less than a minute, the special chemical compound of the venom travels through the bloodstream in the entire body and begins to exert its power. By attacking the central nervous system, it shuts it down in just a few minutes, leading to paralysis, convulsions, and death by suffocation.

In times of old, people had no knowledge of such a thing as an antiserum, which is derived from the very same venom that causes the problem in the first place, and so being bitten by a venomous snake meant the end of the story for the unfortunate.

The Scripture passage in Numbers 21:4-9 tells about an incident in the desert, during the journey of the people of Israel from Egypt to Canaan. The people became impatient and began to grumble and complain against God and Moses. They said, *“Why have you brought us up out of Egypt, to die in the wilderness? There is no bread! There is no water! And we detest this miserable food [manna]!”* These were serious complaints and in effect, hidden accusations against both God and Moses. The momentary hardships that they experienced during their journey led them to believe that God and Moses did not care about them. They were looking at their immediate situation and lost sight of the bigger picture: God saved them, entered into a covenantal relationship with them, is leading them, and taking them to the Promised Land.

In response to their rebellion the *“Lord sent venomous snakes among them”*, in essence, withdrew divine protection from them – of which they were completely oblivious prior to this. As a result, many Israelites died from snake bites. Psalm 107, composed hundreds of years later reflects on this entire story and says in v.17, *“Some became fools through their rebellious ways and suffered affliction because of their iniquities.”*

This tragic outcome made the Israelites realize that God had been protecting them all along and they were foolish to assume that God didn't care. They came to Moses in repentance saying, *“We sinned when we spoke against the Lord and against you. Pray that the Lord will take the snakes away from us.”* As Psalm 17:19 puts it, *“Then they cried to the Lord in their trouble, and God saved them from their distress.”*

Moses prayed for them and received instructions from God to make a bronze snake and display it in the camp on a pole so that those who were bitten could look upon it and be healed. As the Scripture says, *“...when anyone was bitten by a snake and looked at the bronze snake, they lived” (Num. 21:9).*



The source of their healing in the desert that brought the cure was not the bronze snake itself, though. That edifice didn't have any magical power, nor some special mysterious force emanating from it. It was merely a sign. A sign giving assurance of a very present help, a guarantee of God's goodness and mercy in a world, where death was lurking not only physically, behind any bush or under any rock, but also spiritually, behind their disbelief, lack of trust and arrogance.

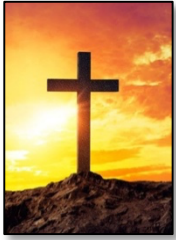
The source of their healing was God and the only way to access God's restoring power was through faith, by believing that if they looked upon that bronze snake on the pole, they would be healed. **Faith** was the key element in the process of their healing.

(Unfortunately, the bronze snake indeed became an idol, an object of worship, and was later set up in Jerusalem. When Hezekiah came to the throne and became King of Judea six hundred years later, he ordered the removal and destruction of the bronze snake. (2 Kings 18:4))

It is important to note that the snakes remained for the rest of the journey to the Promised Land. They became poignant reminders of their rebellion against God, of how fickle and small-minded they were, and of how brazenly they turned against the One who saved them from bondage. The bronze serpent on a pole also became part of their daily existence, of their lives, as a reminder of God's goodness, love, and care, as a sign of healing and restoration. No wonder, that Psalm 107:1.21 called everyone to *“Give thanks to the Lord, for he is good; his love endures forever. 21 Let them give thanks to the*

Lord for his unfailing love and his wonderful deeds for mankind”.

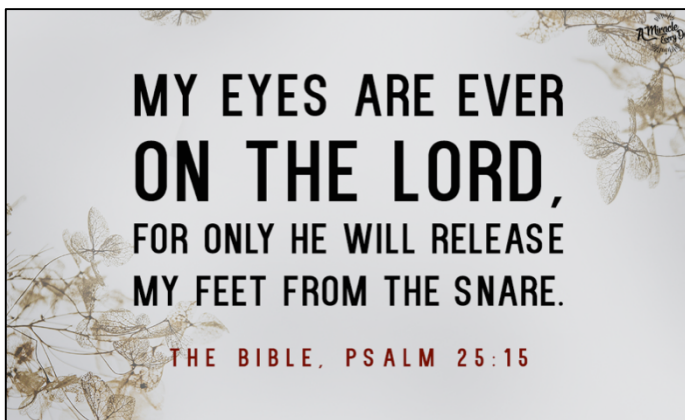
This story – and all the others recorded in the Old Testament – were recalled and retold by the people of Israel throughout their history, from generation to generation. The gospel of John tells us that well over a thousand years later, one evening, a member of the Jewish high council, the Sanhedrin, went to see Jesus. His name was Nicodemus. At some point during their conversation Jesus made a statement about Himself and His mission by referring to the bronze serpent in our story. He said to Nicodemus, “Just as Moses lifted up the snake in the wilderness, so the Son of Man must be lifted up, that everyone who believes may have eternal life in him.” (John 3:14-15)



Jesus drew a direct line, a link, between the image of the bronze snake on the pole and His crucified body on the Cross as He presented the gospel in a nutshell: “For God so loved the world that he gave His one and only Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish but have eternal life”. (John 3:16)

Just like the bronze snake on the pole didn't have any magical, mysterious power, neither does the Cross. It is a sign, an emblem, pointing to the depth of God's love towards us, to the length God was willing to go to save us. The only way to access our salvation is by repentance and faith, by reaching out and placing our trust in God, through Jesus Christ. As Eph. 2:8 says, “For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith— and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God.”

Poisonous snakes are still around, literally, they can be found in many parts of the world. They are also around figuratively, in many forms. Time and time again we are bitten by them, we lose faith, we follow our own ways, or we are beset by hardships of many kinds - but even if we are not – we are reminded by the Scriptures that we are loved by God, and as Hebrews 12:2 says, we must “fix our eyes on Jesus, the author, and finisher of our faith”.



(image: Jesus.net)



International Women's Day

Monday, March 8, 2021, marked the International Women's Day (IWD), a global **celebration** of the social, economic, cultural and political achievements of women.

In addition to the celebration the day also served as a call to action for raising **awareness** of the presence of gender-based violence, abuse, exploitation, open or disguised harassment, disenfranchisement and other forms of mistreatment directed against women of all ages, backgrounds and cultures, and as a call to challenge the still wide-spread biases, stereotypes and practices limiting gender parity. This year's campaign theme for International Women's Day was '**Choose to Challenge**'.

“A challenged world is an alert world and from challenge comes change. So let's all choose to challenge. We can all choose to seek out and celebrate women's achievements. We can all choose to challenge and call out gender bias and inequality. Collectively, we can all help create an inclusive world. From challenge comes change, so let's all choose to challenge.”

(<https://www.internationalwomensday.com/Theme>)

We acknowledge and salute the tremendous contributions that women make in our lives, families, in wider society and last but not least in our churches. We also commit ourselves to journey with them together with a transformed and renewed mind and heart, to be partners in changing harmful and outdated perceptions and practices where they still exist either within or without.

UPCOMING EVENTS

March 13. (Saturday)

Lay Leaders Certificate Course Day 3/13 – via Zoom

March 14. (Sunday) 4th Sunday of Lent

Girls' Brigade Week begins

March 15. (Monday)

CIRMC Council Executive Meeting – via Zoom

March 20. (Saturday)

Girls' Brigade Day Camp – Prospect Youth Centre
Pre-Synod Council Meeting – 9:00 am – via Zoom



on Radio Cayman 89.9
every Sunday at 7:45 am

March 14, 2021
Rev. Otto Menko

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LAY LEADERS CERTIFICATE COURSE

UCJCI Lay Training Institute

in collaboration with

The International University of the Caribbean

MODULE 1

PRESENTS:

**THE LEADER AS
EVANGELIST, DISCIPLE-MAKER
AND MENTOR**

March 13, 2021 9:00 am – 4:00 pm
Via Zoom

LECTURER:

Rev. Sylvan Hinds

Minister (Shortwood United Church)

If you are interested in this topic, you can audit it without being registered. For further information and Zoom link please contact cirmc.info@gmail.com or 947-1963

The United Church in Jamaica and the Cayman Islands
Cayman Islands Regional Mission Council



*Service
for Candidates
in the 2021 General Election*

Sunday, March 21, 2021

Time: 4:00pm

Location: Elmslie Memorial United Church



UNITED CHURCH IN JAMAICA AND THE CAYMAN ISLANDS

CAYMAN ISLANDS REGIONAL MISSION COUNCIL

**CHILDREN & YOUTH
SYNODICAL
RALLY!**



SUNDAY,
MARCH 28, 2021
Savannah United Church
5:00pm to 7:00pm

Refreshments will be provided



United Church in Jamaica
and the Cayman Islands

THE
42nd

SYNOD

April 11 - 18, 2021
- via Zoom -

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