

No turning back

Notes on the Bible readings

- In the Gospel reading, Jesus is challenged by Nicodemus, a learned Pharisee, who would have understood Jesus' reference to Moses lifting up the serpent in the desert (Numbers 21.4-9). Jesus draws a parallel between this Old Testament episode, in which the bronze serpent offers salvation to the Israelites, and his own forthcoming 'lifting up' on the cross, which will bring salvation to humankind.

- The serpent incident is one of many similar moments along the Israelites' prolonged journey to freedom. Whenever faced with difficulties or obstacles, God's people grumbled and complained, failing to give thanks for God's unfailing faithfulness to them. On this occasion, God punishes them with a plague of poisonous serpents which bite and kill people. But God acts to save them in response to Moses' prayer.

- Light and darkness are common themes in John's Gospel. The light that comes into the world through Jesus brings judgement (v.19), and those who do evil deeds hide them in the darkness. Jesus offers Nicodemus, and us too, an invitation and a challenge to leave behind our life in the darkness, to accept God's gift to live in the light and to reflect that by doing good in the world (v.21).

- The Ephesians passage reminds us that by grace, God's gift of salvation has always been available to us (v.8), just as it was to the Israelites in the desert, if we choose to step out of the darkness and into the light.

For reflection and comment linking this week's Bible reading to the news, current issues and events, go to www.rootsontheweb.com and click on PostScript.



Questions for reflection

- ▶ How does this picture make you feel?
- ▶ How might God bring light into your life?
- ▶ How can you share his light with others?



A prayer of thanks and praise

*We give thanks to you, O Lord,
whose goodness extends to the ends of the earth,
whose love endures till the end of time.
We give praise to you, O God,
who gathers us from the four corners of the world,
from the north and from the south,
from the east and from the west.
Let all people come together to worship you.
Amen.*

A personal prayer

*Take time to read through Ephesians 2.1-10 meditatively.
Focus particularly on verses 8 to 10.
Read them, then pause, then read them aloud but changing the words 'us', 'we' and 'our' to 'me', 'I' and 'my'.
Let these words speak to you.*

A prayer for the week

*God so loved the world that he sent his only Son.
Christ so loved the world that he sent the Holy Spirit.
The Holy Spirit so loves the world that she sends us out in love,
to love and to be loved –
there is no greater calling.
Amen.*

Live your faith

Find something that you can do as an individual to make life easier for a refugee – and do it!