

Pastor Jordan Gades Sermon 3.14.21 Numbers 21:4-9 Ephesians 2:1-10 John 3:14-21

Grace and peace be to you from God our father and our Lord Jesus Christ Amen.

How many of you know the story of St Patrick? How does his fit in with today's readings? Whether you believe it or not, Snakes play a big role in his story. Sure, he preached the gospel and converted Ireland and had a great analogy with the 3-leaf shamrock and God, but did you know that St Patrick as miracle got rid of all the snakes in Ireland? And to this not one has returned? Sure, that miracle was made just a tiny bit easier by the fact that there probably weren't any snakes in Ireland and its climate makes in almost impossible for snakes to live there, but we don't know if there were snakes before he banished them. So, thank you St Patrick.

No there really is a lot more to his story. That we are going to see echoes of in our scripture readings. In his early life he wasn't a Christian. Didn't believe in god or God's power at all. We saw that in the people of Israel, again they in the wilderness and doubting God, and then, because of this doubting, a whole bunch of snakes come out and bite a whole bunch of people. It's really a shame that st patty wasn't there then, his whole snake shtick could have really helped out there.

But as a young man st patty was living in great Britain and gets kidnapped by Irish pirates and becomes a slave for a few years. Finally escapes, travels hundreds of miles, gets a ship back to England, and decides you know what, God protected me and kept me safe. Quite the change of attitude. Much like our Israelite friends in exodus. Oh Moses, isn't God supposed to help us? And of course, God does.

St patty decided to become a monk, then priest and receives a vision that he's supposed to go back to Ireland and spread Christianity.

Moses is told by God, "ok I'll help since my people asked so nicely" Grab a stick, put a bronze snake on it and if the people look up at it they'll be healed and they'll know I'm their God.

St Patty succeeds. Performs his miracles and Ireland becomes Christian.

Moses does as he is told; the miracle happens and the people are healed.

Those are great stories that show us the ultimate power and effect of God on normal people's lives. That's really who Moses and st Patrick were. They were normal people living their normal lives until God gave the tap on the shoulder and said ready or not your up.

I think that is one of the scariest parts of being a Christian nowadays. We don't face persecution in the US. We might not feel comfortable sharing our faith but no one is hunting us down because of it. And we are blessed in that. So, the scariest part becomes we God sends us into action.

And God always sends us in action. This really gets us into the meat and potatoes of today, What Paul had to say to the people of Ephesus 2000 years ago and what God is saying to us today.

8 For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God— 9 not by works, so that no one can boast. 10 For we are God’s handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.

Good work. Good work. Moses had good work to do. St patty had good work to do. You have good work to do. It's a shame it's not written as easy work or little work, but it's good work still.

What good work have you been invited into this week because you have been invited to do this good work for our God. Not because we have to but because we know the Good work our savior, our Christ has done, and we follow that example as Christians.

I’ll ask again, what good work have you been invited into this week because you have been invited to do this good work for our God. Was it as a part of your vocation, was it as a leader, was it as a follower? Where you walking down the halls of your school or when you were walking the halls of your house. Was it when you were outside amongst Creation? Was it when you saw the pain in someone's heart. There is so much good work for us to do.

It’s time for us to look up and do this work that has been set before us. It’s time for us to do the small things, the big things, the things we know we should be doing. We become so blind by focusing on only ourselves and our own worries. And possibly even worse We become consumed by judging and try to control other actions when we don’t see them doing what we think they ought to be doing.

But when we look at the great leaders and human beings, such as Moses, Such as St Patrick, we see people willing to work hard doing the good work that is set before them. We see leaders who are willing to work for the good of all. This is shown to perfection in Jesus Christ. He worked through his entire life showing grace and compassion to all around him, never worrying about what they could do, for him, for themselves, or anyone else. And that is model we can follow and strive for as we do our good wrok. Amen.