

Sermon followed by Service

July 21, 2024

Daniel 5

Let's set the table. You're at the palace of the king! King Belshazzar - king of the Babylonian Empire - has invited you and a thousand of his nobles to party with him in his palace. The wine is flowing; it's time to party. What's the occasion? It's October 11, 539 BC. Your biggest rival in the Middle-East, the Persian Empire has been knocking off kingdoms one after another, from Iran all the way into Greece. King Cyrus has decided: "you're next." Just days earlier, just days and miles away, an army of the Medes and Persians has ... what? ... whooped your Babylonian army, and now they are on the way to take Babylon, where Belshazzar, king of Babylon, has decided: "it's time to party!"

*How do you see people doing the same thing today?
How might we fall into that same trap?*

Sounds crazy, doesn't it? What was Belshazzar thinking? Did he think that somehow his army would pull it together and stop the Persians? Did he think that Fortress Babylon would be able to stand against the Persians? Did he think his gods would come through for him? Was he in some great state of denial - "we can beat this"? Or a state of defeat - "Eat, drink, and be merry, for tomorrow we may die"? And if that's what Belshazzar was thinking - "Eat, drink, and be merry, for tomorrow we may die" - that's just another state of denial - a party can make things better; getting drunk can make things better. Even before "the writing was on the wall," Belshazzar should have known he was in trouble. Even more than that, Belshazzar should have known - he needed God on his side.

Instead, what did he do? Tasting the wine, Belshazzar called for the gold and silver goblets Nebuchadnezzar had taken from God's temple in Jerusalem. He would show what he thought of the God of Jerusalem. And drinking together, Belshazzar and his nobles, his wives and concubines praised the gods of gold and silver, bronze, iron, wood, and stone. And so they dared God to step in and stop them.

How do you see your world living edgy, sharpening their edge against God?

When do you see yourselves sharpening your edge against God?

And that is exactly what God did. Just like that, a hand appears writing on the wall. Big, bold Belshazzar's face turns pale; his hips let loose; his knees are knocking. He calls for his "wise" men, his enchanters and diviners: "Tell me what it says; tell me what it means." But nobody can read it; nobody has an answer, until Daniel is called.

Daniel must be pushing 80 years old. He's brought in to the panicked party room. Belshazzar repeats his need, his offer: "If you can read this, if you can tell me what it means, I'll make you the third highest ranking ruler in the land." Daniel's not impressed. He skips the niceties that he'd share with Nebuchadnezzar. I'll give you the short version of what Daniel tells the king: "You should have known better. You knew what God did to Nebuchadnezzar, how God humbled him. You knew what God did for Nebuchadnezzar, how God raised him up. You should have known to humble yourselves before God. In fact, you did know better, but instead of humbling yourself before God, you set yourself against God, and praised made-up gods instead of the God who holds your life in his hand."

"You should have known better."

What is our typical response to that charge?

What is a healthy response to that charge?

So now what? For Belshazzar, the writing was on the wall - in the form of a riddle - three words in the Aramaic - "Mene, tekem, and parsin." What did it mean? Belshazzar's people couldn't even read the riddle. [We'll talk about that in BC.] And since they couldn't even read the riddle, they sure couldn't interpret it. But Daniel could. Three words. Daniel repeats the first word to help the people catch what he's saying, and then he explains what God is saying –

- Mene - God has counted up your kingdom, and paid it out.
- Tekel - You have been weighed on the scales, and are light-weight, lacking, deficient.
- Parsin - Your kingdom has been broken in two, and given to the Medes and Persians.

Now the writing was on the wall. But as Daniel said, they should have known - Daniel 4 - you stand tall against God and you will get knocked down. They should have known - Daniel 2 - (you remember the statue with the head of gold, the chest of silver, the hips of bronze, and the feet of iron and clay - all bowled over and smashed by the Rock?) They should have known: Babylon would be replaced. Read through Daniel 1,2,3,4; they should have known - God rules - AND God has the answers - God has the power - God has the promise. Better than the life of the world, better than the gods of this world, better than anything we might think for ourselves - God has the answers, God has the power, and God has the promise.

What do you know better now that we have worked through Daniel 1-5?

For Belshazzar and all his party, they should have known better, and now the writing was on the wall. That night, God gave Belshazzar and Babylon over to the Medes and the Persians, and Belshazzar was killed.

They should have known better. And not just them. How many times could God say to me: “You should have known

better”? How many times could God say to you, to us: “You should have known better; in fact, you did know better, but for some reason wanted to live in denial of the truth and pretend that he [Jesus] and His Word doesn’t matter”? Or worse, far worse, to how many of us - me, you - could God say today: “You should know better, but for some reason, still today, even today, you are still living in denial, pretending me and my word don’t matter.”

Why is that third question “worse, far worse”?

To live in denial, hiding from the truth - how? - by living it up, living the life of the world ... Or by hiding behind a screen ... Or by numbing the truth with a drink, a smoke, a mouthful, a belly-full of whatever makes us feel good while we hide from the truth ... to live in denial, to hide from the truth, doesn’t change the truth or save us from whatever truth we don’t want to face.

*How do you see people in your life hiding and denying?
How do you see yourself hiding and denying?*

We already know that, don’t we? We don’t have to wait for some writing on the wall, do we? We already have God’s hand writing in here [Bible]. And what do we see here? God keeps his promises. God works his judgment just as promised. If we’re talking about kings and kingdoms, no matter how great the kings and kingdoms of this world might think themselves to be, they will all be replaced, knocked down and replaced, smashed and replaced, crushed and replaced. No matter how much we

might think or wish some earthly king or kingdom, ruler or leader, will make life right for us - every earthly king and kingdom will be knocked down, crushed, and replaced. And if we're talking ourselves, no matter how we might try to hide and deny, God will judge those who would rather hide and deny than live in the truth of Jesus.

But God doesn't just work his judgment as promised. Just as he promised, he raised up a new kingdom to replace the Babylonians. That new kingdom set God's people free to go back home to Judah and Jerusalem - just as he promised. Then, when the time was right, God replaced the Persians with the Greeks, and then the Greeks with the Romans - preparing God's people and God's world for Jesus. Then, when the time was right, God sent his Son - just as he had promised.

How did the Greek Empire set God's people and God's world up for Jesus?

How did the Roman Empire set God's people and God's world up for Jesus?

As a true King, Jesus didn't hide and deny. No matter what God gave him to say or do, Jesus didn't hide or deny. He didn't try to hide and fit in with the world. He didn't try to deny and pretend that all was good with the world. When the world didn't like what he said or did, and turned against him, he still didn't hide or deny. When his own people sent him to the cross, even when his own God and Father sent him to the cross, still Jesus didn't try to hide and deny. Instead, like a true King, he accepted

the Truth, God's Truth and Judgment, and he worked to make God's Truth and Promise true for his people.

What does it mean that Jesus worked to make God's Truth and Promise true for his people?

What does that mean for us?

- For all those times we should have known better ... and God could say: "I don't know you" ...
- For all those times we tried to hide and deny, living it up, making ourselves busy with the world instead of living the life God has for us...
- For all those times we tried to hide and deny, numbing our hearts and minds instead of living the life God has for us ...
- For all those times, God could hide and deny us ...
- For all those times, God could - "mene" - count us up and sell us off ... "tekell" - weigh us and find us lacking ... and "parsin" - break our lives and hand us over to our enemies.

Instead, for all those times, we have Jesus hiding and denying - hiding our sin under his blood and denying our guilt with his perfect life. With Jesus, we don't have to live a life kicking ourself - "I should have known better." With Jesus, we don't need to live a life hiding and denying, afraid of God. With Jesus, we are safe to do what Belshazzar and Nebuchadnezzar should have done: "God, have mercy on me a sinner!" With Jesus, we are safe to do what Daniel and Jesus did; we are safe to

live the life God gives us to live, to do what God gives us to do,
to say what God gives us to say.

*Which of your sins, how much of your guilt, peeks out and
finds its way into God's courtroom?
Instead of kicking ourselves ("I should have known
better!"), what do we get to do?*

In other words, with Jesus, it doesn't matter how we may
have botched it. With Jesus, it doesn't matter who or what is
against us. With Jesus, we don't need to hide and deny, we are
safe to live for the glory of God and the good of his people.
Amen.

What is the life God has for us to live?

July 20 & 21, 2024

SERVICE OF WORD AND SACRAMENT

IN OUR WORLD TODAY ... how many around us live in a state of denial? How many around us look for excitement by pushing the envelope, living on the edge? How many of us are guilty of falling for those traps?

IN OUR WORSHIP TODAY ... we see the writing on the wall. We don't have any excuses for living in denial; we have something better than living on the edge. We know the Truth that gives us and our lives a whole new dimension of edgy excitement.

OPENING HYMN

"Rise, Shine, You People"
Hymn 744

Rise, shine, you people! Christ the Lord has entered
our human story; God in him is centered.
He comes to us, by death and sin surrounded, with grace unbounded.

See how he sends the pow'rs of evil reeling;
he brings us freedom, light and life and healing.
All men and women, who by guilt are driven, now are forgiven.

Come, celebrate, your banners high unfurling,
your songs and prayers against the darkness hurling.
To all the world go out and tell the story of Jesus' glory.

Tell how the Father sent his Son to save us.
Tell of the Son, who life and freedom gave us.
Tell how the Spirit calls from ev'ry nation his new creation.

INVOCATION

M: The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you.

C: **And also with you.**

+ CONFESSION OF SINS AND ABSOLUTION +

- M: God invites us to come into his presence and worship him with humble and penitent hearts. Therefore, let us acknowledge our sinfulness and ask him to forgive us.
- C: **Holy and merciful Father, I confess that I am by nature sinful, and that I have disobeyed you in my thoughts, words, and actions. I have done what is evil and failed to do what is good. For this I deserve your punishment both now and in eternity. But I am truly sorry for my sins, and trusting in my Savior Jesus Christ, I pray: Lord, have mercy on me, a sinner.**
- M: God, our heavenly Father, has been merciful to us and has given his only Son to be the atoning sacrifice for our sins. Therefore, as a called servant of Christ and by his authority, I forgive you all your sins in the name of the Father and of the Son † and of the Holy Spirit. **Amen.**

+ PRAYER AND PRAISE +

LORD, HAVE MERCY

- M: For all that we need in life and for the wisdom to use all your gifts with gratitude and joy, hear our prayer, O Lord.
- C: **Lord, have mercy.**
- M: For the steadfast assurance that nothing can separate us from your love and for the courage to stand firm against the assaults of Satan and every evil, hear our prayer, O Christ.
- C: **Christ, have mercy.**
- M: For the well-being of your holy Church in all the world and for those who offer here their worship and praise, hear our prayer, O Lord.
- C: **Lord, have mercy.**
- M: Merciful God, maker and preserver of life, uphold us by your power and keep us in your tender care:
- C: **Amen.**
- M: The works of the Lord are great and glorious; his name is worthy of praise.

HYMN (No Introduction)

"O Lord, Our Lord"
Hymn 939

Refrain

O Lord, our Lord, how glo-rious is your name in all the earth.

Al-might-y God, mer-ci-ful Fa - ther, you crown our life

with your love. You take a-way our sin; you com-fort our spir-it;

you make us pure and ho-ly in your sight. You did not spare your

Refrain

on - ly Son, but gave him up for us all. O Lord, our Lord,

how glo-rious is your name in all the earth. O Son of

God, e - ter-nal Word of the Fa - ther, you came to live with us;

you made your Fa - ther known; you washed us from our sins in

your own blood. You are the King of glo-ry; you are the Lord!

Refrain

O Lord, our Lord, how glo-rious is your name in all the earth.

PRAYER OF THE DAY

O Lord our God, so govern the nations on earth and direct the affairs of this world that your church may worship you in peace and joy; through your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

Amen.

FIRST READING

Daniel 5 (Select verses)

King Belshazzar gave a great banquet for a thousand of his nobles and drank wine with them. While Belshazzar was drinking his wine, he gave orders to bring in the gold and silver goblets that Nebuchadnezzar his father had taken from the temple in Jerusalem, so that the king and his nobles, his wives and his concubines might drink from them. So they brought in the gold goblets that had been taken from the temple of God in Jerusalem, and the king and his nobles, his wives and his concubines drank from them. As they drank the wine, they praised the gods of gold and silver, of bronze, iron, wood and stone.

Suddenly the fingers of a human hand appeared and wrote on the plaster of the wall, near the lampstand in the royal palace. The king watched the hand as it wrote. His face turned pale and he was so frightened that his legs became weak and his knees were knocking.

The king summoned the enchanters, astrologers and diviners. Then he said to these wise men of Babylon, "Whoever reads this writing and tells me what it means will be clothed in purple and have a gold chain placed around his neck, and he will be made the third highest ruler in the kingdom."

Then all the king's wise men came in, but they could not read the writing or tell the king what it meant. So King Belshazzar became even more terrified and his face grew more pale. His nobles were baffled.

The queen, hearing the voices of the king and his nobles, came into the banquet hall. "May the king live forever!" she said. "Don't be alarmed! Don't look so pale! There is a man in your kingdom who has the spirit of the holy gods in him. ... Call for Daniel, and he will tell you what the writing means."

So Daniel was brought before the king, and the king said to him, "Are you Daniel, one of the exiles my father the king brought from Judah? I have heard that the spirit of the gods is in you and that you have insight, intelligence and outstanding wisdom. The wise men and enchanters were brought before me to read this writing and tell me what it means, but they could not explain it. Now I have heard that you are able to give interpretations and to solve difficult problems. If you can read this writing and tell me what it means, you will be clothed in purple and have a gold chain placed around your neck, and you will be made the third highest ruler in the kingdom."

Then Daniel answered the king, "You may keep your gifts for yourself and give your rewards to someone else. Nevertheless, I will read the writing for the king and tell him what it means.

"Your Majesty, the Most High God gave your father Nebuchadnezzar sovereignty and greatness and glory and splendor. Because of the high position he gave him, all the nations and peoples of every language dreaded and feared him. Those the king wanted to put to death, he put to death; those he wanted to spare, he spared; those he wanted to promote, he promoted; and those he wanted to humble, he humbled. But when his heart became arrogant and hardened with pride, he was deposed from his royal throne and stripped of his glory. He was driven away from people and given the mind of an animal; he lived with the wild donkeys and ate grass like the ox; and his body was drenched with the dew of heaven, until he acknowledged that the Most High God is sovereign over all kingdoms on earth and sets over them anyone he wishes.

"But you, Belshazzar, his son, have not humbled yourself, though you knew all this. Instead, you have set yourself up against the Lord of heaven. You had the goblets from his temple brought to you, and you and your nobles, your wives and your concubines drank wine from them. You praised the gods of silver and gold, of bronze, iron, wood and stone, which cannot see or hear or understand. But you did not honor the God who holds in his hand your life and all your ways. Therefore he sent the hand that wrote the inscription.

"This is the inscription that was written:

“Here is what these words mean:
Mene: God has numbered the days of your reign and brought it to an end.
Tekel: You have been weighed on the scales and found wanting.
Peres: Your kingdom is divided and given to the Medes and Persians.”

Then at Belshazzar’s command, Daniel was clothed in purple, a gold chain was placed around his neck, and he was proclaimed the third highest ruler in the kingdom.

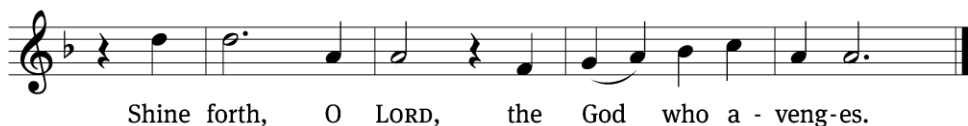
That very night Belshazzar, king of the Babylonians, was slain, and Darius the Mede took over the kingdom, at the age of sixty-two.

The Word of the Lord. **Thanks be to God.**

PSALM OF THE DAY

Psalm 94A

Refrain



Tone



Rise up, Judge / of the earth;
pay back to the proud what / they deserve.
How long, LORD, will the / wicked,
how long will the wicked be / jubilant?

They crush your / people, LORD;
they oppress your in- / heritance.
Who will rise up for me against the / wicked?
Who will take a stand for me against evil- / doers? *Refrain*

Unless the LORD had / giv'n me help,
I would soon have dwelt in the si- / lence of death.
When I said, "My foot is / slipping,"
your unfailing love, LORD, sup- / ported me.

The LORD has become my / fortress,
and my God the rock in whom I take / refuge.
He will repay them / for their sins
and destroy them for their / wickedness.

**Glory be to the Father and / to the Son
and to the Holy / Spirit,
as it was in the be- / ginning,
is now, and will be forever. / Amen. Refrain**

GOSPEL

Matthew 28:16–20

Then the eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain where Jesus had told them to go. When they saw him, they worshiped him; but some doubted. Then Jesus came to them and said, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age."

The Gospel of the Lord. **Praise be to you, O Christ!**

HYMN OF THE DAY

"O Worship the King"
Hymn 620

O worship the King, all-glorious above,
O gratefully sing his pow'r and his love,
our shield and defender, the Ancient of Days,
pavilioned in splendor and girded with praise.

O tell of his might, O sing of his grace,
whose robe is the light, whose canopy, space;
his chariots of wrath the deep thunderclouds form,
and dark is his path on the wings of the storm.

This earth, with its store of wonders untold,
Almighty, your pow'r has founded of old,
established it fast by a changeless decree,
and round it has cast, like a mantle, the sea.

Your bountiful care what tongue can recite?
It breathes in the air, it shines in the light,
it streams from the hills, it descends to the plain,
and sweetly distills in the dew and the rain.

Frail children of dust, and feeble as frail,
in you do we trust nor find you to fail;
your mercies, how tender, how firm to the end,
our maker, defender, redeemer, and friend!

SERMON

Daniel 5

NICENE CREED

We believe in one God, the Father, the Almighty, maker of heaven and earth, of all that is, seen and unseen.

We believe in one Lord, Jesus Christ, the only Son of God, eternally begotten of the Father, God from God, Light from Light, true God from true God, begotten, not made, of one being with the Father. Through him all things were made. For us and for our salvation, he came down from heaven, was incarnate of the Holy Spirit and the Virgin Mary, and became truly human. For our sake he was crucified under Pontius Pilate. He suffered death and was buried. On the third day he rose again in accordance with the Scriptures.

He ascended into heaven and is seated at the right hand of the Father. He will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead, and his kingdom will have no end.

We believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life, who proceeds from the Father and the Son, who in unity with the Father and the Son is worshiped and glorified, who has spoken through the prophets. We believe in one holy Christian and apostolic Church. We acknowledge one baptism for the forgiveness of sins. We look for the resurrection of the dead and the life of the world to come. Amen.

OFFERING

If you prefer to give online, the code at the right will take you to our Online Giving page. We invite our online givers to join in our offering with an "I Give Online" card in the pew racks.



PRAYER OF THE CHURCH

Gracious God and Father, we praise you for the countless blessings, which we receive from your hand: the beauties of creation and the bounties of the earth, the joy of life and the pleasure of friendship, the good of work and the gift of rest, the privilege to share happiness and sorrow with one another. Above all we praise and thank you for your saving Word and for your Son's body and blood, which you give us to eat and to drink in the sacrament. Through these means of grace, you send the Holy Spirit into our hearts and unite us to Jesus and to the whole Christian Church on earth. **Strengthen us through this heavenly food; increase our trust in Christ and our love for one another.**

Great God and Lord, without your continuing help we easily waver in our faith, lose courage, and grow careless in our watchfulness. The times and days are perilous. Give us strength to face the evils of each day with fresh confidence. Open our lips to speak of your grace, and move us to use the gifts that you give us to share your Word of salvation with all people.

Protect and prosper the family, the school, the government, and all good institutions that you have established for the benefit of society. Remember in mercy those who are sick and suffering, and bring your healing to troubled homes and lives.

Move us to pray for those in need and to help them with deeds of kindness.

Special prayers and intercessions may follow.

Hear us, Lord, as we bring you our private petitions.

Silent prayer.

Now, eternal God and Father, keep us in the saving faith and so enable us to overcome all things through our Lord Jesus Christ.

LORD'S PRAYER

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name, thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread; and forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us; and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever and ever. Amen.

THE SACRAMENT

(Guests, please see our communion practice on page 2.)

(Gluten-free wafers are available; ask Pastor.)

M: The Lord be with you.

C: **And also with you.**

M: Lift up your hearts.

C: **We lift them up to the Lord.**

M: Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

C: **It is right to give him thanks and praise.**

M: Praise to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! In love he has blessed us with every spiritual blessing. He sends the Holy Spirit to testify that we are his children and to strengthen us when we are weak. Now have come the salvation and the power and the kingdom of our God and the authority of his Christ. To him who sits on the throne and to the Lamb be praise and thanks and honor and glory for ever and ever.

HOLY, HOLY, HOLY *Sanctus* (No Introduction) Sung

Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts.
The whole earth is full of your glory.
You are my God and I will exalt you.
I will give you thanks for you have become my salvation.
Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts.
The whole earth is full of your glory.

WORDS OF INSTITUTION

M: Our Lord Jesus Christ, on the night he was betrayed, took bread; and when he had given thanks, he broke it and gave it to his disciples, saying, "Take and eat; this is my † body, which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of me."

Then he took the cup, gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, "Drink from it, all of you; this is my † blood of the new covenant, which is poured out for you for the forgiveness of sins. Do this, whenever you drink it, in remembrance of me."

M: The peace of the Lord be with you always. **Amen.**

O CHRIST, LAMB OF GOD *Agnus Dei* (No Introduction)

O Christ, Lamb of God, you take away the sin of the world;
have mercy on us.

O Christ, Lamb of God, you take away the sin of the world;
have mercy on us.

O Christ, Lamb of God, you take away the sin of the world;
have mercy on us.

O Christ, Lamb of God, you take away the sin of the world;
Grant us your peace. Amen.

DISTRIBUTION HYMN

"Take and Eat"

Hymn 676

Soloist Singing Verses

Congregation Singing Refrain

Refrain

Take and eat, take and eat, this is my body given up for you.
Take and drink, take and drink, this is my blood given up for you.

*I am the Word that spoke and light was made; I am the seed that died to be reborn;
I am the bread that comes from heav'n above;
I am the vine that fills your cup with joy. **Refrain***

*I am the way that leads the exile home; I am the truth that sets the captive free;
I am the life that raises up the dead;
I am your peace, true peace my gift to you. **Refrain***

*I am the Lamb that takes away your sin;
I am the gate that guards you night and day;
you are my flock: you know the shepherd's voice;
you are my own: your ransom is my blood. **Refrain***

*I am the cornerstone that God has laid; a chosen stone and precious in his eyes;
you are God's dwelling-place, on me you rest;
like living stones, a temple for God's praise. **Refrain***

*I am the light that came into the world; I am the light that darkness cannot hide;
I am the Morning Star that never sets;
lift up your face, in you my light will shine. **Refrain***

*I am the first and last, the Living One; I am the Lord who died that you might live;
I am the bridegroom, this my wedding song;
you are my bride, come to the marriage feast. **Refrain***

CLOSING PRAYER

M: Hear the prayer of your people, O Lord, that the lips which have praised you here may glorify you in the world, that the eyes which have seen the coming of your Son may long for his coming again, and that all who have received in his true body and blood the pledge of your forgiveness may be restored to live a new and holy life, through Jesus Christ, our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.
Amen.

BLESSING

M: Brothers and sisters, go in peace. Live in harmony with one another.
Serve the Lord with gladness.

The Lord bless you and keep you.

The Lord make his face shine on you and be gracious to you.

The Lord look on you with favor and give you peace. **Amen.**

CLOSING HYMN

"Praise God, from Whom All Blessings Flow"

Hymn 617

Praise God, from whom all blessings flow;
praise him, all creatures here below;
praise him above, ye heav'nly host;
praise Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. Amen.

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The Word of the Lord grows— from Hong Kong to New Zealand

The South Asian Lutheran Evangelical Mission (SALEM) is a sister church body comprised of ten congregations located in Hong Kong. This week, five members of SALEM visited our synod's headquarters in Waukesha, Wis. They had attended the Lutheran Women's Missionary Society convention and now were visiting various WELS sites in Wisconsin.

What made this visit especially interesting was the report this group shared about a new mission effort in New Zealand. Since 2020, about two dozen members of SALEM moved from Hong Kong to New Zealand. With the help of SALEM, they formed a new mission congregation called SALEM New Zealand Lutheran Church. In the three years since, their group has grown to about 40 Chinese-speaking members. They joyfully described the blessings of their fellowship in this new land, and they were very excited to be sharing the gospel with other Chinese-speaking people there. SALEM will be continuing its support of SALEM New Zealand in the coming years.

The WELS Board for World Missions has provided some modest funding to support their effort. In addition, Missionary Matt Doeblner, located in Thailand, will also be providing additional guidance and encouragement to this group.

This is a beautiful reminder that our sister church bodies around the world are not content to keep the gospel for themselves but are also dedicating time and resources to take the gospel to new places and new people.

Serving with you in Christ,
WELS President Mark Schroeder