

Sermon followed by Service

July 28, 2024

Daniel

*What was your favorite Bible lesson your parents shared with you?
What is the Bible lesson you most enjoyed sharing with children?*

*When was the last time you shared a Bible lesson with your
children, or asked your grandchildren or god-children
about the Bible lessons they are hearing and reading?*

Today we're with Daniel - living in a place that's not our real home - heaven is our home. Today we're with Daniel in the lion's den. Worse, we're in the lion's world where Satan is stalking and prowling. Today we see how Daniel handled life in the lion's world. Today we see what God is doing for us in the lion's world.

How do you see Satan the Lion prowling in our world and in your life?

Today, we're in Daniel 6, just weeks or months after Daniel 5 with the writing on the wall. God has worked a regime change. Belshazzar and the Babylonians are out; Cyrus - Daniel calls him Darius - Cyrus with the Medes and Persians are in. We might say that Iraq with its empire is out, and Iran with its empire is in. God has worked a regime change. God is getting his world and his people ready for something new, but God still has a role for Daniel.

With the regime change, with God's something new, in some ways we are back to Daniel 1. Like in chapter 1, a world set against God is watching Daniel, testing Daniel. And what does Daniel do? Just like in Chapter 1, Daniel shows himself to be a man of God - it's not just a man thing - Daniel shows himself to be a child of God -

faithful to God and the government God gives him, hardworking for God and his people - and blessed by God to be outstanding. In chapter 1, Nebuchadnezzar noticed Daniel and promoted him; now in chapter 6, Cyrus notices him and is promoting him. And that leads to trouble.

Some are blessed by God to be outstanding; some are blessed by God to be withstanding; some are blessed by God to be getting back up again. For those days when I'm not feeling outstanding or withstanding, what do I get to feel about "getting up again"?

Cyrus, with his Empire of the Medes and Persians, rules over an empire that stretches from India through the "stans" and Iran, Iraq, Syria, down, through Lebanon, Israel, into Egypt, and up through Turkey, into Greece and Bulgaria. To rule over an empire that vast with so many different peoples, Cyrus is setting up a system with 120 satraps (governors of some kind) with a team of 3 watching over those satraps and governors. Daniel is one of those 3. And he is so faithful and wise, so outstanding, that Cyrus is planning to set him over the whole kingdom.

The other satraps, the other governors and rulers couldn't stand the thought of Daniel ruling over them. Was it because he was a foreigner, a Jew, a God-fearing Jew? Was it because of jealousy, envy? Was it because Daniel made them look bad by how good he was? We aren't told. What we are told is that they wanted him out. But when they dug into Daniel's life to find dirt, they couldn't find any. The only target they could find in Daniel's life was his faith life, not because it was his weak spot, but because Daniel's faith-life set him apart as different.

*Where might an enemy target you?
What might you do about that?*

So the satraps and governors scheme. They appeal to Cyrus' pride. "Let there be a law - a law of the Medes and Persians that can't be changed - let there be a law that anyone who prays to anyone or anything but the king would be thrown into the lion's den." When Daniel heard about that law - and he did hear about it - what did Daniel do? He didn't try to hide; he didn't look for a way out. He didn't reason and rationalize and give himself excuses. Instead, Daniel did what he did every other day - morning, noon, and night. He went home, went up to his room, opened the window toward Jerusalem - where anyone who was looking could see - and he got down on his knees and prayed - just like he did every day before the king's edict.

What do we learn here about Daniel? Daniel is so faithful in his worship life that people readily know his worship life. Daniel is so faithful in his prayer life that people readily know his prayer life. Daniel is so faithful in his devotion to God that people know he will not give in or give up on his worship and prayer life with God - even if it would cost him his life. Not just in theory. Not just in his hopes and dreams. Not just in his talk. But in his real life, Daniel put his worship life, his prayer life, his devotion life first before even his life.

When you see someone praying in public, what does that do for you?

What are you thinking right now? Maybe reasoning, rationalizing: “God doesn’t really expect that of me”? Maybe thinking, thanking: “It’s a good thing we don’t have laws or lions like that”? - missing the point about putting God first. Or maybe twisting God’s forgiveness into devil-talk: “It’s a good thing God forgives because I don’t want to be tied down like that; I’ve got things to do” - turning God’s free forgiveness into a license to keep on cheating on God?

With Jesus, we have something better to think: “**God, have mercy on me a sinner.**” Followed up by this: “**Create in me a clean heart, o God, and renew a right spirit within me.**”

Here in the United States, we’re blessed that we don’t have laws and lions getting in the way of our worship and devotion to God. We do, however, have something far more challenging than laws and lions; we have freedom, freedom in our country to worship as we please, freedom in our Christ to arrange and schedule our worship and prayer life. And with that freedom comes something more sinister than laws and lions - the temptation to busyness. The busyness of work, the busyness of play, the busyness of sports, the busyness of doing nothing. Did you notice I called that busyness more sinister than laws and lions? Why? Because that busyness can look so good, sound so good, that instead of fighting it like we might fight against laws and lions, we choose it for ourselves; we choose it for our children. And as we drift deeper and deeper into busyness, as we drift further and further away from God’s way - we comfort ourselves with talk of freedom and forgiveness - and Satan smiles with anticipation, just like he did before Daniel was thrown into the lion’s den.

As we live in the lion’s world, what in your life might have the lion (Satan) smiling?

But Satan was disappointed. God sent his angel and kept Daniel safe. Daniel wants us to know that it was God and his angel that kept him safe. The lions weren't drugged; they weren't over-fed. When the conspirators who tried to get rid of Daniel were thrown into the lion's den, the lions tore into them crushing them dead before they hit the ground.

What do we see? God judges and God delivers. It doesn't matter who or what or how many are against him or us - God judges and God delivers as he promises. It doesn't matter whether we're facing wicked men or women acting alone or acting together to turn governments against us. It doesn't matter whether we're facing lions or any of the forces of nature. And it doesn't matter how that lion the devil might be stalking and prowling after us. God judges and God delivers.

The things in this lion's world that tempt us, how will they be judged?

How are they already being judged?

Sometimes, like he used Cyrus in our lesson, God uses people to judge and deliver. Sometimes, like in our lesson, he uses his angel or angels to judge and deliver. And sometimes, he works through his Son to judge and deliver. Jesus didn't just shut the mouths of a den of lions, Jesus took on the devil himself. He didn't just shut up the devil, he let the devil take his best shots; the devil used Jesus' friends, his enemies, the power of the government. And every time, Jesus had the answer. Every time, Jesus put the devil in his place. Every times, Jesus stayed true to God. Even when God took your sin and my sin and put the blame and the guilt and the judgment on Jesus. Even as

Jesus felt abandoned by God and cried: “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me.” Even as Jesus died: “Father, into your hands I commit my spirit.” Jesus put the devil in his place and stayed true to God. And just as God judged on Good Friday, God delivered on Easter. Today, no matter how the devil might prowl and scowl, Jesus’ voice echoes in hell - “I win!” And Jesus’ promise echoes from heaven - “Grace, mercy, and peace are yours.”

Even in the lion's den, and forever after, "grace, mercy, and peace" was God's promise for Daniel. And even in the lion's world, "grace, mercy, and peace" is God's promise for us. He delivers with Jesus! Amen.

The chapter ends with Daniel enjoying grace, mercy, and peace. As you are delivered from the lion’s world, how are you enjoying, grace, mercy, and peace?

July 27 & 28, 2024

SERVICE OF THE WORD

IN OUR WORLD TODAY ... some can get so up in arms when “The Powers that Be” get in the way of their worship and devotion to God life, but then so willing when fun and games get in the way of their worship and devotion to God.

IN OUR WORSHIP TODAY ... we see Daniel. He’s willing to go to the Lion’s den rather than give up his devotion to God. Even better, we see Jesus; he gives us victory over the lion that is prowling to devour us!

OPENING HYMN

“All Praise to God Who Reigns Above”

Hymn 603

All praise to God who reigns above, the God of all creation,
the God of wonders, pow’r, and love, the God of our salvation!
With healing balm my soul he fills, the God who ev’ry sorrow stills:
To God all praise and glory!

What God’s almighty pow’r has made, in mercy he is keeping;
by morning dawn or evening shade his eye is never sleeping.
Within the kingdom of his might, all things are just and good and right:
to God all praise and glory!

I cried to him in time of need: Lord God, O hear my calling!
For death he gave me life indeed and kept my feet from falling.
For this my thanks shall endless be; O thank him, thank our God with me:
to God all praise and glory!

The Lord will not forsake his flock, his chosen generation;
he is their refuge and their rock, their peace and their salvation.
As with a mother’s tender hand he leads his own, his chosen band:
to God all praise and glory!

All who confess Christ’s holy name, to God give praise and glory!
Let all who know his pow’r proclaim aloud the wondrous story!
All idols under foot be trod— The Lord is God! The Lord is God!
To God all praise and glory!

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: We have come into the presence of God, who created us to love and serve him as his dear children. But we have disobeyed him and deserve only his wrath and punishment. Therefore, let us confess our sins to him and plead for his mercy.

C: **Merciful Father in heaven, I am altogether sinful from birth. In countless ways I have sinned against you and do not deserve to be called your child. But trusting in Jesus, my Savior, I pray: Have mercy on me according to your unfailing love. Cleanse me from my sin, and take away my guilt.**

M: God, our heavenly Father, has forgiven all your sins. By the perfect life and innocent death of our Lord Jesus Christ, he has removed your guilt forever. You are his own dear child. May God give you strength to live according to his will. **Amen.**

+ PRAYER AND PRAISE +

M: In the peace of forgiveness, let us praise the Lord.

HYMN (No Introduction)

"O Taste and See"

Hymn 965

O taste and see that the Lord is good.

Blessèd are they who take refuge in him.

Your Word, O Lord, is eternal; it stands firm in the heavens.

Your faithfulness continues forever. O taste and see that the Lord is good.

Blessèd are they who take refuge in him.

PRAYER OF THE DAY

Almighty God, look with favor on your humble servants, and stretch out the right hand of your power to defend us against all our enemies; through Jesus Christ, your Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

Amen.

FIRST READING

Daniel 6

It pleased Darius to appoint 120 satraps to rule throughout the kingdom, with three administrators over them, one of whom was Daniel. The satraps were made accountable to them so that the king might not suffer loss. Now Daniel so distinguished himself among the administrators and the satraps by his exceptional qualities that the king planned to set him over the whole kingdom. At this, the administrators and the satraps tried to find grounds for charges against Daniel in his conduct of government affairs, but they were unable to do so. They could find no corruption in him, because he was trustworthy and neither corrupt nor negligent. Finally these men said, "We will never find any basis for charges against this man Daniel unless it has something to do with the law of his God."

So these administrators and satraps went as a group to the king and said: "May King Darius live forever! The royal administrators, prefects, satraps, advisers and governors have all agreed that the king should issue an edict and enforce the decree that anyone who prays to any god or human being during the next thirty days, except to you, Your Majesty, shall be thrown into the lions' den. Now, Your Majesty, issue the decree and put it in writing so that it cannot be altered—in accordance with the law of the Medes and Persians, which cannot be repealed." So King Darius put the decree in writing.

Now when Daniel learned that the decree had been published, he went home to his upstairs room where the windows opened toward Jerusalem. Three times a day he got down on his knees and prayed, giving thanks to his God, just as he had done before. Then these men went as a group and found Daniel praying and asking God for help. So they went to the king and spoke to him about his royal decree:

“Did you not publish a decree that during the next thirty days anyone who prays to any god or human being except to you, Your Majesty, would be thrown into the lions’ den?”

The king answered, “The decree stands—in accordance with the law of the Medes and Persians, which cannot be repealed.”

Then they said to the king, “Daniel, who is one of the exiles from Judah, pays no attention to you, Your Majesty, or to the decree you put in writing. He still prays three times a day.” When the king heard this, he was greatly distressed; he was determined to rescue Daniel and made every effort until sundown to save him.

Then the men went as a group to King Darius and said to him, “Remember, Your Majesty, that according to the law of the Medes and Persians no decree or edict that the king issues can be changed.”

So the king gave the order, and they brought Daniel and threw him into the lions’ den. The king said to Daniel, “May your God, whom you serve continually, rescue you!”

A stone was brought and placed over the mouth of the den, and the king sealed it with his own signet ring and with the rings of his nobles, so that Daniel’s situation might not be changed. Then the king returned to his palace and spent the night without eating and without any entertainment being brought to him. And he could not sleep.

At the first light of dawn, the king got up and hurried to the lions’ den. When he came near the den, he called to Daniel in an anguished voice, “Daniel, servant of the living God, has your God, whom you serve continually, been able to rescue you from the lions?”

Daniel answered, “May the king live forever! My God sent his angel, and he shut the mouths of the lions. They have not hurt me, because I was found innocent in his sight. Nor have I ever done any wrong before you, Your Majesty.”

The king was overjoyed and gave orders to lift Daniel out of the den. And when Daniel was lifted from the den, no wound was found on him, because he had trusted in his God.

At the king's command, the men who had falsely accused Daniel were brought in and thrown into the lions' den, along with their wives and children. And before they reached the floor of the den, the lions overpowered them and crushed all their bones.

Then King Darius wrote to all the nations and peoples of every language in all the earth:

"May you prosper greatly!

"I issue a decree that in every part of my kingdom people must fear and reverence the God of Daniel.

"For he is the living God
and he endures forever;
his kingdom will not be destroyed,
his dominion will never end.
He rescues and he saves;
he performs signs and wonders
in the heavens and on the earth.
He has rescued Daniel
from the power of the lions."

So Daniel prospered during the reign of Darius and the reign of Cyrus the Persian.

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

HYMN

"A Mighty Fortress Is Our God"

Hymn 864

A mighty fortress is our God, a trusty shield and weapon;
he helps us free from ev'ry need that has us now o'ertaken.
The ancient evil foe now means to work us woe;
deep guile and awful might are his dread arms in fight;
on earth is not his equal.

With might of ours can naught be done, soon were our loss effected;
but for us fights the valiant one whom God himself elected.
You ask who this may be? Christ Jesus, it is he,
the Lord of hosts his name, from age to age the same,
he holds the field forever.

Though devils all the world should fill, all eager to devour us,
we tremble not, we fear no ill; they shall not overpower us.
The prince of darkness still may scowl fierce as he will,
his raging harms us none. He's judged; the deed is done;
one little word can fell him.

The Word they still shall let remain nor any thanks have for it;
he's by our side upon the plain with his good gifts and Spirit.
And should they take our life, goods, honor, child, and wife,
though all of these be gone, our victory is won;
the kingdom's ours forever!

GOSPEL

John 17:13–19

“I am coming to you now, but I say these things while I am still in the world, so that they may have the full measure of my joy within them. I have given them your word and the world has hated them, for they are not of the world any more than I am of the world. My prayer is not that you take them out of the world but that you protect them from the evil one. They are not of the world, even as I am not of it. Sanctify them by the truth; your word is truth. As you sent me into the world, I have sent them into the world. For them I sanctify myself, that they too may be truly sanctified.

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

APOSTLES' CREED

I believe in God, the Father Almighty, maker of heaven and earth.

I believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord, who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died, and was buried.

He descended into hell. The third day he rose again from the dead. He ascended into heaven and is seated at the right hand of God the Father Almighty. From there he will come to judge the living and the dead.

I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy Christian Church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting. Amen.

HYMN OF THE DAY

“Rise! To Arms! With Prayer Employ You”

Hymn 871

Rise! To arms! With prayer employ you,
O Christians, lest the foe destroy you, for Satan has designed your fall.
Wield God’s Word, a weapon glorious;
against each foe you’ll be victorious, for God will set you o’er them all.
Fear not the prince of hell, here is Immanuel!
Sing hosanna! The strong ones yield
to Christ, our shield, and we as conqu’rors hold the field.

Cast afar this world’s vain pleasure and boldly strive for heav’nly treasure.
Be steadfast in the Savior’s might. Trust the Lord, who stands beside you,
for Jesus from all harm will hide you. By faith you’ll conquer in the fight.
Take courage, weary soul! Look forward to the goal!
Joy awaits you. The race, then, run;
your battle done, the crown of glory will be won.

Jesus, all your children cherish, and keep them that they never perish
whom you have purchased with your blood.
Let new life to us be given that we may look to you in heaven
whenever fearful is our mood.
Your Spirit on us pour that we may love you more,
hearts o’erflowing; and then shall we,
from sin set free, sing praise through all eternity.

SERMON

Daniel 6

HYMN

"If God Himself Be for Me" Hymn 819 vs. 1, 2, 6, & 7

If God himself be for me, I may a host defy;
for when I pray, before me my foes, confounded, fly.
If Christ, my head and master, befriend me from above,
what foe or what disaster can drive me from his love?

This I believe, yea rather, of this I make my boast,
that God is my dear Father, the friend who loves me most,
and that, whate'er betide me, my Savior is at hand
thro' stormy seas to guide me and bring me safe to land.

No danger, thirst, or hunger, no pain or poverty,
no earthly tyrant's anger shall ever vanquish me.
Though earth should break asunder, you are my Savior true;
no fire or sword or thunder shall sever me from you.

My heart for joy is springing and can no more be sad;
my soul is filled with singing, sees only sunshine glad.
The sun that cheers my spirit is Jesus Christ, my King;
the heav'n I shall inherit makes me rejoice and sing.

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

Almighty God, our heavenly Father, you love your whole creation and forget none of your creatures. We bring you our supplications for all your children, for all those we love and all those committed to your care:

We implore you to hear us, good Lord.

For all who have blessed us with kindness, led us with patience, and restored and refreshed us by their sympathy and help:

We implore you to hear us, good Lord.

For all who have wished or done us ill, that you would turn their hearts to penitence and ours to blessing:

Lord, have mercy.

For all prisoners and captives and all who suffer from oppression, that you would lead them to know the perfect freedom of your Son's forgiveness, relieve their suffering, and move us to imitate you by assisting them with works of mercy and compassion:

Lord, have mercy.

[For... *here name the person and the cause of the petition*, let us pray to the Lord.

Lord, have mercy.]

For all who bear the cross of suffering, who are sick in body or in mind:

Be merciful and spare them, good Lord.

For all who are troubled by the suffering or sin of those they love:

Lord, hear our prayer.

For all who have experienced worldly loss, that in the midst of darkness and confusion they may find their peace in you:

We implore you to hear us, O God.

For all who are absorbed in their own grief, that they may be raised to share the sorrows of their brothers and sisters and to know and appreciate the fellowship of those who bear Christ's cross:

We implore you to hear us, O God.

For all who are suffering because of their faithfulness to conviction and duty, that in sacrifice they might find strength and joy;

and that you, who see in secret, may uphold them by your grace, so they may at last come to an open reward:

Lord, have mercy.

For all who are undergoing temptations of the flesh or who imagine evil in their hearts, that you would enable them to overcome and obtain the victory through Christ:

Be merciful and spare them, good Lord.

For all who are lonely and sad in the midst of the joys of others, that they may know you as their Father, Friend, and Comforter:

Lord, hear our prayer.

For the infirm, the aged, and all who are approaching death, that they may find their strength in you and obtain a blessed end:

Lord, hear our prayer.

For all for whom we have forgotten to pray but who are dear to you:

Assist them according to their needs, and bring them to your heavenly kingdom, through Christ our Lord.

O God our Father, hear our intercessions, answer them according to your will, and make us the channels of your infinite pity and helpfulness.

In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

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.

CLOSING PRAYER

M: O Lord God, our heavenly Father, pour out the Holy Spirit on your faithful people. Keep us strong in your grace and truth, protect and comfort us in all temptation, and bestow on us your saving peace, 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

"I Am Trusting You, Lord Jesus"

Hymn 816

I am trusting you, Lord Jesus, trusting only you;
trusting you for full salvation, free and true.

I am trusting you for pardon; at your feet I bow,
for your grace and tender mercy trusting now.

I am trusting you for cleansing in the crimson flood;
trusting you to make me holy by your blood.

I am trusting you to guide me; you alone shall lead,
ev'ry day and hour supplying all my need.

I am trusting you for power; you can never fail.
Words which you yourself shall give me must prevail.

I am trusting you, Lord Jesus; never let me fall.
I am trusting you forever and for all.

Principal's Message

Dear Parents and Guardians,

August is approaching and it is time to get preparations completed for a new school year at St. John. Whether your family is excited and ready for a new school year to begin, or whether you are a family that just doesn't want the summer schedule to come to an end, we pray that all families will anticipate a great year of Christian education where you and your children can find peace and comfort through the daily message of our Savior.

We are surrounded by a world that can seem quite unloving. I don't think the upcoming presidential election is going to help with that. Watch the news, check out social media, or think back to some of the thoughts and words we have each had in the past, and we can quickly see how unloving our world can be. And our children are not able to escape this influence. Our theme for this year will be a great reminder to us and our children on how to step aside from this negative influence and focus on the direction our Savior gives us. Our theme for this year is from Ephesians 4:32: "Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you."

This verse beautifully summarizes the heart of Christian living, reminding us of the great love and forgiveness we have received through Christ and calling us to extend that same grace to others. A goal of our school is to nurture our students not only academically but spiritually, shaping them to be kind, compassionate, and forgiving individuals. As parents and educators, we have the privilege and responsibility to model this Christ-like behavior for our children. When they see us forgive others, they learn to do the same. When they experience our kindness and compassion, they more easily understand the depth of God's love for them.

Throughout this school year, we will emphasize this theme in our classrooms, chapel services, and daily interactions. We will encourage our students to practice kindness and forgiveness in their relationships with their peers, teachers, and families. By doing so, we aim to create a supportive and loving community that reflects the grace we have received from our Heavenly Father.

Thank you for entrusting St. John with the education and spiritual growth of your children; it is a great privilege which we don't take lightly. May the Lord guide all that we do this coming school year as he daily reminds us of his love and forgiveness. God's blessings!

In Christ's Service,

David Retzlaff, Principal, St. John Lutheran School