

## Sermon followed by Service

June 9, 2024

Daniel 2

“I had a dream. Now you tell me my dream. And interpret my dream; tell me what my dream means.” Sounds like that could be a game, a game that could go horribly wrong. For Nebuchadnezzar it wasn’t a game; for his magicians, enchanters, soothsayers it wasn’t a game. Nebuchadnezzar expected an answer, the right answer; and if he didn’t get his right answer he would turn his magicians, enchanters, and soothsayers into body parts. “Tell me my dream; tell me what it means; get it right - right now - or else.”

*Should I be expecting dreams and visions from God? What is the danger in thinking my dreams are messages from God? What is the danger in looking for message-filled dreams and visions from God?*

Nebuchadnezzar wasn’t playing a game. When his magicians, enchanters, soothsayers couldn’t tell him his dream, he sent out his enforcers to start executing, to start slicing bodies into body parts. When they went looking for Daniel, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego to cut them into body parts, that’s when Daniel first heard of Nebuchadnezzar’s dream demands. So what does Daniel do? He doesn’t run and hide. He doesn’t blow and bluster. He doesn’t whine and complain about how life is so unfair. No, first he speaks to his executioner with wisdom and tact, then he goes in to Nebuchadnezzar, not to argue, but to ask for time. With his extra time, what does Daniel do? He doesn’t

run and hide; he doesn't blow and bluster; he doesn't whine and complain. He prays. He goes home and gets his people - Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego - to pray. They pray to the God of heaven for mercy.

And that night in a vision, God gives Daniel the answer. He shows Daniel Nebuchadnezzar's dream and reveals its meaning.

So what was the dream? Nebuchadnezzar saw a statue - an enormous, dazzling, awesome statue. Its head made of pure gold, its chest and arms of silver, its belly and thighs of bronze, and its legs and feet of iron and clay. If you're dreaming that dream, what are you thinking? "Wow!" And maybe "What?" Do you identify with that awesome statue? Or against that statue? Do you see that statue as for you or against you? I think if you're the great Nebuchadnezzar, in some way you identify with that statue; in some way you see yourself in that statue. But you don't have too much time to think. As you're wowing and whatting, a rock is cut out from a mountain. How? By whom? Not by human hands. That rock strikes the statue in its legs, and the whole statue is smashed to smithereens and blown away by the wind. Now what are you thinking? That statue that had you wowing is gone. Is that good? Does it mean trouble? No wonder Nebuchadnezzar wanted answers!

*When dreams have you on edge, where do we look for peace?*

Daniel has more for Nebuchadnezzar and us than just the dream, Daniel has its meaning. The gold head of the statue stood for Nebuchadnezzar. God had given him dominion, power, might, and glory; God had made him king of kings, and ruler over all. Wow! But a silver kingdom would come after his gold kingdom, a bronze kingdom would come after the silver kingdom - we're told almost nothing of those kingdoms - and then an iron and clay kingdom would come - iron crushing everything before it, clay brittle; a kingdom strong and brittle, never united.

Looking back in history, we can add some detail to what Daniel tells us about the Four Kingdoms. First, we have the Babylonian Empire with Nebuchadnezzar as its greatest ruler; then we have the empire of the Medes and Persians; then the Greek Empire with Alexander the Great; then the Roman Empire. We're not told why God judged the Medo-Persian, Greek, and Roman Empires to be successively inferior. Maps and history books might argue. But we are told what happened to those four kingdoms - each of them was replaced, and then they were all smashed to smithereens and blown away by the wind. The greatest of rulers were replaced one after another; the greatest of kingdoms replaced and smashed and blown away.

*What do you know of these four kingdoms?*

*What happened to them?*

*How did God use them?*

The God of the heavens was giving Nebuchadnezzar some perspective. As great as Nebuchadnezzar was and thought himself to be - he would be replaced, and his kingdom would be smashed and blown away. And that perspective wasn't just

meant for Nebuchadnezzar. Daniel wrote this part of his book in Aramaic, the international language of his day. Just as Nebuchadnezzar would be replaced, so also the kingdoms coming after Nebuchadnezzar would be replaced, smashed, and blown away. A timely reminder for us in America, isn't it? As so many are on edge fretting about the future of our great and blessed country, as so many are willing to say or do or approve of most anything to advance their idea of America as a great and blessed country, what do we want to remember? The greatest kings and kingdoms of this world are all - one after another - replaced, smashed, and blown away. And there are no politics or politicians that will change that. Does that mean we just throw up our hands and sigh together: "it is what it is"? No, but it would be alright to think before we say or do or approve the worst of politics for the sake of a king and kingdom that can not and will not ever be able to do what we want it to do - no political power will ever be able to make life right the way we need life made right.

*When we are ready to justify ourselves with the age-old excuses: "He started it; they did it first; we're just fighting fire with fire," consider this: "For whom did Jesus reserve his harshest criticism - those on the other side of the culture war? Or those thinking they were on God's side in the culture war?"*

I said that Nebuchadnezzar's dream is good to give perspective. It's even better because it gives us hope. How? Do you remember that rock? The rock cut, but not by human hands?

What is the meaning of that rock? Again and again in the Old Testament, who is the Rock? **“The LORD is my Rock, my fortress and my deliverer.”** And the Messiah is the stone rejected by men but chosen by God to be the cornerstone for his kingdom. In our Gospel Lesson, we heard Jesus point to himself as the Rock that crushes. Put that all together and who does Nebuchadnezzar’s dream point to? During the time of the Roman Empire, the kingdom of iron and clay, **“in those days Caesar Augustus issued a decree”** ... and what did God do? When the time was right, God cut Jesus loose to establish his kingdom, a kingdom that has grown to fill the earth. His kingdom will never be destroyed; his kingdom will never be replaced; his kingdom will rule forever.

What did that mean for Daniel and the people of God? The powers of this world - as powerful as they were and are, as evil as they were and are against God’s people - the powers of this world would not and will not last; they would and will be replaced, smashed, and blown away. In place of the powers of this world, we get to know there is a kingdom, as strong as rock, a kingdom in which God rules to make life right for his people. In later chapters, Daniel will tell us more about that Rock, more about that King and Kingdom. Today, I don’t want to steal his thunder. Let me tell you this -

Instead of a King and Kingdom that rules by fear and by force, instead of a King and a Kingdom that bullies and enslaves, instead of the Nebuchadnezzars and Caesars and Herods of this world, in Jesus we have a King and a Kingdom that rules with gentleness and peace - **“Come to me all you who are burdened,**

**and I will give you rest.”** Instead of a King and a Kingdom that uses the cross to punish and instill fear, in Jesus we have a King and a Kingdom that uses the cross to redeem and forgive. In Christ and his Kingdom, the King calls you forgiven and right by God. In Christ and his Kingdom, the King sees you as his to hold and care for. In Christ and his Kingdom, the King sees you, not just as subjects, but as partners in ministry - working his blessing, sharing his treasures, ruling with him at God’s right hand. And in his Kingdom ... instead of a King and Kingdom that will be replaced, smashed, and blown away, in Christ and his Kingdom, you have his plan and promise ruling forever.

*In which kingdom has God called you to serve?*

*What important truths will guide us as we seek to serve faithfully?*

That’s not just a dream. That is God’s vision for his Kingdom, a vision coming true in history, a vision true in Christ and true for you. Amen.

June 8 & 9, 2024

### NEW MORNING PRAISE

**IN OUR WORLD TODAY ...** we can get so wrapped up in politics and power – as the problem against us or as solution for us, that we lose sight of our real problem and our real solution.

**IN OUR WORSHIP TODAY ...** Daniel gives us God’s perspective on politics and power. He has a kingdom greater than anything established by man. His Rock will crush the greatest of the nations of this world ... and will rule forever!

### OPENING HYMN

*“Rejoice, the Lord Is King”*

**Hymn 524**

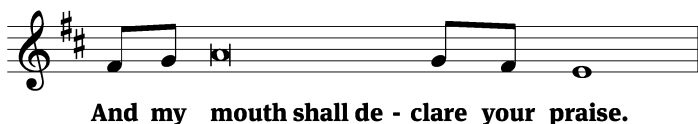
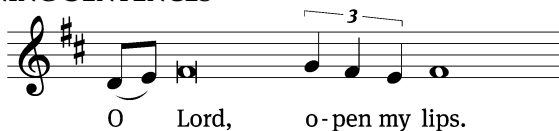
Rejoice, the Lord is King! Your Lord and King adore!  
Rejoice, give thanks and sing, and triumph evermore:  
Lift up your heart, lift up your voice! Rejoice, again I say, rejoice!

The Lord, our Savior, reigns, the God of truth and love;  
when he had purged our stains, he took his seat above:  
Lift up your heart, lift up your voice! Rejoice, again I say, rejoice!

His kingdom cannot fail, he rules o’er earth and heav’n;  
the keys of death and hell are to our Jesus giv’n:  
Lift up your heart, lift up your voice! Rejoice, again I say, rejoice!

Rejoice in glorious hope! Our Lord and judge shall come  
and take his servants up to their eternal home:  
Lift up your heart, lift up your voice! Rejoice, again I say, rejoice!

### OPENING SENTENCES





Hasten to save me, O God.



**O Lord, come quickly to help me.**

### CONFESSION & ABSOLUTION OF SINS

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.

**C: Amen.**



Give glory to God, our light and our life.



**Come, O come, let us wor - ship.**



## COME, O COME, LET US SING TO THE LORD

Come, O come, let us sing to the Lord,  
let us shout with joy to our sav - ing Rock;  
come, en - ter in with our songs of praise,  
come, en - ter in with thanks - giv - ing.

1 You are a great and a won - drous God,  
2 Come, let us wor - ship and, bow - ing low,  
cup - ping in your hands all the depths of earth.  
kneel be - fore the One who has made us all.

You made the hills and the moun - tains high,  
You are the God whom we call our own, *крежан*  
you made the seas and the dry land.  
we are the flock that you shep - herd.

## 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.**

The king asked Daniel (also called Belteshazzar), “Are you able to tell me what I saw in my dream and interpret it?”

Daniel replied, “No wise man, enchanter, magician or diviner can explain to the king the mystery he has asked about, but there is a God in heaven who reveals mysteries. He has shown King Nebuchadnezzar what will happen in days to come. Your dream and the visions that passed through your mind as you were lying in bed are these:

“Your Majesty looked, and there before you stood a large statue—an enormous, dazzling statue, awesome in appearance. The head of the statue was made of pure gold, its chest and arms of silver, its belly and thighs of bronze, its legs of iron, its feet partly of iron and partly of baked clay. While you were watching, a rock was cut out, but not by human hands. It struck the statue on its feet of iron and clay and smashed them. Then the iron, the clay, the bronze, the silver and the gold were all broken to pieces and became like chaff on a threshing floor in the summer. The wind swept them away without leaving a trace. But the rock that struck the statue became a huge mountain and filled the whole earth.

“This was the dream, and now we will interpret it to the king. Your Majesty, you are the king of kings. The God of heaven has given you dominion and power and might and glory; in your hands he has placed all mankind and the beasts of the field and the birds in the sky. Wherever they live, he has made you ruler over them all. You are that head of gold.

“After you, another kingdom will arise, inferior to yours. Next, a third kingdom, one of bronze, will rule over the whole earth. Finally, there will be a fourth kingdom, strong as iron—for iron breaks and smashes everything—and as iron breaks things to pieces, so it will crush and break all the others. Just as you saw that the feet and toes were partly of baked clay and partly of iron, so this will be a divided kingdom; yet it will have some of the strength of iron in it, even as you saw iron mixed with clay. As the toes were partly iron and partly clay, so this kingdom will be partly strong and partly brittle. And just as you saw the iron mixed with baked clay, so the people will be a mixture and will not remain united, any more than iron mixes with clay.

“In the time of those kings, the God of heaven will set up a kingdom that will never be destroyed, nor will it be left to another people. It will crush all those kingdoms and bring them to an end, but it will itself endure forever. This is the meaning of the vision of the rock cut out of a mountain, but not by human hands—a rock that broke the iron, the bronze, the clay, the silver and the gold to pieces.

“The great God has shown the king what will take place in the future. The dream is true and its interpretation is trustworthy.”

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

PSALM OF THE DAY (PAGE 11 OF SERVICE FOLDER)

*Psalm 62C*

SECOND READING

*1 Peter 2:4-9 (EHV)*

As you come to him, the Living Stone, rejected by men but chosen by God and precious, you also, like living stones, are being built as a spiritual house to be a holy priesthood, in order to bring spiritual sacrifices that are acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. For it says in Scripture:

See, I lay a stone in Zion,  
a chosen and precious cornerstone,  
and the one who believes in him will certainly not be put to shame.

Therefore, for you who believe, this is an honor. But for those who do not believe:

The stone which the builders rejected has become the cornerstone,  
and,

a stone over which they stumble  
and a rock over which they fall.

Because they continue to disobey the word, they stumble over it. And that is the consequence appointed for them.

But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, the people who are God’s own possession, so that you may proclaim the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light.

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

## GOSPEL

*Matthew 21:42–44*

Jesus said to them, “Have you never read in the Scriptures:

“ ‘The stone the builders rejected  
has become the cornerstone;  
the Lord has done this,  
and it is marvelous in our eyes’?”

“Therefore I tell you that the kingdom of God will be taken away from you and given to a people who will produce its fruit. Anyone who falls on this stone will be broken to pieces; anyone on whom it falls will be crushed.”

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

## EXPLANATION OF THE 2<sup>ND</sup> ARTICLE OF THE APOSTLE’S CREED

I believe that Jesus Christ, true God, begotten of the Father from eternity, and also true man, born of the virgin Mary, is my Lord.

He has redeemed me, a lost and condemned creature, purchased and won me from all sins, from death, and from the power of the devil, not with gold or silver but with his holy, precious blood and with his innocent suffering and death.

All this he did that I should be his own, and live under him in his kingdom, and serve him in everlasting righteousness, innocence, and blessedness, just as he has risen from death and lives and rules eternally. This is most certainly true.

## HYMN

*“Rock of Ages, Cleft for Me”*

**Hymn 839**

Rock of Ages, cleft for me, let me hide myself in thee;  
let the water and the blood, from thy riven side which flowed,  
be of sin the double cure: cleanse me from its guilt and pow’r.

Not the labors of my hands can fulfill thy law's demands;  
could my zeal no respite know, could my tears forever flow,  
all for sin could not atone; thou must save and thou alone.

Nothing in my hand I bring, simply to thy cross I cling;  
naked, come to thee for dress, helpless, look to thee for grace;  
foul, I to the fountain fly; wash me, Savior, or I die.

While I draw this fleeting breath, when mine eyelids close in death,  
when I soar to worlds unknown, see thee on thy judgment throne,  
Rock of Ages, cleft for me, let me hide myself in thee.

SERMON

*Daniel 2*

HYMN

*"Built on the Rock"*

**Hymn 856 vs. 1-4**

Built on the Rock the Church shall stand even when steeples are falling.  
Crumbled have spires in ev'ry land; bells still are chiming and calling,  
calling the young and old to rest, but above all the soul distressed,  
longing for rest everlasting.

Surely in temples made with hands God, the Most High, is not dwelling;  
high above earth his temple stands, all earthly temples excelling.  
Yet he who dwells in heav'n above chooses to live with us in love,  
making our bodies his temple.

We are God's house of living stones, built for his own habitation.  
He through baptismal grace us owns heirs of his wondrous salvation.  
Were we but two his name to tell, yet he would deign with us to dwell  
with all his grace and his favor.

Here stands the font before our eyes, telling how God has received us.  
Th' altar recalls Christ's sacrifice and what the sacrament gives us.  
Here sound the Scriptures that proclaim Christ yesterday, today, the same,  
and evermore, our Redeemer.

## OFFERING

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## PRAYER OF INTERCESSION

*Let us pray, brothers and sisters, for the holy Church of God throughout the world, that God the almighty Father gather and guide it so that we may worship him in peace and tranquility:*

Almighty and eternal God, you have shown your glory to all nations in Jesus Christ. Guide the work of the Church. Help it to persevere in faith, proclaim your Word, and bring salvation to people everywhere. Lord, in your mercy,

**Hear our prayer.**

*Let us pray for our pastors and teachers and all leaders of the Church, and for all the people of God:*

Almighty and eternal God, your Spirit guides the Church and makes it holy. Strengthen and uphold all who serve you and your people. Keep them in health and safety for the good of the Church. Help each of us to do faithfully the work to which you have called us. Lord, in your mercy,

**Hear our prayer.**

*Let us pray for those who do not believe in Christ, that the light of the Holy Spirit may show them the way to salvation:*

Almighty and eternal god, enable those who do not acknowledge Christ to receive the truth of the gospel. Help us, your Church, to grow in love for you and for one another, so that we become more perfect witnesses of your love for all people. Lord, in your mercy,

**Hear our prayer.**

*Let us pray for those who serve in public office, that God may guide their minds and hearts, so that all of us may live in true peace and freedom:*

Almighty and eternal God, graciously direct those who have been set in positions of authority among us, so that people everywhere may enjoy justice, peace, freedom, and a share in the goodness of your creation. Lord, in your mercy,

**Hear our prayer.**

*Let us pray that God, the almighty and merciful Father, may heal the sick, comfort the dying, give safety to travelers, and free those unjustly deprived of liberty:*

Almighty and eternal God, you give strength to the weary and new courage to those who have lost heart. In your mercy hear the prayers of all who call on you in any trouble, that they may have the joy of receiving your help in their need. We ask this through Christ, our Lord.

**Amen.**

#### PRAYER AND 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.**

M: O Lord, our heavenly Father, almighty and everlasting God, you have brought us safely to this new day. Defend us with your mighty power, and grant that this day we neither fall into sin nor run into any kind of danger; and in all we do, direct us to what is right in your sight, through Jesus Christ, your Son, our Lord. **Amen.**

## BLESSING



The Lord bless and keep you.



A - men.



The Lord's face ev - er shine up - on you.



A - men.



The Lord grant you peace for all your days.



A - men.

## CLOSING HYMN

*"Built on the Rock"*

Hymn 856 vs. 5

Grant then, O God, your will be done,  
that, when the church bells are ringing,  
many in saving faith may come where Christ his message is bringing:  
"I know my own; my own know me. You, not the world, my face shall see.  
My peace I leave with you. Amen."

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PSALM OF THE DAY

Psalm 62C



1 My soul finds rest in God a-lone, my rock and my sal -  
 2 Find rest, my soul, in God a-lone a - mid the world's temp -  
 3 I'll set my gaze on God a-lone and trust in him com -



va - tion; a for - tress strong a - gainst my foes, and  
 ta - tions; when e - vil seeks to take a hold I'll  
 plete - ly; with ev - 'ry day pour out my soul and



I will not be shak - en. Though lips may bless and  
 cling to my sal - va - tion. Though rich - es come and  
 he will prove his mer - cy. Though life is but a



hearts may curse, and lies like ar - rows pierce me, I'll  
 rich - es go, don't set your heart up - on them; the  
 fleet - ing breath, a sigh too brief to mea - sure, my



fix my heart on right-eous-ness, I'll look to him who hears me.  
 fields of hope in which I sow are har-vest-ed in heav - en.  
 King has crushed the curse of death and I am his for - ev - er.

Refrain



O praise him, hal-le - lu - jah, my de - light and my re - ward;



ev - er - last - ing, nev - er fail - ing, my Re - deem - er, my God.