

Sermon followed by Service

August 25, 2024

Daniel 9

Have you been listening to the news, to the speeches? Coming out of the DNC in Chicago this past week, coming out of Florida or wherever - it doesn't matter. Listen to our would-be leaders; then listen to Daniel - they sound so different, don't they? And not just as leaders. Listen to our world today; then listen to Daniel. By the thinking of our world, Daniel sounds so different; Daniel sounds so wrong. Do you think there might be a lesson there for us.

Our lesson today is just days, weeks, months, after Daniel had been delivered out of the lion's den. Daniel is part of two very different worlds. On the one hand, he has the ear and the respect of the King. On the other hand, he's part of a people who have been stepped on, pushed around, and victimized. According to today's thinking, what should Daniel be doing? Protesting, politicking, getting in someone's face. Instead, what is Daniel doing? He's praying.

What is the lesson there for us?

And his prayer, what do you notice about Daniel's prayer? It sounds so different; it sounds so wrong. What do we know about Daniel? He's known for his piety, his godliness, for being right and doing right. But what does he pray? He prays for forgiveness. That is so different, isn't it? He should be pointing fingers and blaming someone. He should be blaming the people

before him; if not blaming his parents and grandparents, he should be blaming the messed up and ungodly culture that ruined things for Judah and Jerusalem, or better yet, blaming the Babylonians. But why stop there? Instead of confessing to God and asking God for forgiveness, Daniel should be excusing himself before God, seeking justice for himself. More than that, instead of confessing and asking God for forgiveness, Daniel should be blaming God, protesting God, raising his fist against God, turning his back on God. Instead Daniel is asking God for forgiveness.

In times of trouble, are we more likely to confess like Daniel or protest like the world?

And it gets worse. Daniel isn't just praying for himself, apologizing for himself, confessing for himself. Daniel is praying, apologizing, confessing on behalf of his people - a people from Jerusalem who have been torn from their homes, a people whose homes back in Judah are in ruins. (I picture the cities of Judah and Jerusalem back then looking like what we see in Gaza today - ruins.) By today's thinking, it sounds so wrong. Daniel is praying on behalf of his people, a people who have been attacked and assaulted, bullied and beaten, corralled and crushed. And what does Daniel pray? "Forgive us." Not just "Make life right for us," but "forgive us." By today's thinking, Daniel is all wrong. By today's thinking, Daniel shouldn't be praying for forgiveness; Daniel should be demanding justice. By today's thinking, Daniel shouldn't be asking God for forgiveness (in a sense, blaming the victim), Daniel should be blaming God

for letting his people suffer so much. By today's thinking, Daniel sounds so different, Daniel sounds so wrong.

Which prayer comes more easily - "help me" or "forgive me"?

What was Daniel thinking? Something was missing in his life; something was missing in the lives of his people. Daniel had been reading his Bible, reading the scrolls of Jeremiah. There he read something that raised his hopes, and something that troubled his spirit. In Jeremiah, Daniel read God's promise that after 70 years of Babylonian rule, God would deliver his people and set them free to return back home to Jerusalem. It was now nearly 70 years since he along with Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, and thousands more had been taken captive to Babylon. The 70 years were almost up. But Daniel noticed that something was still missing, missing in his life, missing in the lives of his people.

When you read Jeremiah and God's "70-year" promise [Jeremiah 25:9-13; 29:10], that he would deliver his people in 70 years, you can't miss God telling his people why he was handing them over into captivity in the first place, and why their homes and Jerusalem would be destroyed. God had been warning his people - they had been setting their hearts and minds on living the life of the world, and if living the life of the world is what they wanted, then he would hand them over to the world. But God's people wouldn't listen. They chose the life of the world over life with God; they chose the sin of the world over godliness with

God. And so, God did what he said he would do - he handed his people over to the world.

Now, with the 70 years almost over, what did Daniel see? God's people still didn't get it! Sure, some of God's people, like Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, lived the God-life, but more didn't. Some were eager to return to Jerusalem, to rebuild Jerusalem and the Temple as God's home, to live the God-life, but more were settled, comfortable and content to live the Babylonian life. As for why they were in Babylon - some were bitter and angry at the Babylonians, in other words, blaming the world for their troubles; some were bitter and angry at God, blaming God for their troubles; but almost nobody got the connection between their sin and God's judgment [Ezekiel 18]. Here it was, almost 70 years after God announced his judgment, 70 years after God handed his people over to judgment, and for the most part, they still didn't get why.

Do we get why? When we flirt with the life of the world, do we get why God lets the world betray us? When we fall in love with the world, do we get why God might turn the world against us? When we chase the life of the world, do we get why God lets us trip and fall, or maybe even knocks us down? When we think we can do better than God, or better without God, do we get why God lets us fail and fall? Or do we settle for making excuses and blaming others? When our finances go bust, it's so easy to blame the economy. When our health goes bad, it's so easy to blame bad genes - people with the Raddatz gene die. When life goes bad, it is so easy to be content to look for a reason out there, instead of doing the hard thing, the painful thing, of

looking in here (our head and our heart). I'm not saying that every trouble we have has some direct cause in some sin we have committed. The lives of Job and Jesus show that's not true. But it is good, godly wisdom to recognize that God uses trouble to judge sin, and that God uses trouble as a teaching tool to turn us from sin. And that sin may be as simple as being too much in love with our self, instead of setting our heart and mind to fear, love, and trust in God above all things. When trouble hits, we don't need to obsess: "What did I do wrong now?" But it can be good to check what's going on in here [our head and heart] instead of just driving down the road with the check engine light flashing in front of our face.

When trouble hits, and we want to know "why?!" - what is a healthy, godly response?

Daniel knew what to do. He looked in here [Bible]; he looked in the mirror; he looked to God; and he prayed. He didn't just pray for relief, to be delivered, for life to be made right - that would be easy. No, Daniel went to the root, to the core, and in sackcloth and ashes, he begged God to forgive him.

And what did God do? God sent the angel Gabriel to Daniel: "God has heard your prayer, and here's your answer." We'll look at God's answer more in Bible Class. [Gabriel's answer has some of the most difficult verses in the Bible.] Here I'll give you the short and sweet version. In Daniel 2, we heard the Rock that will crush and replace all earthly powers is coming. In Daniel 7, we heard the Son of Man who will rule on God's

throne ... he's coming and he will raise God's people up to rule with him forever in heaven. Now, in Daniel 9, we hear Christ the King is coming. Not only will he crush and replace every evil power out there. Not only will he set up a new kingdom for God's people up there [heaven]. But he will do what we need so we aren't crushed and replaced and thrown into the fire. Gabriel tells Daniel that God has it on his calendar to put an end to our rebellion against God; he will put a stop to sin, a stop to our ungodly failures and faults; he will atone for our wickedness. But that's not all. Gabriel told Daniel that God has it on his calendar to usher in a new right life for us, to wrap up all his promises for us, to anoint a Messiah, a Christ for us. We know how he did that. On the cross, Jesus took Daniel's sin, and Jerusalem's sin, and your sin, and my sin - and he covered it with his blood. As Gabriel told Daniel, with Jesus, your sin and God's judgment, your sin and God's anger - are done - you are forgiven. But that's not all. God has for you a new life, a right life for you. He has all his promises wrapped up for you. And all that is true for you in Christ Jesus.

I know - we don't see all that right now. We don't feel all that right now. But God had it on his calendar to make it true in Jesus - which he did. And now God has it on his calendar to make it true for you - with Daniel and Jesus in heaven. Amen.

God has it on his calendar to deliver us to life made right. How do we put that on our calendar?

THE SERVICE

IN OUR WORLD TODAY ... we are accustomed to leaders blaming, excusing, and demanding.

IN OUR WORSHIP TODAY ... Daniel shows us a different heart, confessing, praying, and trusting!

OPENING HYMN

"Praise the Almighty; My Soul, Adore Him"

Hymn 619

Praise the Almighty; my soul, adore him! Yes, I will laud him until death.
With songs and anthems I'll come before him
as long as he allows me breath.
From him my life and all things came; bless, O my soul, his holy name.
Alleluia, alleluia!

Penitent sinners, for mercy crying, pardon and peace from him obtain;
ever the wants of the poor supplying, their faithful God he will remain.
He helps his children in distress, the widows and the fatherless.
Alleluia, alleluia!

Trust not in princes, they are but mortal;
earthborn they are and soon decay.
Vain are their counsels at life's last portal
when the dark grave will claim its prey.
Since, then, no one can help afford, trust only Christ, our God and Lord.
Alleluia, alleluia!

Praise, all you people, the name so holy
of him who does such wondrous things!
All that has being, to praise him solely, with happy heart its amen sings!
Children of God, with angel host praise Father, Son, and Holy Ghost!
Alleluia, alleluia!

INVOCATION

In the name of the Father and of the T Son and of the Holy Spirit. **Amen.**

CONFESSION AND ABSOLUTION

Blessed are they whose transgressions are forgiven, whose sins are covered.

Blessed are they whose sin the Lord does not count against them.

Let us confess our sins to the Lord.

Almighty and merciful Father,

we have strayed from your ways like lost sheep.

We have followed what we have devised and desired in our hearts.

We have offended you and sinned against your holy law.

We have done those things that we should not have done,

and we have not done those things that we should have done.

Have mercy on us, Lord!

Spare us, forgive us, and restore us,

according to your promises in Christ Jesus.

Silence for meditation and reflection

God, our merciful Father, has forgiven all our sins. He sent his Son, Jesus Christ, to be our Redeemer and Savior. Jesus paid the penalty for our guilt by his death on the cross and freed us from death by his resurrection from the grave. We have peace with God now and forever. **Amen.**

LORD, HAVE MERCY

In peace let us pray to the Lord.



Lord, have mer - cy.

For the peace from above and for our salvation, let us pray to the Lord.



Lord, have mer - cy.

For the peace of the whole world, for the well-being of the Church of God,
and for the unity of all, let us pray to the Lord.



Lord, have mer - cy.

For this holy house and for all who offer here their worship and praise, let
us pray to the Lord.



Lord, have mer - cy.

Help, save, comfort, and defend us, gracious Lord.



A - men.

GLORY TO GOD IN THE HIGHEST

CW 176



Glo - ry to God in the high - est, and peace



to his peo - ple on earth.

Lord God, heavenly King, almighty God and Father, we worship you, we
give you thanks, we praise you for your glory. *Refrain*

Lord Jesus Christ, only Son of the Father, Lord God, Lamb of God, you take
away the sin of the world; have mercy on us. You are seated at the right
hand of the Father; receive our prayer. *Refrain*

For you alone are the Holy One, you alone are the Lord, you alone are the
Most High, Jesus Christ, with the Holy Spirit in the glory of God the Father.
Amen. Amen. *Refrain*

PRAYER OF THE DAY

Almighty and everlasting God, you are always more ready to hear than we to pray and willing to give far more than we either desire or deserve. Pour upon us the abundance of your mercy, forgiving us those things of which our conscience is afraid, and giving us those good things for which we are not worthy to ask except through the merits and mediation of 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 9:1–19

In the first year of Darius son of Xerxes (a Mede by descent), who was made ruler over the Babylonian kingdom – in the first year of his reign, I, Daniel, understood from the Scriptures, according to the word of the LORD given to Jeremiah the prophet, that the desolation of Jerusalem would last seventy years. So I turned to the Lord God and pleaded with him in prayer and petition, in fasting, and in sackcloth and ashes.

I prayed to the LORD my God and confessed:

“Lord, the great and awesome God, who keeps his covenant of love with those who love him and keep his commandments, we have sinned and done wrong. We have been wicked and have rebelled; we have turned away from your commands and laws. We have not listened to your servants the prophets, who spoke in your name to our kings, our princes and our ancestors, and to all the people of the land.

“Lord, you are righteous, but this day we are covered with shame – the people of Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem and all Israel, both near and far, in all the countries where you have scattered us because of our unfaithfulness to you. We and our kings, our princes and our ancestors are covered with shame, LORD, because we have sinned against you. The Lord our God is merciful and forgiving, even though we have rebelled against him; we have not obeyed the LORD our God or kept the laws he gave us through his servants the prophets. All Israel has transgressed your law and turned away, refusing to obey you.

“Therefore the curses and sworn judgments written in the Law of Moses, the servant of God, have been poured out on us, because we have sinned against you. You have fulfilled the words spoken against us and against our rulers by bringing on us great disaster. Under the whole heaven nothing has ever been done like what has been done to Jerusalem. Just as it is written in the Law of Moses, all this disaster has come on us, yet we have not sought the favor of the LORD our God by turning from our sins and giving attention to your truth. The LORD did not hesitate to bring the disaster on us, for the LORD our God is righteous in everything he does; yet we have not obeyed him.

“Now, Lord our God, who brought your people out of Egypt with a mighty hand and who made for yourself a name that endures to this day, we have sinned, we have done wrong. Lord, in keeping with all your righteous acts, turn away your anger and your wrath from Jerusalem, your city, your holy hill. Our sins and the iniquities of our ancestors have made Jerusalem and your people an object of scorn to all those around us.

“Now, our God, hear the prayers and petitions of your servant. For your sake, Lord, look with favor on your desolate sanctuary. Give ear, our God, and hear; open your eyes and see the desolation of the city that bears your Name. We do not make requests of you because we are righteous, but because of your great mercy. Lord, listen! Lord, forgive! Lord, hear and act! For your sake, my God, do not delay, because your city and your people bear your Name.”

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

PSALM OF THE DAY

Psalm 143C



1 Hear my prayer, O God, and lis - ten to my plea;
 2 Hound - ed by a foe who crushed me to the ground,
 3 An - swer soon, O God; my spir - it faints in me;
 4 Keep me safe, O God, and help me learn your will;



faith - ful, right - eous One, give ear and an - swer me.
 I am like the dead or those in pris - on bound.
 do not hide your face, or I will cease to be.
 let your Spir - it lead through lev - el path - ways still.



Judge me not, I pray; no mer - it dare I claim;
 Hope - less, numbed by fear, I pon - der all your care;
 When the morn - ing dawns, make known your love a - new;
 For your great name's sake, my griefs and fears dis - pel;



know - ing my own faults, I trust in your just name.
 thirst - y as parched earth, I lift my hands in prayer.
 show me how to walk, for I will trust in you.
 free me from my foes, that I may serve you well.

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION

John 6:68

Alleluia. Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life.
 Alleluia.

GOSPEL

Matthew 7:7-11

“Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives; the one who seeks finds; and to the one who knocks, the door will be opened.

“Which of you, if your son asks for bread, will give him a stone? Or if he asks for a fish, will give him a snake?

If you, then, though you are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give good gifts to those who ask him!

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

“What a Friend We Have in Jesus”

Hymn 721

What a friend we have in Jesus, all our sins and griefs to bear!
What a privilege to carry ev'rything to God in prayer!
Oh, what peace we often forfeit, oh, what needless pain we bear,
all because we do not carry ev'rything to God in prayer!

Have we trials and temptations? Is there trouble anywhere?
We should never be discouraged— take it to the Lord in prayer.
Can we find a friend so faithful who will all our sorrows share?
Jesus knows our ev'ry weakness— take it to the Lord in prayer.

Are we weak and heavy laden, cumbered with a load of care?
Precious Savior, still our refuge—take it to the Lord in prayer.
Do your friends despise, forsake you? Take it to the Lord in prayer.
In his arms he'll take and shield you; you will find a solace there.

SERMON

Daniel 9

HYMN

"Our Father, Throned in Heaven Above"

Hymn 720

Our Father, throned in heav'n above, you bid us all to live in love
as members of one family and pray to you in unity—
teach us no thoughtless words to say, but from our inmost hearts to pray.

Your kingdom come, we humbly pray, that Christ may rule in us today
and that your Holy Spirit bring still more to worship Christ as king.
Break Satan's pow'r, defeat his rage; preserve your Church from age to age.

From evil, Lord, deliver us; the times and days are perilous.
Redeem us from eternal death, and, when we yield our dying breath,
console us, grant us calm release, and take our souls to you in peace.

Amen, that is, so shall it be. Make strong our faith in you that we
may never doubt you but believe that what we ask we shall receive.
Thus in your name and at your word we say, "Amen, O hear us, Lord!"

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PRAYER OF THE CHURCH

M: May this be a time, O Lord, for confession and repentance. Forgive us for the apathy that harms our faith and hinders our works. Forgive us for boasting of our past achievements and for blaming others for our present problems. Rid us of indifference to public worship and Bible study. Destroy the distrust that plagues us, and shatter every thought and word that harms the unity of the Spirit and the bond of peace.

C: Create in us pure hearts, O God, and renew steadfast spirits within us.

M: Let this be a time, O Lord, when you renew us again by Word and sacrament, when you reform our hearts and minds, and when you restore to us the joy of fellowship and service. Grant to us in this age and in this place the courage and the wisdom and the prayer-life of Daniel.

C: May the Lord our God be with us as he was with our fathers; may he never leave us nor forsake us.

M: Let this be a time, O Lord, when we recommit and reconsecrate ourselves to the ministry of the gospel. Let us find joy in our unity, zeal for our work, and success in our labor.

C: May God be gracious to us and bless us and make his face shine on us, that his ways may be known on earth, his salvation among all nations. 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

Blessed Lord, you have given us your Holy Scriptures for our learning. May we so hear them, read, learn, and take them to heart that, being strengthened and comforted by your holy Word, we may cling to the blessed hope of everlasting life; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. **Amen.**

BLESSING

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

“Now Thank We All Our God”

Hymn 597

Now thank we all our God with hearts and hands and voices,
who wondrous things has done, in whom his world rejoices;
who from our mothers’ arms has blessed us on our way
with countless gifts of love and still is ours today.

Oh, may this bounteous God through all our life be near us,
with ever-joyful hearts and blessed peace to cheer us
and keep us in his grace and guide us when perplexed
and free us from all ills in this world and the next.

All praise and thanks to God the Father now be given,
the Son, and him who reigns with them in highest heaven,
the one eternal God, whom earth and heav’n adore;
for thus it was, is now, and shall be evermore.

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