# Sermon followed by Service

August 4, 2024 – Daniel 7

Have you ever picked a loser? Hopefully, not too many times. It's frustrating, isn't it? It hurts. It can be dangerous. At the time of our lesson God's people had been in the habit of picking losers. They picked the Assyrians to protect them and they got stepped on. They picked the Egyptians to protect them and they got stepped on. They expected their priesthood to protect them and it was stepped on. They expected the Temple building to protect them, like some lucky rabbit's foot, and it was stepped on. At the time of our lesson, God's people had a history of picking losers. Why? They thought of God as a loser, so they went looking for someone else - and again and again it cost them.

So now, for Daniel and the rest of God's people, it would have been so easy for them to see themselves as losers. So God gave Daniel a vision.

In Daniel 7, we have Daniel's vision of the four beasts. In this vision, Daniel sees a lion with the wings of an eagle; a bear gnawing on someone's ribs and looking for more; a leopard with wings and four heads; and a fourth beast with iron teeth crushing and devouring its victims, that fourth beast becoming the home of the Antichrist. Each of these beasts stood for kingdoms powerful and fierce that would rule over the earth and tear at God's people kingdoms that would look like winners, kingdoms that would make God's people feel like losers.

When we compare and contrast the beasts of Nebuchadnezzar's vision (Daniel 2) with the beasts of Daniel's vision, what do we notice? What might be the significance of the differences that we see in the beasts?

But the vision of the beasts really isn't about the power of God's enemies, it's about the power and rule of God and his people. So while the fourth beast with the Antichrist is still mouthing off against God, God shows Daniel who wins in the end. The courtroom is set; God, the Ancient of Days, is seated on his throne; his clothing is as white as snow; his throne is flaming with fire; a river of fire is flowing out from before him; ten thousand times ten thousand stand before him; the court is seated and the books are opened; and then, in judgment, that fourth beast, God's great enemy, is slain, destroyed, and thrown into the blazing fire.

What book of the Bible does this sound like? To best understand that other book, what do wise Bible scholars do? (Instead of starting our Bible study with the book of Revelation, we start with the Scripture that builds into Revelation.)

That's when we see Jesus. Daniel tells us: "in my vision at night I looked, and there before me was one like a son of man, coming with the clouds of heaven. He approached the Ancient of Days and was led into his presence." After seeing

lion and bear, leopard and beast, a son of man might not seem very impressive; but he's riding on the clouds like God! And what happens to this son of man riding on the clouds like God? Is he thrown off the clouds as an imposter and a fake? No! Is he sent back to where he came from to do better and get it right? No! This son of man is welcomed home as hero and conqueror! Daniel tells us: "he was given authority, glory and a kingdom; all peoples, nations and men of every language worshiped him." God made this Son of Man to be king. And not just to be king in name alone. God gave this Son of Man authority and power to rule as king. And not just in his own little house. God gave him the kingdom and the glory to be worshipped by all peoples. God made this Son of Man to be king over all the world!

In the Old Testament, who is most often titled "son of man"? (It's not whom most might think.)

What is the significance of the title "Son of Man" when referring to Jesus? (It's not just what we might first think.)

Why might Jesus refer to himself so often as "Son of Man"?

We don't really see that now, do we? We don't see Christ's power over all the world or Jesus worshiped as King over all the world. In fact we often see just the opposite -Christ's enemies taking charge, evil taking control, death running up its score. Sometimes it seems that beasts of evil are running wild in the world around us; sometimes it might seem that beasts of evil run wild inside us. Some days it can seem as if the beasts of evil will win.

And we might forget what it means to have Christ as our King. We might think that the Son of Man is too small to fight against the beasts in our life. We might think he doesn't have the right answer for our hurt. Or we might think the Son of Man riding on the clouds of heaven ... that he's left us behind and turned his back on us. Why might we think that? Because instead of crushing our enemies he lets us be attacked. With all that can be going wrong in us and around us, some days we might think that Christ isn't the kind of king we really need.

What kind of king are we apt to think we need? What kind of king do we really need?

But look at what your King has already done! As the Son of Man, not riding on the clouds, but walking in the dust of this earth, Jesus met the devil face to face. That beast took his best shots, his cheap shots at Jesus; he even had Jesus dead on the cross. It looked like the devil had won. But we get to see things differently! On the cross, the devil didn't take Jesus' life, Jesus was giving his life as an offering to God. Instead of evil wiping out Jesus, Jesus was wiping out evil! We get to see - the beasts couldn't win! The beast of evil couldn't turn Jesus evil; he couldn't turn Jesus against God; and the beast of death couldn't hold Jesus dead. Instead Jesus raised himself back to life! We

get to see - yes, beasts do rise; but in the end they all fall, defanged and destroyed before Jesus, while the Son of Man who died on the cross continues to ride on the clouds and live!

What does this Daniel 7 vision get to mean for us? This is the way we get to see history - in the end, Jesus wins!

What times in Bible history did it most look like Jesus had lost? What times in world history did it most look like Jesus had lost? What times in your history did it most look like Jesus had lost?

What has a wider, longer view of Christ's work shown you?

So why doesn't Jesus show us more winning today ... why doesn't he show us more ruling power today? Why does he let the beasts rage out there? Why does he let evil raise its ugly head in here [my heart]? Think of what kind of king Jesus wants to be. Think of what kind of king we need. We don't need a king with an iron fist to crush and burn every one who speaks up against him; otherwise - how many times would we be on the wrong side of that iron fist judged to join the beasts in the blazing fire? We need more than a king who rules with an iron fist; we need more than a king who judges and burns. We need a king to make life right for us, not just out there, but in here [in our hearts]. We need a king to save us, not just from what's out there, but from what's in here [our hearts]. Thank God, Christ as King doesn't just come to rule and make things right with the power of force. Thank God he comes to us with the power of the cross, the power of peace - the power of peace that changes hearts and lives: "I

love you; I forgive you; I'm here to take care of you; stick with me and I'll make life right for you forever!"

What would your life be like if Jesus resolved every problem in your life with immediate judging power?

How has your heart and life changed knowing Christ's patient promise of peace (from forgiveness to your new life as God's child, to your future life in heaven)?

Jesus' promise to make life right for us doesn't mean Jesus is going to give us a heaven on earth today. His way to show his love as King isn't by how easy he makes life for us today. And his way to show his power as King isn't by clearing all trouble out of our lives today.

That means there will be times when it seems to us that Christ is losing and the beasts of this world are winning. At those times, we might be tempted to give up on Christ, to figure that what we see here and today is all that matters, to see Jesus as just another loser who has let us down. If that's the way we see things, our vision is too narrow, too short-sighted. We get to see to the end; we get to see Christ wins!

In his vision from God, Daniel saw one beast after another, one kingdom after another, come up to attack and rule and devour the world. But one after another each beast was stripped of its power and destroyed. The powers of this world rise and fall.

They come and go. But Christ's rule will not pass away. One after another we can expect that beast and devil will tear at Christ's church; one after another we can expect that beast and evil will tear at us. We don't need a vision from God to see that. We can see that with our eyes today. But Daniel's vision shows us what we can't see with our eyes today. No matter who attacks Christ's church, no matter how ugly and powerful the beast, no matter how many the beasts -- "Christ's dominion is an everlasting dominion that will not pass away, and his kingdom is one that will never be destroyed."

What does that mean for us? By his word of love, Christ has made you to be part of his kingdom. As your King and Shepherd, he promises to keep you part of his kingdom. With Jesus, you aren't hooked up with a loser. With Jesus, we have the winner we need - for today and for ever. Amen.

## SERVICE OF WORD AND SACRAMENT

**IN OUR WORLD TODAY ...** so many think there is no Christ because they see no Christ. In times of trouble, we may be tempted to think the same way.

**IN OUR WORSHIP TODAY ...** after chapters of trouble, we finally see Christ - and see that he has been winning all along ... into forever!

### **OPENING HYMN**

"Jesus Shall Reign Where'er the Sun" Hymn 380

Jesus shall reign where'er the sun does its successive journeys run; his kingdom stretch from shore to shore till moons shall wax and wane no more.

To him shall endless prayer be made and endless praises crown his head; his name like sweet perfume shall rise with ev'ry morning sacrifice.

People and realms of ev'ry tongue Dwell on his love with sweetest song, and infant voices shall proclaim their early blessings on his name.

Blessings abound where'er he reigns: the pris'ners leap, unloosed their chains, the weary find eternal rest, and all who suffer want are blest.

Let ev'ry creature rise and bring worship and honor to our King; angels descend with songs again, and earth repeat the loud amen.

# **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.

"O Lord, Our Lord" Hymn 939

Almighty God, merciful Father, you crown our life with your love.

You take away our sin; you comfort our spirit;

you make us pure and holy in your sight. You did not spare your only Son, but gave him up for us all.

O Lord, our Lord, how glorious is your name in all the earth.

O Son of God, eternal Word of the Father, you came to live with us; you made your Father known;

you washed us from our sins in your own blood.

You are the King of glory; you are the Lord!

O Lord, our Lord, how glorious is your name in all the earth.

### PRAYER OF THE DAY

Lord Jesus Christ, by your victory you have broken the power of the evil one. Fill our hearts with joy and peace as we look with hope to that day when every creature in heaven and earth will acclaim you King of kings and Lord of lords to your unending praise and glory; for you live and reign with the Father and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. **Amen.** 

FIRST READING Daniel 7:1-18

In the first year of Belshazzar king of Babylon, Daniel had a dream, and visions passed through his mind as he was lying in bed. He wrote down the substance of his dream.

Daniel said: "In my vision at night I looked, and there before me were the four winds of heaven churning up the great sea. Four great beasts, each different from the others, came up out of the sea.

"The first was like a lion, and it had the wings of an eagle. I watched until its wings were torn off and it was lifted from the ground so that it stood on two feet like a human being, and the mind of a human was given to it.

"And there before me was a second beast, which looked like a bear. It was raised up on one of its sides, and it had three ribs in its mouth between its teeth. It was told, 'Get up and eat your fill of flesh!'

"After that, I looked, and there before me was another beast, one that looked like a leopard. And on its back it had four wings like those of a bird. This beast had four heads, and it was given authority to rule.

"After that, in my vision at night I looked, and there before me was a fourth beast—terrifying and frightening and very powerful. It had large iron teeth; it crushed and devoured its victims and trampled underfoot whatever was left. It was different from all the former beasts, and it had ten horns.

"While I was thinking about the horns, there before me was another horn, a little one, which came up among them; and three of the first horns were uprooted before it. This horn had eyes like the eyes of a human being and a mouth that spoke boastfully.

"As I looked,

"thrones were set in place, and the Ancient of Days took his seat.

His clothing was as white as snow; the hair of his head was white like wool.

His throne was flaming with fire, and its wheels were all ablaze.

A river of fire was flowing, coming out from before him.

Thousands upon thousands attended him;

ten thousand times ten thousand stood before him.

The court was seated, and the books were opened.

"Then I continued to watch because of the boastful words the horn was speaking. I kept looking until the beast was slain and its body destroyed and thrown into the blazing fire. (The other beasts had been stripped of their authority, but were allowed to live for a period of time.)

"In my vision at night I looked, and there before me was one like a son of man, coming with the clouds of heaven. He approached the Ancient of Days and was led into his presence.

He was given authority, glory and sovereign power; all nations and peoples of every language worshiped him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion that will not pass away, and his kingdom is one that will never be destroyed.

"I, Daniel, was troubled in spirit, and the visions that passed through my mind disturbed me. I approached one of those standing there and asked him the meaning of all this.

"So he told me and gave me the interpretation of these things: 'The four great beasts are four kings that will rise from the earth. But the holy people of the Most High will receive the kingdom and will possess it forever—yes, for ever and ever.'"

The Word of the Lord. Thanks be to God.



Endow the king with your justice, / O God,

the royal son with your / righteousness.

May he endure as long / as the sun,

as long as the moon, through all gener- / ations.

May he be like rain falling on a / mown field,
like showers water- / ing the earth.
In his days may the righteous / flourish
and prosperity abound till the moon / is no more. *Refrain* 



May all kings bow / down to him and all nations / serve him.

Long may he live! May gold from Sheba be / given him. May the kings of Sheba and Seba pre- / sent him gifts.

May people ever / pray for him and bless him / all day long.

Then all nations will be / blessed through him, and they will / call him blessed.

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 ACCLAMATION

Revelation 11:15

Alleluia. The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Messiah, and he will reign for ever and ever. Alleluia.

GOSPEL Matthew 25:31–46

"When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, he will sit on his glorious throne. All the nations will be gathered before him, and he will separate the people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. He will put the sheep on his right and the goats on his left.

"Then the King will say to those on his right, 'Come, you who are blessed by my Father; take your inheritance, the kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world. For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in, I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me.'

"Then the righteous will answer him, 'Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you something to drink? When did we see you a stranger and invite you in, or needing clothes and clothe you? When did we see you sick or in prison and go to visit you?'

"The King will reply, 'Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me.'

"Then he will say to those on his left, 'Depart from me, you who are cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels. For I was hungry and you gave me nothing to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me nothing to drink, I was a stranger and you did not invite me in, I needed clothes and you did not clothe me, I was sick and in prison and you did not look after me.'

"They also will answer, 'Lord, when did we see you hungry or thirsty or a stranger or needing clothes or sick or in prison, and did not help you?'

"He will reply, 'Truly I tell you, whatever you did not do for one of the least of these, you did not do for me.'

"Then they will go away to eternal punishment, but the righteous to eternal life."

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

## HYMN OF THE DAY

"See, He Comes, the King of Glory" Hymn 494

See, he comes, the King of glory, angels blazing round his throne, wielding wrath to those who spurned him, bearing blessings for his own. Do not dread that day, dear Christian! Do not fear his fearsome face, for the judge is our dear Savior; we are guarded by his grace.

See, he comes, the King of glory, naming deeds we did for him: feeding, clothing, sharing, caring, visiting, inviting in.

We may ask, "When did we do this—show you, Lord, such courtesy?"

He will say, "The least, the lowly—serving them was serving me."

See, he comes the King of glory, with a kingdom to award. We have not deserved or earned it; it's his gift, not our reward. All our works are but an off'ring of our gratitude and praise. We serve not so God will save us; we serve God because we're saved.

Till he comes, the King of glory, angels blazing round his throne, we will turn our eyes to heaven, tune our ears to trumpet's tone. But we won't neglect our neighbors needing comfort, shelter, love. Kindnesses for friends and strangers serve our Savior-King above.

SERMON Daniel 7

#### 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

Lord Jesus Christ, blessed are you, the King who comes to set your people free.

Reign over us in your abundant mercy.

While we long for your final coming, we rejoice that you lengthen these end times so that many may hear of your saving work and believe.

Send your Spirit on us that we may use the gift of time to share our faith with others.

Lord and King, defend all who are imprisoned or insulted because of your name. Come to help those whose Christian faith is mocked as foolish or naïve, and rescue those who are straying from the faith.

Lead us to those who need help, guide us in our works of service, and strengthen us with a firm resolve to follow you in obedience.

Lord of the Church, develop in us a new awareness of the gifts you give us to use in our callings, that your kingdom of grace may flourish.

Bless and preserve Christian churches everywhere and raise up another generation of faithful workers.

Both in humiliation and glory you extended your loving hand to the weak and the hurting. Speak to those who are confused and wondering. Defend those who are oppressed and put down. Comfort those who are enduring pain or struggling with sadness. [Keep in your care... here name the person and the cause of the petition.] Abide with the aged who are alone as they die and protect pregnant mothers and their unborn children.

Move us to see your face in them, Lord Jesus and to help them as we serve you.

Mighty King, look with mercy on this land, its government, and all the kingdoms of the world. Relieve us from war, bloodshed, and rebellion. Grant us wisdom as we deal with a changing economy. Provide for the unemployed and their families. Open the hearts of those who prosper to be generous and willing to share.

Hear us, Lord, as we pray in silence.

Silent prayer.

Coming King and Savior of the world, keep us faithful to the end as we watch and wait for your return. **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.

#### 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 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 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) Sung

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

**Hymn 488** 

The day is surely drawing near when Jesus, God's anointed, shall with great majesty appear as judge of all appointed. All mirth and laughter then shall cease when flames on flames will still increase, as Scripture truly teaches.

A trumpet loud shall then resound and all the earth be shaken. Then all who in their graves are found shall from their sleep awaken and with the living in that hour, by God's almighty, boundless pow'r, be changed at his commanding.

A book is opened then to all, a record truly telling what each has done, both great and small, when they on earth were dwelling, and ev'ry heart be clearly seen, and all be known as they have been in thoughts and words and actions.

Then woe to those who scorned the Lord and sought but carnal pleasures, who here despised his precious Word and loved their earthly treasures! With shame and trembling they will stand and at the judge's stern command to Satan be delivered.

My Savior paid the debt I owe and for my sin was smitten; within the Book of Life I know my name has now been written. I will not doubt, for I am free, and Satan cannot threaten me; there is no condemnation!

O Jesus Christ, do not delay, but hasten our salvation; we often tremble on our way in fear and tribulation. Your saints are waiting patiently; come soon, Redeemer, make us free from ev'ry evil. Amen.

#### **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**

"Crown Him with Many Crowns" Hymn 511 vs. 1 & 4

Crown him with many crowns, the Lamb upon his throne; hark how the heav'nly anthem drowns all music but its own. Awake, my soul, and sing of him who died for thee, and hail him as thy matchless King thro' all eternity.

Crown him the Lord of heav'n, enthroned in worlds above; crown him the King to whom is giv'n the wondrous name of Love. Crown him with many crowns as thrones before him fall; crown him, ye kings, with many crowns for he is King of all.

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# **Brunch to Meet the New Bunch**

Join us after service on Sunday, August 18, to celebrate the installation of our new Principal, David Retzlaff, and 5<sup>th</sup> & 6<sup>th</sup> Grade Teacher, Liz Kuschel. This is a great opportunity to meet Dave, Liz, and their families and enjoy time with your church and school family. And there will be lots of food!

# St John Picnic

Saturday, September 7 Church service from 4-5pm | Picnic to Follow

What to Bring: Side Dish (families with last name A-L) Dessert (families with last name M-Z)

Our favorite event of the year. Everyone is welcome and guests are encouraged! We will have music, a bounce house for the kids, the annual corn-hole tournament, and back again by popular request Dave Knight's famous BBQ pulled pork! See you there!