

Daniel 6:1-28¹The LORD delivers Daniel
from the lions den4th Last Sunday of Reformation
& Endtime – Reformation Sunday
Supplementary Lectionary Series “A,”
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Grace WELS Durand MI
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^{6:1} It pleased Darius to appoint 120 satraps to rule throughout the Kingdom, ² with three administrators over them, one of whom was Daniel. The satraps were made accountable to them [those three] so that the King might not suffer loss. ³ 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. ⁴ 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. ⁵ 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.”

⁶ So the administrators and the satraps went as a group to the King and said: “O King Darius, live forever! ⁷ 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 man during the next thirty days, except to you, O King, shall be thrown into the lions’ den. ⁸ Now, O King, issue the decree and put it in writing so that it cannot be altered—in accordance with the laws of the Medes and Persians, which cannot be repealed.” ⁹ So King Darius put the decree in writing.

¹⁰ 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. ¹¹ Then these men came thronging and found Daniel praying and asking God for help. ¹² 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 man except to you, O King, would be thrown into the lions’ den?”

The King answered, “The decree stands—in accordance with the laws of the Medes and Persians, which cannot be repealed.”

¹³ Then they said to the King, “Daniel, who is one of the exiles from Judah, pays no attention to you, O King, or to the decree you put in writing. He still prays three times a day.” ¹⁴ When the King heard this, he was greatly distressed; he was determined to rescue Daniel and made every effort until sundown to save him.

¹⁵ Then the men went as a group to the King and said to him, “Remember, O King, that according to the law of the Medes and Persians no decree or edict that the King issues can be changed.”

¹ *The New International Version*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House) 1984. All Scripture references are taken from this translation unless noted otherwise.

¹⁶ 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!"

¹⁷ 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.

¹⁸ 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.

¹⁹ At the first light of dawn, the King got up and hurried to the lions' den. ²⁰ 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?"

²¹ Daniel answered, "O King, live forever! ²² 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, O King."

²³ 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.

²⁴ 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.

²⁵ Then King Darius wrote to all the peoples, nations and men of every language throughout the land:

"May you prosper greatly!

²⁶ "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.

²⁷ 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."

²⁸ So Daniel prospered during the reign of Darius and the reign of Cyrus the Persian.

IS YOUR GOD ABLE TO RESCUE YOU?

- I. ... FROM THE WICKED?
- II. ... FROM THE LIONS?
- III. ... FROM DEATH?

In the Name of Jesus who rescues us from our sins and gives us eternal life in heaven, Dear Fellow-Redeemed,

Most of you are probably familiar with this Old Testament Lesson of Daniel in the Lions' Den. We want to focus on the key question that King Darius, also known as King Cyrus, asks concerning Daniel and Daniel's God. After a restless night, King Darius comes to the mouth of the den of lions and calls out 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?" (6:20b). That is the key question that you also need to ask yourself. Is your God able to rescue you? IS YOUR GOD ABLE TO RESCUE YOU? I. ... FROM THE WICKED? II. ... FROM THE LIONS? III. ... FROM DEATH?

IS YOUR GOD ABLE TO RESCUE YOU? I. ... FROM THE WICKED?

While most of you are familiar with the lesson of Daniel in the lions' den, you may not be familiar with how Daniel got himself into that mess in the first place. Daniel was a faithful servant of King Darius – King Cyrus. He was so faithful that the King planned to place Daniel over the entire Kingdom. This plan made the other administrators jealous. While they looked for something that might be improper in Daniel's conduct, they could not find anything. Finally, they determined that if they were going to bring Daniel down, they would have to do it in connection with his worship of the One True God.

You heard then how these conspirators went to the King. They played upon the King's ego. They enticed him to pass a law that anyone who worshipped or prayed to anyone except to him – the King – would be thrown into the den of lions. Daniel heard this law, but he continued to pray to the One True God three times a day. The conspirators found him praying and turned him over to the King for execution – to be thrown into the lions' den.

While King Darius realized now too late that he had been tricked, he nevertheless stuck by his law – a law "of the Medes and Persians, which cannot be repealed" (6:8b,12b). He had Daniel thrown into the lions' den. These conspirators were successful – at least for one night.

The following morning things changed. Daniel was still alive, unharmed by the lions. The King then ordered that the conspirators along with their families be thrown into the lions' den. They were not spared. The lions immediately attacked them and broke all their bones. The lions had a feast.

History has a way of repeating itself. Today, we are celebrating the Reformation. It was on October 31, 1517, that Dr. Martin Luther posted his ninety-five theses or statements on the door of the Castle Church in Wittenberg, Germany. You heard some of those theses in the first part of our worship service this morning. Those theses challenged the validity of the Indulgences being sold by the Priest Tetzl under the authority of the Roman Catholic Pope. Luther too was confronted by "conspirators." He was excommunicated

by the pope. Emperor Charles named him an “outlaw” whom any one could kill on sight. The LORD, however, rescued Luther. The LORD rescued Daniel. Will the LORD rescue you?

APPROPRIATION

Is the LORD able to rescue you from the wicked? You probably have encountered some people whom you thought fall into this category of being wicked. Perhaps it was that person who cheated you in some sort of business transaction. Or, maybe it was the person in the shop or at work who seemed to have it in for you. It could have been someone at school who always gave you trouble. Or, maybe it was someone whom you trusted in a personal relationship that you feel betrayed you. There will be other situations in which you encounter those whom you think are wicked. But there is one other person that you have for sure encountered that is wicked.

The other person whom you have encountered who is wicked is the one you see in the mirror every morning. That’s right – that wicked person is you. Think not? Listen to what the Bible says about you ... and you ... and you ... and me.

In his Epistle or Letter to the Romans, St. Paul quotes from Psalm 14:1-3; 53:1-3; and, Ecclesiastes 7:20. St. Paul says,

¹⁰ ***As it is written:***
“There is no one righteous, not even one;
¹¹ ***there is no one who understands,***
no one who seeks God.
¹² ***All have turned away,***
they have together become worthless;
there is no one who does good,
not even one” (Romans 3:10-12).

St. Paul paints with broad strokes your condemnation, your wickedness: “No one righteous” that means you. “No one who understands” that means you. “No one who seeks God” that means you. “All have turned away” that includes you. “All ... together have become worthless” that includes you. “No one ... does good, not even one” that includes you. This is not the only place in Scripture, in the Bible, that paints such a terrible and condemning picture of you and your wickedness.

Before the flood and after the flood, God observed concerning all mankind, “The LORD saw how great man’s wickedness on the earth had become, and that every inclination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil all the time” (Genesis 6:5). After the flood, God saw the same thing. He saw that “every inclination of [mankind’s] heart is evil from childhood” (Genesis 8:21b). King David confessed this same truth about himself in Psalm 51:5, “Surely I was sinful at birth, sinful from the time my mother conceived me.” The Apostle Paul said the same thing about himself. He said, “I know that nothing good lives in me, that is, in my sinful nature” (Romans 7:18a). So, dear friend, you yourself are that wicked person from whom you need to be rescued.

Is God able to rescue you from the wicked? From your sinful self? Indeed he is able, and he has. God rescued you from your own wickedness and sinfulness by sending his Son Jesus into the world to be your Savior. Jesus “committed no sin” (1 Peter 2:22a), and Jesus’ sinlessness, righteousness, perfection and innocence, has been credited to you. Jesus took upon himself your punishment and suffered for you on the cross. You know this because the Bible tells you that Jesus is “The atoning sacrifice ... for the sins of the whole world” (cf. 1 John 2:2). If Jesus sacrificed himself on the cross “for the sins of the whole world,” then Jesus sacrificed himself for your sins too.

Jesus has delivered you from the wicked – not only from others who are wicked but also from yourself and from your sins and your wickedness. Has Jesus also delivered you from the lions?

IS YOUR GOD ABLE TO RESCUE YOU? II. ... FROM THE LIONS?

Daniel had to deal with real lions. Being thrown into a den of lions was the way in which the Babylonians, Medes and Persians often executed people. Those lions were ravenous. Look at what happened to the conspirators and their families when they were cast into the lions’ den: “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” (6:24). How did Daniel escape?

How did Daniel escape from those ravenous lions? Daniel himself tells us, “My God sent his angel, and he shut the mouths of the lions” (6:22a). Yet there is one who is more ravenous and dangerous than those lions whom Daniel encountered.

The one more ravenous and dangerous than the lions is the devil, Satan. Peter tells us in his First Epistle, “Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour” (1 Peter 5:8b). First of all, note that the devil is your enemy. Second, the devil is active – he looks for – he is prowling around for – someone to devour. So how does God rescue you from this enemy the devil.

How does God rescue you from the devil? John writes in his First Epistle, “He who does what is sinful is of the devil, because the devil has been sinning from the beginning” (1 John 3:8a). Reference to the person “who does what is sinful” is a reference to you. You have already noted that from what St. Paul repeated in his Epistle to the Romans that “There is no one righteous, not even one” (Romans 3:10b). But now John continues with these words, “The reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the devil’s work” (1 John 3:8b). Yes, you belong to the devil because you are a sinner. But Jesus, God’s Son came to destroy the devil’s work – Jesus, God’s Son came to rescue you from sin and from the devil.

APPROPRIATION

The devil is not accurately depicted in some Halloween costume of red, with a head of horns and a spiked tail. The devil is real creature. Satan is real. He wants to devour you. The way in which the devil chiefly works is by changing, altering and twisting God's Word – the Bible – to make it say something it does not say.

What did the devil say to Eve when he tempted her in the Garden of Eden? He said, "Did God really say, 'You must not eat from any tree in the garden'?" (Genesis 3:1b). God did not say that at all, and Eve responded correctly, "We may eat fruit from the trees in the garden, but God did say, 'You must not eat fruit from the tree that is in the middle of the garden, and you must not touch it, or you will die'" (Genesis 3:2b). Then the devil continued by calling God and God's Word a liar: "You will not surely die "For God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil" (Genesis 3:4,5). We also observe the devil twisting and distorting God's Word when he tempted Jesus in the wilderness.

⁵ Then the devil took [Jesus] to the Holy City [Jerusalem] and had him stand on the highest point of the Temple. "If you are the Son of God," [the Devil] said, "throw yourself down [from the highest point of the Temple]. For it is written:

***"He will command his angels concerning you,
and they will lift you up in their hands,
so that you will not strike your foot against a stone"***
(Matthew 4:5,6).

The devil was quoting Psalm 91, verses 11 and 12, but he was misusing the Scriptures – the Bible – in order to tempt Jesus. The devil does the same kind of thing today in order to capture you.

The devil says, "God so loved the world" (John 3:16a); so you can enjoy any kind of sinfulness and wickedness you want and still go to heaven; you can believe anything you want and still go to heaven. The devil ignores "repent and believe the Gospel" (cf. Mark 1:15b). The devil misuses the words of St. Paul who said, "Everything is permissible" (1 Corinthians 6:12 & 10:23), and the devil says, "You can do anything you want." But the devil ignores the words that follow, "Not everything is beneficial." Then the devil comes full force against you when you have fallen into sin and realize it.

The devil comes against you full force and attacks you when you realize your sinfulness. That is when the devil tempts you to despair just as he tempted Judas Iscariot and won that betrayer's soul. The devil tries to make you believe that your sin is so great, so devastating, so pervading, that you will never be forgiven. To those who feel the depth of sin, however, the Scriptures proclaim, "The blood of Jesus, [God's] Son, purifies [you] from all sin" (1 John 1:7b). Another temptation that your enemy the devil throws at you has to do with your works.

The devil uses logic and reason. You know that to succeed in life, you have to work. You know that to get ahead, you have to work hard. So it just makes sense that if you want to be in a right and saving relationship with God, you have to work for it – or have to work at least for some of it. To that God’s Word answers clearly and concisely, “It is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—not by works, so that no one can boast” (Ephesians 2:8,9).

How do you stand fast and firm against your adversary the devil? Hold fast to God’s Word – the Bible – in truth and purity – without addition, without subtraction, without twisting or distorting. Finally, is your God able to rescue you from death?

IS YOUR GOD ABLE TO RESCUE YOU? III. ... FROM DEATH?

Daniel did not die from the threat of the lions. Dr. Martin Luther did not die from the threats of the pope or the emperor. But both of them died sooner or later. Was their God able to rescue them from death?

Was God able to rescue Daniel from death? Listen to what God told Daniel, recorded in the Last Chapter of his Book. God the LORD tells Daniel ... and us: “Your people—everyone whose name is found written in the book—will be delivered. Multitudes who sleep in the dust of the earth will awake: some to everlasting life, others to shame and everlasting contempt” (12:1c,2). God is speaking about Judgment Day – the Last Day.

All people will rise from the dead to stand before Jesus for judgment. Jesus indicates how this judgment will be rendered. He says, “Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved, but whoever does not believe will be condemned” (Mark 16:16). Those who believe in Jesus as their Savior will be rescued from eternal condemnation in hell. They will be saved. They will enjoy heaven with Jesus.

APPROPRIATION

Is your God able to rescue you from death? Indeed, he is able and he has. Jesus’ resurrection from the dead is the guarantee that you too, as a believer in Jesus, will rise from the dead. Jesus, your Risen Savior, has given you these promises: “Because I live, you also will live” (John 14:19b). Jesus, your Risen Savior, assures you, “Everyone who looks to the Son and believes in him shall have eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day” (John 6:40b). Jesus, your Risen Savior, says to you, “I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in me will live, even though he dies; and whoever lives and believes in me will never die” (John 11:25,26a). By faith in Jesus, God has rescued you from death – from eternal death and damnation and suffering in hell – and has given you eternal life and joy in heaven with Jesus.

CONCLUSION

Your God, your LORD and Savior, Jesus Christ, has rescued you from wickedness, from the devil and from eternal death and damnation. Physical death for you and all believers in Jesus is only temporary. Eternal life and joy with Jesus awaits you in heaven. Amen.