

Pastor's Message
November 29, 2020

Hi Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

Congregational meetings – There will a virtual (Zoom) congregational meeting tomorrow after worship. At this meeting the 2021 budget included in this mailing will be presented, as well as a slate of nominees for GSELC Church Council members. The second annual congregational meeting will be held virtually after church on December 13th to approve the budget and elect members to the GSELC Church Council. A copy of the budget was included in this email in a separate file.

2021 Offering Envelopes – The 2021 offering envelopes are here and ready to be picked-up. You can pick them up tomorrow or on December 6th between 11:00 a.m. and 1:00 p.m. at the church. Masks and social distancing are required. In addition to your own envelopes, please pick up those for family members and/or friends that you would be willing to deliver to their houses.

Communion Sundays – There will be communion each Sunday in Advent starting on November 29.

God's Peace!

Pastor Denise	Home Phone	610-750-6432
	Cell/Text Phone	610-858-8187

Daniel in the Lions' Den

A reading from the 6th chapter of Daniel.

6 ¹⁻³ Darius reorganized his kingdom. He appointed one hundred twenty governors to administer all the parts of his realm. Over them were three vice-regents, one of whom was Daniel.

The governors reported to the vice-regents, who made sure that everything was in order for the king. But Daniel, brimming with spirit and intelligence, so completely outclassed the other vice-regents and governors that the king decided to put him in charge of the whole kingdom.

⁴⁻⁵ The vice-regents and governors got together to find some old scandal or skeleton in Daniel's life that they could use against him, but they couldn't dig up anything. He was totally exemplary and trustworthy. They could find no evidence of negligence or misconduct.

So, they finally gave up and said, "We're never going to find anything against this Daniel unless we can cook up something religious."

⁶⁻⁷ The vice-regents and governors conspired together and then went to the king and said, "King Darius, live forever! We've convened your vice-regents, governors, and all your leading officials, and have agreed that the king should issue the following decree:

For the next thirty days no one is to pray to any god or mortal except you, O king. Anyone who disobeys will be thrown into the lions' den.

⁸ "Issue this decree, O king, and make it unconditional, as if written in stone like all the laws of the Medes and the Persians."

⁹ King Darius signed the decree.

¹⁰ When Daniel learned that the decree had been signed and posted, he continued to pray just as he had always done. His house had windows in the upstairs that opened toward Jerusalem. Three times a day he knelt there in prayer, thanking and praising his God.

¹¹⁻¹² The conspirators came and found him praying, asking God for help. They went straight to the king and reminded him of the royal decree that he had signed. “Did you not,” they said, “sign a decree forbidding anyone to pray to any god or man except you for the next thirty days? And anyone caught doing it would be thrown into the lions’ den?”

“Absolutely,” said the king. “Written in stone, like all the laws of the Medes and Persians.”

¹³ Then they said, “Daniel, one of the Jewish exiles, ignores you, O king, and defies your decree. Three times a day he prays.”

¹⁴ At this, the king was very upset and tried his best to get Daniel out of the fix he’d put him

in. He worked at it the whole day long.

¹⁵ But then the conspirators were back: “Remember, O king, it’s the law of the Medes and Persians that the king’s decree can never be changed.”

¹⁶ The king caved in and ordered Daniel brought and thrown into the lions’ den. But he said to Daniel, “Your God, to whom you are so loyal, is going to get you out of this.”

¹⁷ A stone slab was placed over the opening of the den. The king sealed the cover with his signet ring and the signet rings of all his nobles, fixing Daniel’s fate.

¹⁸ The king then went back to his palace. He refused supper. He couldn’t sleep. He spent the night fasting.

¹⁹⁻²⁰ At daybreak the king got up and hurried to the lions’ den. As he approached the den, he called out anxiously, “Daniel, servant of the living God, has your God, whom you serve so loyally, saved you from the lions?”

²¹⁻²² “O king, live forever!” said Daniel. “My God sent his angel,

who closed the mouths of the lions so that they would not hurt me. I've been found innocent before God and also before you, O king. I've done nothing to harm you."

²³ When the king heard these words, he was happy. He ordered Daniel taken up out of the den. When he was hauled up, there wasn't a scratch on him. He had trusted his God.

²⁴ Then the king commanded that the conspirators who had informed on Daniel be thrown into the lions' den, along with their wives and children. Before they hit the floor, the lions had them in their jaws, tearing them to pieces.

²⁵⁻²⁷ King Darius published this proclamation to every race, color, and creed on earth:

Peace to you! Abundant peace!

I decree that Daniel's God shall be worshiped and feared in all parts of my kingdom.

He is the living God, world without end. His kingdom never falls.

His rule continues eternally.

He is a savior and rescuer.

He performs astonishing miracles in heaven and on earth.

He saved Daniel from the power of the lions.

²⁸ From then on, Daniel was treated well during the reign of Darius, and also in the following reign of Cyrus the Persian.

The word of the Lord.

C: Thanks be to God.

Sermon

Grace and Peace to you from God our Father and Jesus Christ our Lord and Savior. AMEN

Let us pray.

God of deliverance,
You rescued Daniel from the
mouths of the lions when he was
punished for worshiping you.
Liberate all who are endangered
for the sake of their faith
and rescue us from anything
that separates us from
worshiping only you, for the
sake of the one who made your
name known to all people, across
land and seas, Jesus Christ, our
redeemer.

Amen.

As we begin this season of
Advent, it seems that this year
we are overanxious for the joy
and hope of Christmas more
than ever. As life these past 9
months have challenged us with
finding new and different ways
of connecting with one another,

new and different ways of
getting the basic needs in our
lives taken care of, and even new
ways of experiencing church, we
long to move on from the reality
of our current circumstances.

As we meet up with Daniel this
morning, Daniel is now living in
a foreign land without many of
the structures, practices and
traditions of his ancestors, as
their beloved temple has been
destroyed, their enemies have
taken over their land and the
Israelites find themselves living
in exile. And as is the case with
Daniel, they find themselves
limited in the ways that they can
legally worship and praise the
God of their ancestors.

This story tells us that although
Daniel was a foreigner and at
the mercy of a foreign king,
Daniel continued to live with

integrity and remained faithful to the God of his ancestors. Daniel much like Joseph before the enslavement of the Israelites in Egypt, found favor in the foreign king's court. And King Darius even appointed Daniel to be a vice-regent, who were responsible for supervising the governors and other court officials. But Daniel, brimming with spirit and intelligence, so completely outclassed the other vice-regents and governors that the king decided to put him in charge of the whole kingdom.

Needless to say, the other court officials were not happy that they were now being supervised by a foreigner. The court officials got together to plot against Daniel and started by trying to find something he had done wrong in the past that they could hold against him. But, they couldn't find anything. He was totally exemplary and trustworthy. They could find no evidence of negligence or misconduct.

However, this did not stop them as they wanted Daniel gone.

They also knew that Daniel continued to take time each day to pray to the God of Israel. Since, those in power were always on guard for another entity rising in power to defeat them, the conspirators played on that fear and convinced King Darius that he needed to squash any attempts by the foreigners to question his authority.

The conspirators suggested that King Darius issue an edict that for the next thirty days no one is to pray to any god or mortal except King Darius and anyone who disobeys this edict will be thrown into the lions' den.

The King not realizing that he would be putting his beloved Daniel in jeopardy agreed and issued the decree.

When Daniel learned of the degree, he did not heed it, but continued to pray just as he had always done. The conspirators watched him through his windows and reported back to King Darius, who was upset with the news because of his love and

respect for Daniel. He wanted to find a way to pardon Daniel for his faithfulness to the God of Israel, but his officials pushed him to not make an exception for Daniel just because he had a position of authority in the kingdom. That night Daniel was thrown in the cave with lions and then the cave was sealed with a large stone.

The king who was distraught over this whole situation went down to the cave early the next morning. As he approached the den, he called out, “Daniel, servant of the living God, has your God, whom you serve so loyally, saved you from the lions?”

And to his surprise, King Darius heard Daniel respond, “O king, live forever! My God sent his angel, who closed the mouths of the lions so that they would not hurt me. I’ve been found innocent before God and also before you, O king. I’ve done nothing to harm you.”

When the king heard these words, he was happy. He ordered the officials to move away the stone and as Daniel came out of the cave, the king saw for himself that there was not a scratch on Daniel.

And then King Darius decreed this proclamation to every race, color, and creed on earth that the God of Israel shall be worshiped and feared through all parts of his king. For Daniel’s God is the living God, who performs miracles in heaven and on earth. We know this to be true as the God of Israel has saved Daniel from the power of the lions.

After which the conspirators and their families were thrown to the lions and Daniel continued on in service to King Darius and future kings of the Persian nation.

We find in this story that through the faithfulness of God’s good and faithful servant Daniel, God continues to act to rescue and restore God’s people. And

through these acts, the story of God's power and providence has become known throughout the land and throughout the generations by not only the Israelites but also by the Gentiles.

And it is these stories of rescue and restoration that give God's faithful people both of Daniel's day and of today, hope that God will act again and the reality of the present will not define the future.

In the case for Daniel who was living in exile in a foreign land because his homeland had been seized by their enemies and their people scattered, the people of Israel still lived in hope that one day God will in the future perform acts of rescue and restoration and the descendants of Abraham will be restored as a nation. They lived in hope that they will be reunited to resume the practices of temple worship. And they lived in hope that God's promise of the new covenant will

be fulfilled and that a descendant of David will be seated on the throne forever more.

And especially this year; we are called to live in hope that God will perform acts of rescue through the scientists and the medical professionals so the reality of our present will someday be only a story that we tell to our children and grandchildren.

We live in hope that our God, who rescued Daniel from the lion's den will also rescue us from this terrible pandemic.

Advent is the season of hope. And as we retell the story of the God's people, who suffered through dark times waiting for the one through whom the world will be saved, let us see in the Christmas lights that surround us and let us hear in the Christmas music that fill our ears, the faithfulness, steadfastness and the

awesomeness of our God, the
God of descendants of Abraham.

Our God, who will never leave us
or forsake us.

Our God, who is present with us
and who will wipe away all our
tears.

Our God, who continues to
rescue and restore us.

And our amazing God, who has
fulfilled God's promises with the
most precious of gifts, God's one
and only Son, who born of a
descendant of David will indeed
reign over God's kingdom
forevermore.

For this, during this season of
Advent may we be filled with
HOPE.

AMEN

Blessing

The Lord bless you and keep you.

The Lord's face shine on you with grace and mercy.

The Lord look upon you with favor and give you peace.

In the name of the + Father, and the Son and the Holy Spirit.

AMEN