



Saint John United Methodist Church
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Message for June 11, 2023
"By Faith. Daniel"
Speaker: Pastor Tom Grieb
Scripture: Hebrews 11:32-34, Daniel 6:16-23

The Hall of Faith we have been talking about the past few weeks ends with a flurry of names and, in some cases, names that aren't even mentioned. Ashlee read it last week.

Hebrews 11:32-34

And what more shall I say? I do not have time to tell about Gideon, Barak, Samson and Jephthah, about David and Samuel and the prophets, who through faith conquered kingdoms, administered justice, and gained what was promised; who shut the mouths of lions, quenched the fury of the flames, and escaped the edge of the sword; whose weakness was turned to strength; and who became powerful in battle and routed foreign armies.

The part about "shutting the mouths of lions" and "quenching the fury of the flames," has to do with the life of Daniel.

Unlike Gideon, who Ashlee talked about last week, Daniel was as solid as a rock when it came to living by faith. Where Gideon's faith would waver at times, Daniel's never did. Gideon's was more like shifting sand, Daniel's was rock-solid. Let's hear a bit about that as we read one of the most endearing and well-known stories in all the Bible.

We read today, Daniel 6:16-23, the story of Daniel in the Lion's Den.

Let's hear this from God's Word.

Daniel 6:16-23

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!"

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. 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.

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

Daniel answered, "May the king live forever! 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, Your Majesty." 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.

This is the Word of God for the people of God. Thanks be to God.

Wholly Dedicated to God

The story of Daniel is the story of a man wholly dedicated to God. His is the story of a resolute faith. Daniel's focus was constantly on God. Daniel sought to glorify God at every turn. Daniel refused to go along with the crowd, whether it involved refusing to eat food that was deemed unclean or committing himself to regular prayer. Daniel, much like Joseph, was a Hebrew who rose to high standing in the court of a foreign kingdom.

Like Joseph, Daniel always seemed to land on his feet.

Daniel was also a dreamer, just like Joseph. Daniel's ability to interpret dreams gained the attention of the king and only solidified his position in the king's court. Daniel was one of three overseeing the whole of Babylon and was in the running to oversee the entire kingdom.

Like Joseph, Daniel remained faithful to God. This was his most endearing quality.

Daniel's relationship with God was strong in every way. Daniel was so dedicated to God that he prayed three times each day with his face pointed to Jerusalem.

We shouldn't be surprised that prayer played an important role in the development of Daniel's faith. Interestingly, it was Daniel's regular practice of prayer that eventually got him in a bind with his rivals. Here we encounter a bit of political intrigue.

The rivals talked the king into making a decree that for thirty days no one would be allowed to pray to anyone except the king. Daniel would not be deterred. He continued his regular prayers to God which allowed him to stand strong in the face of the challenges that would soon come his way.

Prayer has the same effect for us. Prayer helps us stand strong amid the challenges we face.

Like with Daniel, prayer plays a pivotal role in the development of our faith as well. Daniel was so highly regarded and so above reproach that his rivals knew that the only way they would be able to get him would be on religious grounds.

As the story of Daniel goes, those rivals were quick to make the king aware that Daniel had been praying to God when by decree of the king directed all prayers his way. When Daniel's rivals brought up the fact that Daniel had been praying to his God, the king had no other

recourse but to throw Daniel in the lion's den. The king would have put his credibility on the line if he would have done otherwise.

So, off to the lion's den Daniel went.

The Lion Tamer

Most everyone is familiar with the famous entertainers, Siegfried, and Roy. They were master magicians and well-known as lion tamers. They were a must-see act in Las Vegas. In 2003, Roy provoked his lion while doing a show. The lion attacked and nearly killed him. Roy endured a long road of recovery. Their act, Siegfried and Roy never did recover. A lion is called the King of the Jungle for good reason. Lions are ferocious and the most feared of all animals. They have a way of relentlessly stalking their prey into submission. They are everyone's match.

That's why the story of Daniel in the lion's den is so thrilling. It is a story of deep faith triumphing over a very real and a very present danger.

As we learn from scripture the mouths of the lions in the lion's den remained shut because Daniel placed his trust in God. Some might assert that Daniel was the lion tamer here, much like Siegfried and Roy. Nothing could be further from the truth. Sure, Daniel's faith played an important role, but it was God who was the lion tamer.

We all have "*lions*" in our lives. Those "*lions*" are all around us and seek to do us harm. Placing our faith in God helps us face them and emerge victoriously. Circumstances are constantly swirling about us that conspire to weigh us down.

- Work can be a big deal.
- Concerns about finance can be as well.
- Things don't always go as we would like at home.
- Sometimes health concerns get the better of us.
- At other times, we find ourselves overwhelmed with what might be around the corner. Those kinds of lions threaten to jump out at any time.

One lion for me these days has to do with the broader church and its effect upon our ministry here. As a church we are taking the tack to wait and see what comes out of the 2024 General Conference next spring. In the interim, we are committed to continue to move forward faithfully, doing ministry as God leads us, all the while praying for his fruitfulness. I trust that such faithfulness will keep the lions at bay until such time when we enter a season of discernment, if not decision, based upon what the General Conference decides.

I have a sheet that explains a bit more about that on one of the tables in the Lobby. I encourage you to pick one up. Last Wednesday I met with the youth. My goodness, we can certainly be proud of our youth. I encourage you to pray for them as they make the way to Florida for their summer camp.

On Wednesday, we read through the first chapter of James. It talks about persevering when times are tough. It also talks about not giving into temptation, particularly the temptation to give up. That same night I came home to watch the last episode of season three of *The Chosen*. It features Peter leaving the boat during a storm on the Sea of Galilee and walking out to Jesus. As we know from that story, Peter took his eyes off Jesus and began to sink. It was then that Jesus drew him out of the water.

In *The Chosen*, Peter exclaims repeatedly, *"Don't let me go. Don't let me go."* Christ will never do that. Jesus says in John 16:33, *"I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world."* Paul quotes Jesus in II Corinthians 12:9, *"My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness."*

In referencing the *"lions"* of our lives Peter writes in I Peter 5:8-9, *"Be self-controlled and alert. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour. Resist him, standing firm in the faith, because you know that your brothers throughout the world are undergoing the same kind of suffering."* Remember this, *"The one who is in you is greater than he who is in the world."* (I John 4:4)

The Lion of Judah

In the end, we have a great Lion on our side, the Lion of Judah, our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

He is our protector and stay.

In him, we have hope now and forever more. By faith, we can stake our very lives upon him.

"Do not weep! See the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the root of David has triumphed."
(Revelation 5:5)

He will do that every time, all the way to the end of time.

May God bless us all as we seek to live *By Faith*.