

**TRINITY EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH  
MINOCQUA, WI  
SERMON FOR SEPTEMBER 27 & 28, 2020**

*It seemed like a good plan to Darius to appoint one hundred twenty satraps over the kingdom. They were to rule throughout the kingdom. <sup>2</sup> Above them there would be three supervisors (Daniel was one of them) to whom these satraps would report, so that the king would not suffer any loss. <sup>3</sup> It came about that this Daniel distinguished himself above the supervisors and satraps, because there was an outstanding spirit in him. So the king intended to promote him so that he would be in charge of the entire kingdom.*

*<sup>4</sup> Then the supervisors and satraps kept trying to find a basis for an accusation against Daniel in regard to his administration of the kingdom. However, they were unable to come up with an accusation or any evidence of corruption, because he was trustworthy and no neglect of duty or evidence of corruption could be found against him. <sup>5</sup> Then these men said, "We will not find any accusation to bring against this Daniel unless we find something against him concerning the law of his God."*

*<sup>6</sup> So these supervisors and satraps came as a group to the king and said this to him, "Darius, Your Majesty, may you live forever! <sup>7</sup> All the supervisors of the kingdom, the prefects and the satraps, the advisors and the governors advise the king to establish and enforce a decree that prohibits anyone to pray a prayer to any god or person for thirty days except to you, Your Majesty. Anyone who does so will be thrown into the den of lions. <sup>8</sup> Now Your Majesty, please establish the decree and sign a document that cannot be changed, according to the law of the Medes and the Persians that cannot be revoked."*

*<sup>9</sup> That is why King Darius signed the written decree.*

*<sup>10</sup> Now, when Daniel learned that the document had been signed, he went to his house. It had windows on its upper story that opened toward Jerusalem. Three times each day he would get on his knees and pray and offer praise before his God. He continued to do that, just as he had been doing before this. <sup>11</sup> Then these men came as a group and found Daniel praying and seeking favor from his God.*

*<sup>12</sup> They then went and asked the king about the decree. "Your Majesty, did you not sign a decree that anyone who prays to any god or person for thirty days except to you, Your Majesty, would be thrown into the den of lions?" The king answered, "Indeed I did. The order is established as a law of the Medes and the Persians that cannot be revoked."*

*<sup>13</sup> Then they responded to the king, "Daniel, who is one of the exiles from Judah, does not pay attention to you, Your Majesty, or to the decree that you signed. Instead, three times each day he is praying his prayers."*

*<sup>14</sup> When the king heard this report, he was very upset about it, but he was determined to save Daniel. So until sunset he worked hard to rescue him. <sup>15</sup> Then these men came as a group to the king and kept saying to the king, "You know, Your Majesty, that it is the law of the Medes and the Persians that every decree or statute that the king establishes cannot be changed."*

*<sup>16</sup> Then the king gave the order, and Daniel was brought and thrown into the lions' den. The king said to Daniel, "May your God, whom you serve continually, rescue you." <sup>17</sup> A stone was brought and placed over the mouth of the pit. The king sealed it with his signet ring and the signet rings of his nobles so that nothing could be changed with regard to Daniel's situation. <sup>18</sup> Then the king went to his palace. He spent the night without food, and no entertainment was brought before him. But he could not sleep.*

*<sup>19</sup> At dawn the king arose as soon as it was light and hurried to the lions' den. <sup>20</sup> As he came near the pit, he cried out in a fearful voice. The king said to Daniel, "Daniel, servant of the living God, was your God, whom you serve continually, able to rescue you from the lions?"*

*<sup>21</sup> Then Daniel spoke with the king. "Your Majesty, may you live forever! <sup>22</sup> My God sent his angel and shut the mouth of the lions. They have not hurt me because he found me innocent in his presence. Also before you, Your Majesty, I have committed no crime."*

*<sup>23</sup> Then the king was very glad and said that Daniel should be brought up from the pit. So Daniel was brought up from the pit, and he was unharmed because he trusted in his God.*

<sup>24</sup> *The king gave the order, and those men who maliciously accused Daniel were brought and thrown into the lions' den—they, their children, and their wives. They had not reached the bottom of the pit when the lions overpowered them and crushed all their bones.*

<sup>25</sup> *Then King Darius wrote to all the peoples, nations, and languages that dwell in the entire earth: May your peace and prosperity increase. <sup>26</sup> I give this command throughout my royal dominion: People should continually tremble and be afraid before the God of Daniel, because he is the living God, who endures forever. His kingdom will not be destroyed, and his dominion is eternal. <sup>27</sup> He rescues and he saves. He works signs and wonders in heaven and on earth. So he saved Daniel from the power of the lions.*

<sup>28</sup> *So this Daniel prospered during the reign of Darius, that is, during the reign of Cyrus the Persian.*

(Daniel 6, EHV)

What's in your cloud? If Daniel had a smartphone and web access, and hackers hacked their way into his device and his cloud storage, what would they have found? Nothing. Nothing salacious, suspicious, or scandalous. Not one thing.

As we catch up to Daniel in chapter six, it's the year 538 BC. The Babylonians are history, the Medes and Persians now rule the region, and Daniel is still standing. More than 65 years after his exile from Israel to Babylon, Daniel continues to stand up and stand out. He's now in his 80s, and has successfully maintained a significant leadership role in the new realm.

But Daniel has his detractors, kids today would call them "haters." They ***"kept trying to find a basis for an accusation against Daniel in regard to his administration of the kingdom. However, they were unable to come up with an accusation or any evidence of corruption, because he was trustworthy and no neglect of duty or evidence of corruption could be found against him."*** (Daniel 6: 4,5)

There is nothing – nothing in his behavior, nothing in his 60 plus years of government service, nothing in any cloud (literal or digital) – that can be held against him. Daniel is a man of integrity.

What's in your cloud? You and I are hardly celebrities, we wouldn't make headlines like others did this past week. But what would hackers find if they got into your files, pictures, videos, and digital history? Daniel's example of integrity is a great reminder for us, and for more than just our digital cloud. If people were to investigate your entire spiritual cloud history, what would they find?

Suppose they checked out your school records, shopping habits, how you treat your children/family members/friends, favorite TV shows/movies/music. Suppose they checked out every relationship you've ever had, how you act on the job, how you act toward the opposite sex, your vocabulary, the jokes you tell, the thoughts that cross your mind. What's in your cloud?

The answer to that will be influenced by your answer to the next question for our consideration: What's on your schedule? Those conspiring against Daniel succeed in getting the king to decree that for the next 30 days, anyone who prays to any god except the king shall be thrown into the lions' den.

Daniel's response? ***"When Daniel learned that the document had been signed, he went to his house. It had windows on its upper story that opened toward Jerusalem. Three times each day he would get on his knees and pray and offer praise before his God. He continued to do that, just as he had been doing before this."*** (v. 10) The key words here: ***"just as he had been doing before."***

What's on his schedule? A better question would be, Who's on his schedule? God is. Time with God was of the highest priority. And not just because Daniel was in trouble and might get thrown into the lions' den. It's what he always did. It was his regular routine. ***"Just as he had been doing before."***

Call it prayer, meditation, Bible study – it's time with God...there are several things about Daniel's example here that we do well to imitate.

- 1) A specific place - At home in his upstairs room by the southwest-facing/Jerusalem-facing windows; you and I benefit from a usual specific location for our time with God – a desk, an easy chair

- 2) A regular time – Three times a day. We too benefit from a regular time for time with God. Commit to a schedule and stick with it.
- 3) Giving thanks; giving thanks? At this time? He's the subject of a conspiracy; these guys aren't just trying to ruin his reputation, they want to kill him; and here Daniel is living the New Testament words of the Apostle Paul which wouldn't be written down for another 600 years: **"Give thanks in all circumstances, for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus"** (1 Thessalonians 5:18) **"Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God."** (Philippians 4:6)
- 4) This was a consistent habit. This wasn't a recent campaign to better himself, 40 days of purpose or 7 habits of highly effective people. This was something he just did, had done for a long time. Again, those all-important words: **"Just as he had been doing before."**

There's no doubt, the more time we spend with God, the more blessings we'll enjoy, the more of his promises we'll understand, the more we'll trust him, and we'll be strengthened to be people of integrity.

From the very beginning of this account, people have been choosing sides. Seems like pretty much everyone is against Daniel, except, incredibly, King Darius. The king absentmindedly signed this law, and it can't be repealed because to do so would make him seem not infallible, not really someone to worship as a god (as the decree declared). A god doesn't change his mind, at least a god worth his so-called divinity.

So, a good question to ask as we continue to search this Scripture, "Whose side are you on?" This is NOT a political question. It's a spiritual question. All life long, Daniel has stood up and stood out as a man of God. He doesn't change now. He remains faithful and loyal to God. And God is faithful to Daniel, not because of Daniel, not as a reward to Daniel or because he has such amazing faith. God is faithful to Daniel because of who He (God) is – the merciful, faithful, unchanging God who keeps his promises.

During the Civil War, Abraham Lincoln was purportedly asked if God was on his side. **"Sir, my concern is not whether God is on our side,"** said the President, **"my greatest concern is to be on God's side, for God is always right."**

Remember what I asked what's in your cloud, your spiritual cloud, your every thought/word/deed? God knows it all, sees it all. Our sins exclude us from God's side, from even approaching him. Why would God even want to have us on his side, or be near us at all? Because he is not just a God of holiness and righteousness, and justice. He is also a God of mercy and compassion and forgiveness. This is shown most clearly in the sending of his Son to be our Savior. Justice demands that we be on the hook for every single sin, a price we could never pay. Mercy and grace, in the form of Jesus' innocent shed blood, wash us clean of every sin. And God pulls us to his side through the gift of faith.

You know how the account goes on. The king tried to keep Daniel from the lions' den, but couldn't. So he gave the order and said to Daniel, **"May your God, whom you serve continually** (echoes of the question, What's/Who's on your schedule – God is, all the time), **rescue you."** (v. 16b)

Who slept better that night? Daniel or King Darius? The king refused any entertainment, tossed and turned, could not sleep. Daniel? Well, Daniel had a much more comfortable, carefree night. At the first light of dawn, the king rushed to see if Daniel was somehow, some way, still alive. **Daniel answered, "Your Majesty, may you live forever! My God sent his angel and shut the mouth of the lions. They have not hurt me because he found me innocent in his presence. Also before you, Your Majesty, I have committed no crime."** (vv. 21,22) He was lifted out of the den, not a single scratch was found on Daniel because, and I'm quoting, **"because he trusted in his God."**

Who's got home "den" advantage? Sports teams make a big deal out of home field advantage. Home teams in any sport usually have an advantage when playing at their own field, court, stadium. Except during the age of COVID. You would think that since it was the lions' den, that the lions had home field advantage. Anyone who got tossed in there was pretty much DOA.

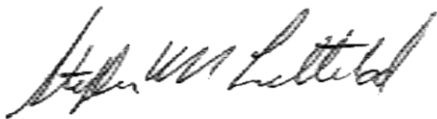
But not Daniel. He turned the home den advantage on its ear, and made himself right at home there thanks to the angel of the Lord. I picture the angel arriving, closing the mouths of the lions who were gathered all around Daniel, and then Daniel pulling out his pocket Old Testament and reading between the “lions” for a while. God was with him, and since God was there, it wasn’t so much a lions’ den as it was Daniel’s den.

Even in a pagan culture, a world hostile toward God and his people, you and I can always have home den/home field advantage even when not at home or in comfortable surroundings. Here’s a fact, an unchanging, irrefutable fact: God is with his people. Always. God is with you always. He is with you wherever you are, wherever you go, whatever circumstances you find yourself in. And because God is with you, you have home den/home field advantage. Whether you’re attending a new school, walking into a job interview, navigating some relationship difficulties, or just holding on through some family struggles – you’re not being thrown to the lions, to your challenges. Turn that around. Those challenges have to go up against you...and God. God is with you, always. You always – no matter, what, when, where – you always have home den/home field advantage.

Integrity, time with God, God on your side/God with you, home “den” advantage: it’s all yours, by grace, just as it was for Daniel. Be faithful in your walk of life – you never know the impact you might have on others.

You’ve heard of the Magi/Wise Men from the East who came to visit the child Jesus. Where did they come from, and how did they hear of the star and of the child? I think it was Daniel’s influence. Nearly seven decades near the top of government leadership across two empires, in charge of all the wise men, and so dedicated to sharing his faith...Daniel is a pretty good possibility. Surely he shared with the wise men of his day the prophecy in Numbers 24:17 – ***“I see him, but not now; I behold him, but not near. A star will come out of Jacob; a scepter will rise out of Israel.”***

You never know the impact you might have. Trust this: the same God who delivered Daniel will deliver you from or through the painful lions’ den experiences of life in his own time and in his own way, as he sees best. And through your faith-filled, God-honoring words and actions, he will draw others to the Savior for his glory.



Pastor Stephen Luchterhand  
Minocqua, WI