

We bow our hearts in prayer: O Lord, visit this dwelling [and all our dwellings], and drive far from [them] all snares of the enemy; let Your holy angels dwell with us to preserve us in peace; and may Your blessing be upon us evermore; through Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen. (The Collect of "The Office of Compline", ELH, p. 128)

Dear Fellow Redeemed,

Our text is the rather familiar account of "Daniel in the Lion's Den."

I'm sure that your at least familiar with the main story. It's one of our Sunday School lessons.

In fact, the students just went through it 2 weeks ago, so this should be fresh in their minds. Remember how it starts? Daniel was well-liked by King Darius, who wanted to promote him. His co-workers, however, were jealous of the king's favor.

They wanted to get rid of Daniel, but they couldn't find any guilt in him, he was **blameless**.

So instead, they encouraged King Darius to write a new law that couldn't be revoked which made Daniel's public-and-known worship practices illegal.

It is at this point that we enter into the reading of our text. *We read as follows in Jesus' name:*

When Daniel knew that the document had been signed, he went to his house where he had windows in his upper chamber open toward Jerusalem. He got down on his knees three times a day and prayed and gave thanks before his God, as he had done previously. Then these men came by agreement and found Daniel making petition and plea before his God. Then they came near and said before the king, concerning the injunction, "O king! Did you not sign an injunction, that anyone who makes petition to any god or man within thirty days except to you, O king, shall be cast into the den of lions?" The king answered and said, "The thing stands fast, according to the law of the Medes and Persians, which cannot be revoked." Then they answered and said before the king, "Daniel, who is one of the exiles from Judah, pays no attention to you, O king, or the injunction you have signed, but makes his petition three times a day."

Then the king, when he heard these words, was much distressed and set his mind to deliver Daniel. And he labored till the sun went down to rescue him. Then these men came by agreement to the king and said to the king, "Know, O king, that it is a law of the Medes and Persians that no injunction or ordinance that the king establishes can be changed."

Then the king commanded, and Daniel was brought and cast into the den of lions. The king declared to Daniel, "May your God, whom you serve continually, deliver you!" And a stone was brought and laid on the mouth of the den, and the king sealed it with his own signet and with the signet of his lords, that nothing might be changed concerning Daniel. Then the king went to his palace and spent the night fasting; no diversions were brought to him, and sleep fled from him.

Then, at break of day, the king arose and went in haste to the den of lions. As he came near to the den where Daniel was, he cried out in a tone of anguish. The king declared to Daniel, "O Daniel, servant of the living God, has your God, whom you serve continually, been able to deliver you from the lions?" Then Daniel said to the king, "O king, live forever! My God sent His angel and shut the lions' mouths, and they have not harmed me, because I was found blameless before Him; and also before you, O king, I have done no harm." Then the king was exceedingly glad, and commanded that Daniel be taken up out of the den. So Daniel was taken up out of the den, and no kind of harm was found on him, because he had trusted in his God. And the king commanded, and those men who had maliciously accused Daniel were brought and cast into the den of lions—they, their children, and their wives. And before they reached the bottom of the den, the lions overpowered them and broke all their bones in pieces. (ESV)

This is a great story to use when meditating on God's providence and protection.

Daniel, a faithful servant of the Lord, defies the king's injunction, even though death is threatened.

Daniel disobeys men, in order to obey God, and is forced to pay the penalty.

Though the king knows Daniel is a righteous man, he is compelled to condemn him to death.

The Lord, however, intervenes at, seemingly, the last minute, and sends his angel to close the mouths of the lions, and so Daniel is spared.

He rises out of his would-be tomb without mark or scratch; he is a free man.

This is a great story for what the Lord can do to save His people.

He can send His angels to stop great injustices and catastrophes and in miraculous ways.

We can appreciate it because we know what was actually suppose to happen, by nature.

Daniel was to die, being gored by lions. It was inevitable. But the Lord saved him.

(Of course, this doesn't discount all the times the Lord and His angels intervene when we don't know the dangers that they have protected us from.)

But let's say, you're Daniel, and you don't know the end of the story at the beginning of it.

You hear that the document has been signed by the king. What do you do?

Do you give up praying for the next 30 days? Like a variation of a Lenten custom?

Do you simply close the curtains to the window and pray anyway?

But if you do either of those, they win. They can't bust you, but you are no longer faithful.

Your Almighty God seemed too weak to you to provide and protect you against these devious men.

So you pray. What do you pray?

Do you give thanks as you had done previously? Or is your thanks forced or disingenuous?

"Thank you, Lord, for such fiendish co-workers!?"

Thank you, Lord, for such an easily duped government!?"

Thank you, Lord, for this opportunity to be persecuted!?"

Or do you pray prayers of complaint?

"Lord, what are you doing? Don't you realize that this will ruin my life!?"

My job. My career. My friends. My family. My reputation.

You're inviting temptation, not leading me out of it.

How is this protecting me and delivering me from evil!?"

And certainly there are petitions and pleas to God.

"Please, don't let them catch me. Please, don't make me suffer.

Please, take this cup away from me, no matter what You desire to accomplish through it."

But all the while, you're doubting the Lord's wisdom, provision, and protection.

This happens today, doesn't it? We struggle with these things all the time.

It happens when we hear the results of certain court cases. When certain legislation is passed.

It happens when the boss or instructor requires something against your beliefs/conscience.

When family or friends or customers threaten to disown you or turn you in.

All of a sudden, the God we acknowledge is "almighty" and all-knowing,

appears to us to be too weak to hold off these impending persecutions by mere mortal man. He seems too foolish, being so easily duped by the devil and the world's tricks.

And it seems to me that I must try to save myself, deliver myself from the jaws of the lions. ...

But then, the devil wins, because once you think that you can't trust God to protect you, and provide for you, then you are your own idol...and you'll fail to save yourself every time.

But the foolishness of God is wiser than men, and the weakness of God is stronger than men.

This isn't just a great story for what the Lord can do to save His people,
this is a great story for what the Lord has done to save His people.

1 Corinthians 1:25

Daniel in the Lion's Den is a true story. It happened, as Scripture reports it to us.

But Daniel in the Lion's Den is more than just to words inked on the page.

It's not just about Daniel spending a night with big kitty-cats. It's a foreshadow, a type, a picture.

It's the story about Jesus appearing in great weakness and even foolishness,
yet invading the lion's den and shutting up the mouth of the Accuser, Satan himself,
and freeing the entire world of the guilt and punishment of sin.

Note how Daniel's accusers knew he was blameless, so they had to use his righteousness against him.

Note how the gov't, against his conscience and knowledge felt compelled to condemn the innocent.

Note how Daniel was closed in by a large rock which was sealed

to declare that nothing might be changed, the punishment had to be borne.

And how the "living God" saved him from the mouths of the lions.

Note how Daniel was freed, released from the condemnation after he had survived the punishment.

Note how the end of the accusers was destruction by their own tactics.

And consider that after Daniel survived, not only Daniel is safe, but also all those who serve his God as Darius himself issues a **decree, that in all [his] royal dominion people are to tremble**

and fear before the God of Daniel. Daniel 6:26

Daniel's story is the story of your salvation through Jesus,

not by the avoidance of righteousness in the face of persecution and death,

but through the very righteousness that brought on the persecution and death.

Daniel's story is the story of your salvation through Jesus,

Who appeared so weak and foolish by earthly standards yet prayed in your behalf to the Father,

Who thanked the Father that He was to be glorified in death,

Who prayed and did not fall into temptation, and was, in fact, delivered from evil,

Who trusted entirely in the Father's will, no matter how dire it looked around Him,

Who insisted on the Father's gracious will, over His own, no matter what it cost Him.

Daniel's story is a death and resurrection story and so it is your story of salvation through Baptism,

as you die daily to this world and its wisdom and strength, and to your own self-preservation,

and rise daily in God's weakness and foolishness in Christ, redeemed, forgiven and sanctified.

Daniel's story is your story, too, about how the Lord has provided for and protected you

against the **prowling, roaring lion, seeking someone to devour.** 1 Peter 5:8

How He has well provided for your spiritual and eternal life already,

and is very capable to protect you against all enemies according to His wisdom and strength,

so that you are always right to *fear, love and trust in Him above all things.* (Luther's Expl. To the 1st Comm.)

and so that you are always right **in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving**
[to] **let your requests be made known to God**, as Daniel did.
And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts
and your minds in Christ Jesus. Philippians 4:6-7 Amen.

Soli Deo Gloria