"Our God Whom We Serve is Able to Deliver Us"

In Jesus' name. **Amen**.

…as follows in Jesus' name:

Then Nebuchadnezzar in furious rage commanded that Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego be brought. So they brought these men before the king. Nebuchadnezzar answered and said to them, "Is it true, O Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, that you do not serve my gods or worship the golden image that I have set up? Now if you are ready when you hear the sound of the horn, pipe, lyre, trigon, harp, bagpipe, and every kind of music, to fall down and worship the image that I have made, well and good. But if you do not worship, you shall immediately be cast into a burning fiery furnace. And who is the god who will deliver you out of my hands?" Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego answered and said to the king, "O Nebuchadnezzar, we have no need to answer you in this matter. If this be so, our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, **and He will deliver us out of your hand, O king**. But if not, be it known to you, O king, that we will not serve your gods or worship the golden image that you have set up."

Then Nebuchadnezzar was filled with fury, and the expression of his face was changed against Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. He ordered the furnace heated seven times more than it was usually heated. And he ordered some of the mighty men of his army to bind Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, and to cast them into the burning fiery furnace. Then these men were bound in their cloaks, their tunics, their hats, and their other garments, and they were thrown into the burning fiery furnace. Because the king's order was urgent and the furnace overheated, the flame of the fire killed those men who took up Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. And these three men, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, fell bound into the burning fiery furnace.

Then King Nebuchadnezzar was astonished and rose up in haste. He declared to his counselors, "Did we not cast three men bound into the fire?" They answered and said to the king, "True, O king." He answered and said, "But I see four men unbound, walking in the midst of the fire, and they are not hurt; and the appearance of the fourth is like a son of the gods." Then Nebuchadnezzar came near to the door of the burning fiery furnace; he declared, "Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, servants of the Most High God, come out, and come here!" Then Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego came out from the fire. And the satraps, the prefects, the governors, and the king's counselors gathered together and saw that the fire had not had any power over the bodies of those men. The hair of their heads was not singed, their cloaks were not harmed, and no smell of fire had come upon them. Nebuchadnezzar answered and said, "Blessed be the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, **who has sent His angel and delivered His servants, who trusted in Him, and set aside the king's command, and yielded up their bodies rather than serve and worship any god except their own God.** (ESV)

This is Your Word, heavenly Father; ***sanctify us in the truth, Your Word is Truth****. Amen.* (John 17:17)

People loved by God, made holy through the waters of Baptism,
and who remember not only the names, but also the grace of God upon our departed brethren,

Today, as we do every All Saints Day, we remember especially those saints from our congregation who have been **delivered out of the hand** of the prince of this world, since last All Saints Day.
This year, we remember William Hill, Marlene O'Neill, Joseph Cutberth, Diana Cutberth, & Edward Durrant.

These are now among those that we heard about in the Revelation:
standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed in white robes,
with palm branches in their hands, and crying out with a loud voice,
"Salvation belongs to our God who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb! Revelation 7
They are there, along with Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego… and the myriads of the faithful departed.
But most importantly, they are there with the Lamb who was slain for them, Jesus their Savior.
They now enjoy eternal rest, joy, and comfort after a lifetime of sin, guilt, hardship, and suffering.
They have now realized what was so hard for them to believe at times while they suffered in this life,
that "**Our God Whom We Serve is Able to Deliver Us**."

This, of course, was what we heard just a moment ago from Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego.
With great confidence & not a hint of fear, they refused Nebuchadnezzar's opportunity for a 2nd chance.
Their decision was not an accident… nor an unthought through or fleeting whim.
They were absolutely certain that God COULD—**was able to—deliver them from the fiery furnace.**
And they were absolutely certain that God **WOULD deliver them out of the king's hand.**
In other words, the king's words, no matter how fierce or threatening, would not burden their consciences.
They would not struggle with **whether to listen to God or man** Acts 4:19;
They **set aside the king's command, and** were willing to **yield up their bodies**
rather than serve and worship any god except their own God.
They were boldly willing to stake their lives on the Lord's Word and promises…
not just promises of His gracious care in this life, but also—especially—His promises of life after death.
…
Now, we can listen to this story and marvel at how bold they were and wish that we had the same faith.
And perhaps you try to measure your own quantity of faith… or quality of faith,
saying something like "I don't have enough faith," … or "My faith isn't strong enough for that."
Or maybe you are on the other end, being confident that you have such a strong faith,
believing that decision would be easy,
"Of course, I wouldn't worship that golden image… even if mighty men were taking hold of me
to throw me into a burning fiery furnace."
But the truth is, you won't truly know until it actually happens to you.

It may never be such a clear decision as Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego had,
it might be something more akin to what Bill, Marlene, Joe, Diana, and Ed had.
None of them died completely unexpectantly.
Each of them had medical issues that they had suffered with for a while, one of them, most her long life.
They had lots of time to think and wonder: "Is God real… the Triune God?" "Is life after death real?"
"Is Jesus real?" "Is He really the Savior of the world?… My Savior?"
"Did He die for my sins?" "Could He… Would He really die for me?"
"If God is real… if He is truly a loving/merciful God, why would He let me suffer like this?"
"Why would He allow the king to make such a ridiculous law and threaten my faithful life?"

Now there are some who would say that asking such questions is a sin.
And that can be true. People do certainly ask such questions in distrust or fear…
But these are also really important questions to ask… and even more important questions to answer! …
And not just at the point of death, but throughout your life.
These are the questions of true faith.

"Do I believe that the Triune God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are real… and really for me?"
"Do I believe that Jesus is true God and true Man, who lived a perfect/righteous life… in my place;
and suffered the flames of hell… for me; and died as the innocent Lamb of God… for me?"
"Do I believe that God will judge me guiltless and welcome me into eternal paradise?"
To go through life, not asking… and answering these questions constantly,
is really to fail to prepare for this life (whether suffering or not)… for death… and for eternal life.
But often these questions don't become significant or serious, nor the answers vital,
until either a guilty conscience seizes us or death threatens us.

And it's important that you recognize, as Shadrach Meshach & Abednego did, what is true deliverance.
Notice that their faith was not that God would absolutely stop the flames from killing them,
but that they would be delivered from the king's hand, listen again:
our God…<u>is able to</u> deliver us from the burning fiery furnace,
and He WILL deliver us out of your hand, O king, <u>but if not…</u> we will [still] **not serve your gods,**
That was to say, "if He chooses that we should die in this fire,
know that our faith is in His eternal salvation, a deliverance from an eternal flame,
not merely in a deliverance from this temporal flame and suffering."
…
Each one of our departed brothers and sisters asked these questions… and sought their answers.
When health failed… as the corruption of their sinful flesh became gravely evident,
as their consciences sought relief from a lifetime of guilt and feelings of condemnation,
they welcomed the voice of their Savior, to hear Him speak to them once again,
words of peace… "I forgive you all your sins"… words of life and hope… of grace and certainty.
Theirs wasn't a blind faith, rooted in shallow, unkept promises,
nor a whimsical faith in a fanciful life of ease and comfort.
Theirs was a faith forged and purified in the crucible of suffering and guilt.
They, like Shadrach Meshach and Abednego, believed that
God was able to deliver them from their earthly sufferings,
if He desired to… if He considered it good for their eternal well-being…
but if not… they would still serve Him alone,
the God who had served them by suffering the fires of hell while He atoned for their sins on the cross,
and delivered them from the hands of the devil.

They did not trust in the quantity or quality of their faith. They trusted in their Savior, Jesus Christ.
Theirs was not a proud faith… nor a weak faith… as they clung to the Lord's Word and promises.
Theirs was a faith of humble boldness… humble and grateful before God,
bold and defiant against the threats of the devil and the insecurity of their own flesh.

The Lord gives you this same faith, or more clearly… He has given you the same Savior, Jesus Christ.
The same son of God who saved Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego in the fiery furnace;
the same son of Man who lived, died, and rose for the salvation of Bill, Marlene, Joe, Diana, and Ed;
the same Triune God who doused the flames of hell for little Ethan today in the waters of Baptism…
Is the same Lord who has given you His faithful Word, that He **is with you to the end of the age**,
and you will be with Him in paradise on into eternity.
Blessed are you… truly, blessed are you… in Jesus Name. **Amen**. *Soli Deo Gloria*