

## Go Beyond with Faith

8/11/2019

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Although Daniel knew that the document had been signed, he continued to go to his house, which had windows in its upper room open toward Jerusalem, and to get down on his knees three times a day to pray to his God and praise him, just as he had done previously. <sup>11</sup> The conspirators came and found Daniel praying and seeking mercy before his God. <sup>12</sup> Then they approached the king and said concerning the interdict, "O king! Did you not sign an interdict, that anyone who prays to anyone, divine or human, within thirty days except to you, O king, shall be thrown into a den of lions?" The king answered, "The thing stands fast, according to the law of the Medes and Persians, which cannot be revoked." <sup>13</sup> Then they responded to the king, "Daniel, one of the exiles from Judah, pays no attention to you, O king, or to the interdict you have signed, but he is saying his prayers three times a day." <sup>14</sup> When the king heard the charge, he was very much distressed. He was determined to save Daniel, and until the sun went down he made every effort to rescue him. <sup>15</sup> Then the conspirators came to the king and said to him, "Know, O king, that it is a law of the Medes and Persians that no interdict or ordinance that the king establishes can be changed." <sup>16</sup> Then the king gave the command, and Daniel was brought and thrown into the den of lions. The king said to Daniel, "May your God, whom you faithfully serve, deliver you!" <sup>17</sup> 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, so that nothing might be changed concerning Daniel. <sup>18</sup> Then the king went to his palace and spent the night fasting; no food was brought to him, and sleep fled from him. Then, at break of day, the king got up and hurried to the den of lions. <sup>20</sup> When he came near the den where Daniel was, he cried out anxiously to Daniel, "O Daniel, servant of the living God, has your God whom you faithfully serve been able to deliver you from the lions?" <sup>21</sup> Daniel then said to the king, "O king, live forever! <sup>22</sup> My God sent his angel and shut the lions' mouths so that they would not hurt me, because I was found blameless before him; and also before you, O king, I have done no wrong." <sup>23</sup> 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. <sup>24</sup> The king gave a command, and those who had accused Daniel were brought and thrown into the den of lions—they, their children, and their wives. Before they reached the bottom of the den the lions overpowered them and broke all their bones in pieces. (Daniel 6:10-24)

### 1. 2019 Vacation Bible School

As you saw in our presentation, our children last week learned a lot about going beyond with faith, boldness, kindness, thankfulness, and hope at VBS. Through going through the Bible stories our children became voyagers on a

journey through space, exploring where God's power can take them. Along the way, they learned how God walked with heroes of the Bible, and that God is always with them. The Bible stories inspired kids to give glory to God, who is able to do far beyond all that we could ask or imagine. On the first day the children learned to "go beyond with faith." The focus was on Daniel in the Old Testament.

Who is Daniel? Daniel was born to a Jewish family in the early 7<sup>th</sup> century B.C. He was among the first group of Jewish captives taken to Babylon by Nebuchadnezzar in 605 B.C. There Daniel served in the government for over 60 years during the reigns of King Nebuchadnezzar, Darius, and Cyrus. The Book of Daniel was written to tell us that it is possible to have faith in God despite being in captivity and in crisis.

Daniel reminds us of Joseph in Genesis who faithfully served Pharaoh in Egypt. In challenging situations, Joseph and Daniel did not compromise their convictions of following after God. As King Pharaoh trusted Joseph making him in charge of Egypt, King Darius in Babylon trusted Daniel and wanted Daniel to be his right-hand man of the nation. But there were people who envied and hated Daniel. The people made a new law prohibiting Daniel from praying to God. Despite the new law, Daniel continued to pray three times a day in the sight of everyone. Those who plotted against Daniel were delighted to accuse Daniel. Daniel was cast into the lions' den because he refused to compromise his faith.

Although Darius does not do anything to save Daniel from being accused, Darius hastens to the lions' den to find out what happens to Daniel during the night. Darius asks Daniel, "**Has your God who you faithfully serve been able to deliver you from the lions?**" (verse 20). Daniel replies, "**My God sent his angel and shut the lions' mouths so that they would not hurt me, because I was found blameless before him; and also before you, O king, I have done no wrong**" (verse 22).

What makes Daniel not compromise his faith when he faces serious danger of losing his life by lions? Verse 24 says, "**because he had trusted in the Lord.**" Our VBS children learned that God is trustworthy.

## **2. The Lesson of the Story of Daniel**

What does the story of Daniel teach us? Does believing in God mean that we will not encounter any danger? The answer is no. Over the past few weeks, we've seen shootings in El Paso and Dayton, Ohio. At least 31 people were killed in the two shootings. The shooter in El Paso confessed that he was targeting people of Mexican descent. The suspect in Ohio is believed to be dead.

In Dayton, Ohio, Lois Oglesby was killed on Sunday when she was out with her friends for the first time after having a baby. She leaves behind two children, a seven-year-old daughter, Hannah and her 2-month-old baby, Reigh. How sad her family, relatives, friends, and all of us are!

There were likely several Christians among the victims in El Paso and Dayton. Christians are no different from other people. We get sick, experience tragedy and eventually all die. God doesn't favor those who believe in him. We may ask ourselves the question, "what is the advantage of being Christians?"

The Israelites believe that God would bless them as the Lord promised to them in the wilderness as written in Deuteronomy 28:1 & 2, "***If you will only obey the Lord your God, by diligently observing all his commandments that I am commanding you today, the Lord your God will set you high above all the nations of the earth; <sup>2</sup>all these blessings shall come upon you and overtake you, if you obey the Lord your God.*** God would bless his chosen people and has been blessing them. But receiving of God's blessing is not what Daniel 6 teaches us this morning.

The true blessing in Daniel's story is that Daniel trusts the Lord so much that he has no fear of death at all. Daniel didn't care about what would happen to him. In Daniel 3:15, King Nebuchadnezzar says to Daniel and his friends that if they do not fall down and worship the statue that king Nebuchadnezzar made, they would immediately be thrown into a furnace of blazing fire. Daniel and his friends say, "***If our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the furnace of blazing fire and out of your hand, O king, let him deliver us. <sup>18</sup>But if not, be it known to you, O king, that we will not serve your gods and we will not worship the golden statue that you have set up***" (verses 17-18).

Daniel and his friends are pressured to deny God, but they choose to be faithful to the Lord no matter what would happen. Daniel is doing the same when he is prohibited from praying. Daniel trusts in the Lord who saved him from burning in the furnace in chapter 3.

### 3. Paul's Letter to the Ephesians

The key scripture verse of our 2019 VBS was Ephesians 3:20. The Common English Bible says, "***Glory to God, who is able to do far beyond all that we could ask or imagine by his power at work within us.***" The VBS children recited this Bible verse every day during the VBS.

In this verse Paul shares the foundation of his faith. To understand this verse, we need to read Ephesians 3:13, "***I pray therefore that you may not lose heart over my sufferings for you; they are your glory.***" Paul writes his letter in prison. Some Ephesians would have been disappointed that Paul was in prison. However, Paul says that he should be honored not disappointed in his suffering.

Why does Paul say this? It is because if Paul did not preach the gospel, the Ephesians would not have heard the good news of Jesus Christ. Just as a mother endures the pain of childbirth, Paul endures the pain of persecution in order to bring one more person to Christ. For Paul bringing someone to Jesus is more important than his own safety and security. Jesus thought the same. He did not mind dying on the cross if the people can understand how much God loves us.

Paul is thankful that God called him to share the gospel with the Gentiles in prison. Paul says in Ephesians 3:8, “**Although I am the very least of all the saints, this grace was given to me to bring to the Gentiles the news of the boundless riches of Christ.**” Paul’s major concern is not to be released from the jail at all. Rather he wants to be used for God’s glory. He believes that God’s power can make a big difference through us far beyond we could image.

#### 4. The Fruits of VBS

What do you think are the fruits of our VBS? No one knows for sure how our children will grow up. One of them may become the next Billy Graham. During our 2019 VBS one clear evidence of the fruit is the growth of the youth who participated in helping the teachers. I noticed that young people like Charlotte Roy did a great job helping Julia Chick and guiding the children.

I was impressed by the teachers who showed their talents and love. They taught them by acting, experimenting, arts and crafting, playing, and serving the children.

#### 5. Conclusion

Daniel is not concerned about his safety or security. He wants to glorify the Lord. Daniel’s act of faith not only saves his own life but also makes King Darius a worshipper of the Lord and a witness to God. When Darius learns that God saved Daniel from the mouths of lions, Darius gives the orders to lift Daniel out of the lions’ den. Darius issues a decree and tells everyone to fear and revere the God of Daniel (6:26). King Darius says, “**He delivers and rescues, he works signs and wonders in heaven and on earth; for he has saved Daniel from the power of the lions.**” Darius learns from the God of Daniel how powerful the Lord is.

#### 6. Application

What do the people around us say about our living God? Would they say that God is able to do far beyond all that we could ask or imagine?

In our world today, there are many things that shake our safety and security. We face natural disasters, shootings, and tragedy in our faith journey. Some people can think that God is absent or impotent. Many people cry out in sorrow and despair and ask, “where is God?” What can we say to these people during these times of pain?

When we join the UMC, we promise that we will participate in the ministry of the church in prayer, presence, gifts, service, and witness. To witness to the living God and our Savior Jesus, we don’t necessarily need to go door to door like Jehovah’s Witnesses. We use every aspect of our lives to witness to our God. Even our crisis could be the opportunity for others to experience the living God. Like King Darius, when our neighbors see our living God through us, they will say that our God will deliver and rescue those who trust in him. Amen.