

# **Central Lutheran Church**

## **Narrative Lectionary Bible Study - Fall, 2020**

### **November 25 Lesson to Ponder**

**Remember: No class tonight. You are invited to the Downtown Interfaith Thanksgiving Worship service tonight (Wednesday) at 7:00 pm, or tomorrow (Thursday) at 10:00 am. Both will be streamed on the Central web site.**

### **Schedule**

We will resume next Wednesday, December 2, for the conversation on Joel 2. If we had met this week, we would have pondered Daniel and the lion's den in Daniel 6. So, let's look at that lesson through lectio divina and a few questions to ponder.

### **Introduction to Daniel 6**

Some of us may remember Daniel and the lion's den from Sunday School days, or other Bible studies. A little background will help us. First, we are in the time of exile, the Persians are in control. The people of Israel struggle to remain faithful as they live all over the place because of diaspora, the scattering of folks after the fall of Jerusalem. Daniel has a great spirit, and so is noticed by King Darius. The drama is that other leaders are not a fan of Daniel, and not a fan that an outsider is favored by the king.

You can imagine what happens, there is a plot to have Daniel removed from office. Daniel 6 tells the story; it is about banning prayer to anyone but the king. Darius does not disagree, but he does not see how they will use this against Daniel. When Daniel prays, he is arrested and King Darius cannot do anything, a law is a law. So, Daniel is locked up with the lions. In the morning the King rushes to see what has happened to Daniel and finds him safe and sound. Daniel is safe with the lions by God's presence.

The end of the story always is a problem for me, why the retribution? The folks that plotted against Daniel, and the women and children of those who plotted, are all thrown to the lions. Ugh, always this human response, this retribution. It

will take Jesus to call us away from an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth, thank God.

If we set aside the unfortunate ending, and just stay with Daniel for a moment, there is much to ponder. It gives us an image of the garden where all the creation was a peace. There is hope that echoes Joseph and his brothers where people intend things for evil, but God works it for the good. It reminds us of Jeremiah and of a God who has plans for all, for our welfare, for a future with hope.

If you have a moment this Thanksgiving weekend, pause for a divine reading of Daniel 6. Perhaps leave the ending to its unfortunate place in history and stay with Daniel in the lion's den. When have you been sustained in great adversity? How is gratitude a way of faith, even in the lion dens of life? What else is here that you notice, that opens you to God?

### *Lectio Divina*

One of the oldest ways to enter the holy conversation at a Bible study is to spend time reading the lesson slowly, and at least three times. This way is called "lectio divina," or divine reading. You can read the lesson silently, or even out loud if you are in a quiet place. There are many ways to engage in *lectio divina*, here is one way to consider:

1. The first time we read the lesson for the information, the story that is being shared. Here we read with our head, asking what we first noticed?
2. The second time, we slow down and read with our heart. What emotions do you notice as you read and respond or react to in the lesson?
3. The third and final time, really slow down. Perhaps you pause or stop at a verse, linger there. Here you begin to read with your soul. What is God saying in, with and under this story? What is God not saying, in other words, is God speaking or does it seem more like human interpretation at this point. What is liberating or what is troubling?

### **Daniel 6: 6-27**

So the presidents and satraps conspired and came to the king and said to him, "O King Darius, live forever! <sup>7</sup>All the presidents of the kingdom, the prefects and the satraps, the counselors and the governors are agreed that the king should establish an ordinance and enforce an interdict, that whoever prays to anyone, divine or human, for thirty days, except to you, O king, shall be thrown into a den of lions. <sup>8</sup>Now, O king, establish the interdict and sign the document, so that it cannot be changed, according to the law of the Medes and the Persians, which

cannot be revoked." <sup>9</sup>Therefore King Darius signed the document and interdict.

<sup>10</sup>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.

<sup>19</sup>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.

<sup>25</sup>Then King Darius wrote to all peoples and nations of every language throughout the whole world: "May you have abundant prosperity! <sup>26</sup>I make a decree, that in all my royal dominion people should tremble and fear before the God of Daniel:

For God is the living God,

enduring forever.  
God's kingdom shall never be destroyed,  
and God's dominion has no end.  
<sup>27</sup>God delivers and rescues,  
works signs and wonders in heaven and on earth;  
for God has saved Daniel  
from the power of the lions."

### **Questions to Ponder from the Divine Reading**

1. What did you notice? What was interesting, or confusing? What was familiar or unfamiliar?
2. What emotions did you notice as you read? How did you respond or react to the lesson?
3. What is God saying in, with and under this story? What is God not saying, in other words, is God speaking or does it seem more like human interpretation at this point. What is liberating or what is troubling? How are you open to God as you pause for this third reading?
4. What questions do you bring tonight for us to discuss?

### **Journaling?**

As you close your pondering of this lesson, perhaps spend some time journaling. It is helpful to write down our reflections and thoughts. Writing can help clarify, help us listen and remind us of some insights we might return to over the next few days.

Thank you for pausing to enter Daniel 6. Have a blessed Thanksgiving Weekend!