

GLENKIRK CHURCH



WEEKLY DEVOTIONS

The DEVO

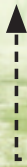
APRIL 20 - 25, 2020

SERMON SERIES

4.19 - 5.17

LIVING IN

Exile



MONDAY

Jeremiah 29:4-6

Gone but Not Forgotten

For forty years Jeremiah had been warning the people of Judah and Jerusalem to submit to the LORD by submitting to their captors in Babylon. In 598 B.C., King Jehoiachin had surrendered Jerusalem to the Babylonians, and the first group of captives had been taken into exile (Jeremiah 29:2), including a young man named Daniel. Nebuchadnezzar had appointed Jehoiachin's uncle, Zedekiah, as a puppet king. Both in Jerusalem and in Babylon, false prophets not appointed by God prophesied an early return and were calling for rebellion. Jeremiah, God's prophet, had already prophesied that the exile would last seventy years (Jeremiah 25:12). Jeremiah sent a letter to the exiles reminding them that their exile was no human accident but God's purpose: *"This is what the LORD Almighty, the God of Israel, says to all those I carried into exile from Jerusalem to Babylon"* (Jeremiah 29:4).

God is never surprised. He is sovereign. When we are in "exile," we often feel that God must have been napping or was preoccupied with something else. We hope and pray, like the Babylonian exiles, that the exile should end, but God is omniscient and omnipresent—all-powerful and ever-present. His time is not our time. For these people in exile, it was to be 70 years, not a day more or a day less.

The instructions their ancestors in Egypt had received from God were simple and basic. They were to remember the LORD your God, settle down, be useful, and live normal lives—regardless of where you are and in what circumstances you find yourselves, God is in control. The LORD had caused them to be carried away as captives. Always remember, as the Israelites were reminded, that it is the LORD who is leading us.

Jesus taught us to love our enemies and to “*pray for those who despitefully use you*” (Matthew 5:44). Sometimes we may find ourselves living in a situation that we would have not chosen. Our task is to live, grow, pray, and glorify Him wherever we are. He is a good, good Father.

QUESTIONS

Do you feel overwhelmed with life and does God seem distant? David, a “man after God’s own heart,” asked this: “*How long, O Lord? Will You forget me forever?*” (Psalm 13:1). Yet he answers: “*But I trust in Your unfailing love*” (Psalm 13:5). Can you say the same?

PRAYERS FOR SHEPHERD’S PANTRY

Pray that Shepherd’s Pantry is able to continue providing food for those who are shut in and those who are unemployed in our San Gabriel Valley.

TUESDAY

Daniel 1:8

True North

It is easy while reading this first chapter of Daniel to “gloss” over this verse: “*But Daniel resolved not to defile himself ... and he asked the chief official for permission not to defile himself this way*” (Daniel 1:8)—a small housekeeping issue with regard to food and wine. Would it not have been easier for Daniel just to accept the way of the land? After all, he was a privileged man, a man in exile who was now in the king’s court and entitled to all the privileges of that position. But this was not just a preference; this was a conviction.

Daniel “*resolved not to defile himself.*” We are all too familiar with resolutions, normally in the context of government or board governance where motions begin with “RESOLVED that.” This is not just a feeling or an emotive behavior. Resolving to do something in an unshakeable conviction of value that is not negotiable. Daniel was not, even in exile, going to waiver on his belief and resolution to serve his God.

Do we sometimes in a situation that is foreign or out of our comfort zone, wander from the promises and faith we have in God? Daniel’s zeal to stay committed to his God is an amazing reminder that this is what is expected of us.

The verse ends with another guiding thought on how Daniel went about his resolution not to defile himself. We read that “*he asked the chief official.*” As convicted as he was, in a different land where his customs were not recognized, he “*asked.*” Many times, when faced in the same situation today, we hear and read more about demands and entitlements in contrast to this gentle and faith-filled approach of Daniel. He made a request. Daniel knew his Lord would not fail him. He did not know how or when, but this was his God, and his God was sovereign and in control in all circumstances—including exile in a strange land. He had unfailing confidence in his “*true north,*” his Lord and his God.

True north is a precise direction, and no matter where we start on this planet, *true north* will lead us to exactly the same location. There is no alternative to *true north*; it transcends geography and position. In uncertain times, *true north* is a welcome blessing. And Jesus Christ is an even greater blessing to those who are spiritually lost.

QUESTIONS

Have you been in a situation where you had to choose between your beliefs and what the world or your family expects? How did you respond? What are your “*resolutes*” in your walk with Christ?

PRAYERS FOR SHEPHERD’S PANTRY

Pray for the many people whom Shepherd’s Pantry serves, who are not only afraid of contracting the virus, but very frightened as to where they will find food to eat and money to pay their bills.

WEDNESDAY

Daniel 2:19-23

Praising God in the Darkest Hours

The Darkest Hour” was a phrase used by British Prime Minister Winston Churchill to describe the period of World War II between the Fall of France in June 1940 and the Axis invasion of the Soviet Union in June 1941 when the British Empire and Commonwealth stood alone. Daniel was a victim in the king’s court called upon to interpret the king’s dream (v. 13) when the wisest men of that day were unable to do so. And then we read “*during the night*” (v. 19) the dream was revealed to Daniel. Daniel praises God, interprets the dream, and God is glorified.

For many, the dark hours of the night do not end as well. There are those hours in the dark when we review challenges and circumstances: the doctor’s report, the children, the job, our relationships—it seems the list is as endless as the night. How does one praise God in the darkest hours? Daniel shares some insights in a short passage: Praise is recognizing that the God we love and praise is eternal “*for ever and ever*” (v. 20). God is the beginning and the end, the Alpha and the Omega. He knows our yesterday, today, and tomorrow. Nothing surprises Him! Trust Him and make your faith in that promise your reality in spite of your circumstances.

Praise is recognizing that no global event, war, pandemic, death, or event important to you escapes God. “*He changes times and seasons; He sets up kings ...*” (v. 21a). Have faith and praise Him that He knows all and is in control of all. Even a sparrow falling does not escape His notice

(Matthew 10:29). If this is how much He cares, praise Him in the hours of despair.

Praise is knowing that He will give wisdom and knowledge to those who lead. He is a God of wisdom, love, and discernment, and He chooses to whom He will give wisdom and discernment. In obedience we are to trust that He has chosen well because “*He knows what lies in the darkness*” (v. 21).

Praise is to give thanks because God has been there for us and with all past generations. However difficult it is, however dark the hours may seem, we know that there has never been a day in history when He has not gifted us with a new morning. The sun rises without question in the East and sets in the West. He is a faithful God worthy to be praised.

QUESTIONS

It is not easy to praise in the “dark hours.” How are you preparing yourself by reading the Word and being in prayer before the “darkest hour” so that you can grow in your faith and love of Jesus despite the circumstances?

PRAYERS FOR SHEPHERD’S PANTRY

Pray for Shepherd’s Pantry even after this pandemic has settled; pray for those thousands of people who will still be without the necessities.

THURSDAY

Daniel 6:5

“Your Family Name”

by Nelle A. Williams

*You got it from your father;
It was all he had to give.
So it's yours to use and cherish
For as long as you may live.*

*If you lost the watch he gave you,
It can always be replaced.
But a black mark on your name
Can never be erased.*

*It was clean the day you took it
And a worthy name to bear.
When he got it from his father,
There was no dishonor there*

*So make sure you guard it wisely
After all is said and done.
You'll be glad the name is spotless
When you give it to your son.*

Without Fault

Jeremiah reminded the exiles in Babylon that they were to live, grow, and glorify God. Daniel modeled these instructions in the midst of an unknown culture, unknown people, new traditions, and in a new land. As times change the world changes, and many times we find ourselves as “exiles” in the world around us. When everything is different, where is our hope? Is it in how we feel about God? Is it really living in faith that God is with us and goes before us? He is our Shepherd and will lead us into quieter waters, though maybe not in the timeframe we are expecting, but in His time and in His way. So how then should we live?

As in this short poem on the importance of a family name, Daniel lived a life that was faultless in his faith and love for God. I am confident that every one of us would be honored to have it said of us that we were never found guilty of anything other than our love of God!

Daniel was neither corrupt nor negligent; he was absolutely trustworthy (v. 4). In times when everything is different, when our plans and even our dreams or aspirations may seem at risk, let us continue to follow Him without turning left nor turning right (2 Chronicles 34:2). May we never be guilty of anything but for our love of God.

QUESTIONS

How would you like to be known? Do your relationships and life glorify God? Do others see you as “walking in the light”? What changes could you make in your life toward that goal of being “totally sold for Christ”?

PRAYERS FOR SHEPHERD’S PANTRY

Pray that Shepherd’s Pantry may continue to be blessed with the resources and volunteers to bless those in need with food and spiritual support. Thank the Lord for what He has done.

FRIDAY

Daniel 6:1-13

God First

Who does not remember from Sunday School the story of Daniel and the den of lions? Some of us may even remember back to the flannel graph illustrated stories, and we will not forget the wonder of a man in a den of ferocious lions. This was certainly not a Disney movie moment; rather, this was a real story, with a real king, using real lions to punish a man who had a real love and commitment to his God. Daniel was a man who was absolute in his conviction to put God first in all things—even if it was to cost him his life.

It would be too easy in today's world of choice, debate, compromise and acceptance to counsel Daniel differently. "Daniel, no need to pray three times a day," we might say. "Perhaps a quick silent prayer on your way to the palace or while eating your lunch in the gardens instead? We need you here as a God-first leader in government. You can do both!" But verse 13 says, "*He [Daniel] still prays three times a day.*" The use of the word "still" indicates that this was not a habit or an action that Daniel had just prescribed to upset the king and his decree. This was a lifetime habit. As Jeremiah the prophet has instructed, Daniel was obedient. So should we be in our habit of worshiping God and giving God our love and deepening our personal relationship with Him.

Daniel knew what was important. As one of the three highest ranking administrators of the then most powerful nation in the world, in the busyness of life, in exile, and without a family, Daniel kept his commitment and “*prays three times a day.*” He was to put his relationship with God before all else. He was to put God first. Daniel’s world had changed, his name was changed, his location had changed; and yet in all of this change, he still prayed three times a day to the One who never changes, to his God.

How should we put God first in all that is happening in our world and in our lives right now? Let us model a life that is completely dedicated to Him, with daily habits that bring us close to Him. Let’s commit to putting God first, to only serving an audience of one, our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

QUESTIONS

Is God really first in your life? Do you sometimes hear the Lord in love, as He replied to the rich young man (Mark 10:17-21), saying to you, “Make me absolutely first above all things?” What positive changes could you make in your life today to focus on Him as first in your life?

PRAYERS FOR SHEPHERD’S PANTRY

Pray for the health and safety of all of those whose efforts keep Shepherd’s Pantry functioning.



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