

6/23/24 Bel and the Dragon

This is not a chapter of the bible we are familiar with and we do not know who Bel and the dragon are. I know a number of places I go, a number of people make fun of this chapter because they say they don't ever remember God fighting a dragon. What happens prior to this part is that Daniel has been exiled. He has been kicked out of Judea and he is wandering around and he comes upon this area that is controlled by the Persians. And he meets the Persian king. He goes up to the king and asks why he is making sacrifices every day to the statue. It isn't real; it isn't God. And the king says to him, well if it isn't real and he doesn't come alive each night then what is going on with all of my offerings? Where is my food going? Where is my wine going? And Daniel says he will prove to the king that it isn't him. That it is not your idol. That it is really someone or something else happening.

And the king says fine if Daniel can prove it then we will figure it out. If not, you will go into the lion's den. So they set a trap. They seat things out like they do every night. As they are leaving, the king seals the door. But before he seals the door, Daniel lays ash all over the floor. They come back the next morning and see the food and wine are gone. The king says ok you are going to the den. Clearly everything is gone, and no one got in here through my seal. Daniel tells him to look at the ground. They are human footprints in different sizes coming from the door hidden behind the altar. The king gets mad and kills all of his high priests. He gives them to the lions instead.

Later, Daniel is talking to the king again and he is worked up that this dragon has been tormenting all the people. Now the word for dragon is the same as for snake. It is a snake that is harassing all of these people. It was eating all these things. So Daniel says if it is the embodiment of a God then it can not die, right. So I am going to go kill it and he did. So the king is like alright. So all this time people have been lying to me. They have been taking advantage of everything. They have been eating all my food and drinking all of my wine. Now they are doing everything again with this dragon. So he takes all of those priests and throws them into the lion's den as well. So these should be fat and happy lions now, right

Then we come to the next part that we read today. In the story we are most familiar with for Daniel we know he gets arrested for praying. He gets seen praying. At this time the Jews are praying three times a day. They look to Jerusalem. They make sure they can see it. They are always in the open or by a window. And in the original story he is by the window and he gets seen. The king makes a decree that nobody can pray for 30 days unless it is to him on the advice of his presents. So the prince had set Daniel up. They knew he was going to pray no matter what. That's how the original story goes. He is only in the den one day.

Now I know that the people who have gone through my bible study in the mornings, we have talked about 7 so many times. Seven is an important number in the Jewish faith. It is the number of days that God created everything. So they look at 7 as

being the perfect number. It took 7 days to create the world, universe and all of the people. Everything. So they do so much around 7. This is why the king waits 7 days before he goes to see Daniel.

This story has been on my mind a lot this week because we spend so much time to false idols. We spend so much time. We are on Facebook. We are on social media. We spend money on frivolous things. We worry about the materials of the world. We worry about the things happening on earth and we forget about what is happening in heaven. We forget about doing the right things. We forget about doing them for the right reasons. And it is easy to do because we have so many people telling us otherwise right now. We have so many people leading us into following these false idols.

A friend of mine has been posting non-stop on social media. And to be honest, I hate Facebook, I really do because there is so much negative out there than positive but I still look at it every day. Well this friend of mine I was really interested in what he was going to be posting because I know yesterday he was in Philadelphia at the Trump rally. And he is a prominent person in that circle. He has his own podcast and all of these things. So I knew with all the things happening in the past week, he was going to be talking to Trump about it. And I also knew I was going to be very disappointed in everything he said. I don't know if you know there have been 26 mass shootings in the last 10 days. There have been 25 people killed in those mass shootings. We have had 52 this entire month and last count we were at almost 100 people that had died in these shootings. The Supreme Court upheld a law on Friday stating that if you have been arrested for domestic abuse or you have a restraining order against you, you can not purchase a gun. And I know my friend was going to Trump and going to ask him about these things. I am not asking for us to think about whether or not it is right to have a gun. But I am asking that we make our own choices., We make our own choices about what is right and wrong by what God has taught us.

So many times we will follow who is the loudest person. So many times we will go with everyone because that is easier. We will follow people because it is easier. We will follow the false idol because people told us we needed to be on these social platforms, that we needed to be going to these events, that we need to be going to these churches because they are bigger, flashier, and have more kids Even if we do not agree with what they are, what they say, what they believe. We still do it because it is easier.

And then what happens. The people that are like Daniel get thrown into the lion's den. The people who are trying to teach the truth. The people who are trying to show God's way. The people who are trying to share God's love just get pushed aside. In this case God protected Daniel. He loves him so much that he kept the lions at bay. He made sure that Daniel was protected and that Daniel got food and sustenance and everything he needed. We know how important Daniel is. We know his faith is so

strong he is going to pray when he is told not to. He is going to stand against people who are lying and teaching ways that are not in God's wisdom. That are not following his truth, love and teachings. And it is hard. It has got to be hard for him. Every time he thinks he has done the right thing there are all these people telling him he is wrong. There are all these people trying to coax people to their way. So they can make more money, get more food, drink more wine. And then they can do more and more and follow the greed. If they did the work themselves. If they shared God's work and wisdom, they would find so much more and be so much more like the rest of us.

We do a lot in this community. We do a lot for a lot of people. We share God's love every chance we get. This week we helped 46 kids. This community, this church, We were there, We were helping. We were feeding. We are providing. And a lot of people tell us we shouldn't be doing it. I know this is my soapbox. I get on it all the time, but it is important. It is important that we do not forget who we are. There are so many things going on in the world, so much bad, so much negativity. So much hate. I don;t understand it. I am not meant to understand it. What I am meant is to have a great family like this one here who not only supports me and what i do, but supports what we all do here in this church. We help support this community. We don't follow the false idols. We do what we can for who we ca, when we can.