

Theme: **Here He comes! Are you ready?**

Text: Daniel 12:1 – 4

Occasion: 26<sup>th</sup> Sunday after Pentecost

Date: November 18, 2018

Place: Shepherd of the Rockies LCMS, Bailey, Co

*Grace and peace to you as you learn from God's past about your future, from God, our Father, our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit. Amen.*

Today is the next to last Sunday of the Church Year and we are looking at the life of the prophet Daniel who lived in the time of Israelite's Babylonian captivity. Daniel was a young man when he was taken as a captive from Jerusalem to Babylon. In Babylon Daniel and his three friends were given the chance to become advisors to the great King Nebuchadnezzar. Daniel became the chief advisor of King Nebuchadnezzar when he was the only one who could interpret the king's dream. In the first six chapters of the book of Daniel we learn about the history of the Israelite people who have been brought into captivity in Babylon. In those years, God used Daniel and his friends to have an influence of the kings of Babylon and the kings of Mede and Persia to save the people of Israel. We learn about how faithful Daniel and his friends are to God despite living in a nation that didn't know or believe in the true God. Because of their faith in God, Daniel's friends Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego were thrown into a fiery furnace because they would not bow down to an idol. Daniel as a trusted advisor to King Xerxes of Mede was thrown into a den of hungry lions because he continued to pray to God daily for His help and guidance. The same God who created and cares for us used Daniel and his friends to guide His people as they fought the battles against the Old Evil Foe and the world around them. These men are the heroes of the faith, the bright shining stars that the Lord uses to point us to the Love of God and all that He has done for us in the past and how much He will do for us in the future.

When you look at the past and especially the past of those who have been faithful to God you will find that amazingly God bring out just the right person for that time to be that bright shining star to guide and direct His people on the path of righteousness even when the world around them is determined to destroy them and God's Word. Martin Luther was that person for the people of God in the 15<sup>th</sup> century in Europe. C.F.W. Walter and Friedrich Wyneken were the men of the early year of the Lutheran Church Missouri Synod. It's really amazing when you look back in the history of the world to see how God brings in just the right person at just the right time to guide and lead His people along the path of righteousness to the heavenly home that He

has prepared for our eternal life. Throughout the history of God's people that has happened and that has also happened in each of our lives as we hold onto our faith in God.

Can you remember the people that God put into your life to lead you along the path of righteousness when it seemed that you were headed for destruction? Oh, I'm sure that each of us can remember those times in our lives when we were afraid of the future because we weren't looking for bright and shiny stars that brought us God's love, peace and joy. How bright and shiny does the future look for you and for your children. To be honest many of us are a little worried about the future especially for our children and their children. How will they be able to remain faithful to God and continue down the path of righteousness to their heavenly home where we will be waiting for them?

Questions like these may have been on the mind of Daniel in his old age, when God gave Daniel a vision of the battles that the people of God will have to face in the future. Every generation thinks it's going to be the last generation because our society can't get any worse than it already is. And yet the world continues even though some parts of the world fall farther and farther away from Christ and His Word, while other parts of the world come to know the bright shining stars of God's love for them. When we look at our world today in the newspaper, on TV, on the Internet or on social media you might wonder: Where has the love for God gone? Where is the concern for one's neighbors? We are pilgrims in an unwelcoming and unholy land, just like Daniel, Luther and Walther were in years past. Still God says to us and Daniel, **"And there shall be a time of trouble, such as never has been since there was a nation till that time."** (Dan. 12:1b) To look at the world as it is today and ponder how much worse it will get between now and Judgment day is a frightening thought! The word that Daniel uses in the Hebrew language is translated 'a time of trouble', but this word contains the idea of getting squeezed in on every side, almost like being squashed in a vise. Are you feeling the squeeze yet in your life? Where are the bright shining stars guiding us to God's Word and Love?

Jesus echoed Daniel's warning about those last days as He says, **"For then there will be great tribulation, such as has not been from the beginning of the world until now, no, and never will be."** <sup>22</sup> **And if those days had not been cut short, no human being would be saved. But for the sake of the elect those days will be cut short."** (Matt. 24:21-22) Our nation is losing it

way, just as other nations in the past have lost their way as they left the path of righteousness for the ways of the world. We've lost our respect for life and it's showing up in the way that we treat each other. The Christian teachings that have guided us in the past are being lambasted and the world wants to silence us and take our religious freedom away. These are just a few of the signs that show us that we are moving away from the bright shining stars of God's love, peace and joy and into a world of hatred, turmoil and suffering. Trouble is all around us and in us. We may even be trying to cover up of bright light of our faith, because we are too tired and too afraid to stand up for our Lord and the message of His Word.

How can we get through this mess called 'life'? God gives us and Daniel the answer to that question as he says, "**At that time shall arise Michael, the great prince who has charge of your people.**" (Dan. 12:1a) Michael is the general of all of God's angels and they are sent into our world to protect all believers from the Old Evil Foe no matter what tricks he plans to use. God throughout the Bible repeatedly calls us to remain faithful unto death for in the end we will be ultimately delivered into the arms of our loving God, to live with Him forever in His love, peace and joy. That's what God is reminding Daniel and us of as he says, "**But at that time your people shall be delivered, everyone whose name shall be found written in the book.**" (Dan. 12:1c)

In the midst of a world gone mad, God reminds us that He will deliver us. Through faith in Jesus Christ and all that He has done for us by His life, death and resurrection, we belong as the people of God and we will be saved as we hold onto the faith that He has given to us. At the last trumpet call, in the blink of an eye, God's angels will gather us, all His people. Not one will be left behind. Now this is a breathtaking picture of Jesus coming down out of the clouds with the archangels shouting and commanding all to appear before the Christ. On that final day, at Jesus' call, the graves will give up their dead and the bodies and souls will be reunited. God tells us and Daniel, "**And all those who sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt.**" (Dan 12:2)

With all those bodies and souls reunited along with all those who had not died, that's when Judgment Day will commence. All will be gathered before the throne, both believers and unbelievers. On the throne will be Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord. Those who do not believe in

Him as their Savior and Lord will awaken to shame and everlasting contempt, a life without God, an eternal separation from God, a place of suffering and pain that will not stop for eternity, Hell.

**“And those who are wise shall shine like the brightness of the sky above; and those who turn many to righteousness, like the stars forever and ever.”** (Dan. 12:3) Whoever believes in Jesus will be saved and we will live with Him in His everlasting love, peace and joy, where there will be no more suffering, pain, tears or death. There we will live in the perfect love, peace and joy of God that we couldn't find in this world of sin without God working through His Word and Sacrament in our lives. This is the source of courage we need as we mourn the death of a loved one and face our own death. This is you and me, as we let God's love shine through our faith in Him out into this world so that others can be guided to His Salvation.

Why can't the world see this incredible glory of God and hold onto it for life? God tells us and Daniel why, **“But you, Daniel, shut up the words and seal the book, until the time of the end. Many shall run to and fro, and knowledge shall increase.”** (Dan. 12:4) The Word of God is shut out in lives of unbelievers because they don't want God in their lives as they listen to the Old Evil Foe. In the end, they will see their mistake but it will be too late. For even though they have come to be able to move around in this world with incredible freedom and grow in their knowledge of the world they have lost the truth that truly sets them free from all the suffering, pain and sorrow of this world. That's why God has put you in this unique place that you are in today, to share the Love, grace and mercy of God with someone else before God comes to take you to be with Him. What will you do with this opportunity to share God's love, forgiveness and mercy in a world that is looking for a bright shining star to lead them to salvation?

Are you ready for the coming of this day? God is here to protect you from the deceitfulness of the Old Evil Foe and will come to deliver all of us who believe in Him to our heavenly home in His perfect love, peace and joy forever. But are you ready for Jesus to come? If so say, **“Amen, Amen, come, Lord Jesus!”** (Rev. 22:20) And let the light of Jesus shine from your life to help others find the way to salvation in Jesus Christ alone. **“Amen, Amen, come, Lord Jesus!**