

SERMON FOR NOVEMBER 25, 2018  
 TEXT: DANIEL 7:13-14  
 THEME: WHOM WILL YOU WORSHIP?

As I looked,  
 thrones were placed,  
     and the Ancient of Days took his seat;  
 his clothing was white as snow,  
     and the hair of his head like pure wool;  
 his throne was fiery flames;  
     its wheels were burning fire.  
<sup>10</sup> A stream of fire issued  
     and came out from before him;  
 a thousand thousands served him,  
     and ten thousand times ten thousand stood before him;  
 the court sat in judgment,  
     and the books were opened.  
 I saw in the night visions,  
 and behold, with the clouds of heaven  
     there came one like a son of man,  
 and he came to the Ancient of Days  
     and was presented before him.  
<sup>14</sup> And to him was given dominion  
     and glory and a kingdom,  
 that all peoples, nations, and languages  
     should serve him;  
 his dominion is an everlasting dominion,  
     which shall not pass away,  
 and his kingdom one  
     that shall not be destroyed.

In the name of Jesus:

What a vision to cap off the end of the church year! The vision that Daniel has is truly awe inspiring, nothing less than the vision of the Ancient of Days, God our Father, and His Son Jesus Christ! Daniel has this vision, at night, and in this vision He beholds the clouds of heaven, and coming from the clouds the heaven there is One who is like a Son of Man. This Son of Man is Jesus, and He comes before the throne of God, the one true, eternal God, here called the Ancient of Days,

and the Son of Man, Jesus, appears before God. As He appears before God the Father, the Father is seated in glory. His hair is white, you see God sitting on His heavenly Throne in all splendor and holiness. It is the Judgment, and there are thousands upon thousands of people, ten thousands upon ten thousands, too numerous to count, and the Books are open.

The Book of Life is open and from that Book the story of Jesus and His Church is told. The story of sin, and grace, the story of how Adam and Eve sinned in the Garden and through their sin not only sin but death and Hell entered into the human existence. Mankind would be forever lost and separated from God if it were not for the love that God had for sinners. For at the right time God sent His Son, Jesus Christ, born of a woman, born under the Law, to buy back sinners from the curse and dominion of sin, Satan and death. Jesus did this, not by making some type of monetary transaction, but rather He purchased and won you from sin, Satan death, with His holy precious blood and His innocent life, suffering, death and resurrection. To make you His own He led you to the waters of your Baptism, where your sin and shame were washed away. In the waters of Baptism you were given a new life, a life bearing the marks of Jesus, a Christ like life to live. All so that you and all who are believers in Christ would thank and praise God in your life to the glory of God the Father.

This Book of Life containing the message of Life is opened on that Day, and as it is opened you hear the Words, "well done, good and faithful servant." These are the same words that Jesus heard from His Father seated on the throne. Because Jesus fulfilled the will of the Father, to Jesus has been given the title King of Kings

and Lord of Lords. And as Daniel goes on to say: “<sup>14</sup> And to him was given dominion and glory and a kingdom, that all peoples, nations, and languages should serve him; his dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom one that shall not be destroyed.”

This vision that Daniel has is such a comforting message for him and those who hear it. Remember that Daniel is the one who was thrown into the lion’s den. His three friends are thrown into the fiery furnace. But do you remember why these things happened? It was because he dared to believe in God. Specifically, Daniel would only worship the One True God.

Daniel was told to bow down and worship Nebuchadnezzar. But Daniel and his friends would not. In a furious rage the Babylonian king spewed forth in anger against the three friends of Daniel, as the Bible records: “Then Nebuchadnezzar was filled with fury, and the expression of his face was changed against Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. He ordered the furnace heated seven times more than it was usually heated. <sup>20</sup> And he ordered some of the mighty men of his army to bind Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, and to cast them into the burning fiery furnace. <sup>21</sup> Then these men were bound in their cloaks, their tunics, their hats, and their other garments, and they were thrown into the burning fiery furnace. <sup>22</sup> Because the king’s order was urgent and the furnace overheated, the flame of the fire killed those men who took up Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. <sup>23</sup> And these three men, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, fell bound into the burning fiery furnace.”

You know how this ends, don't you? God saved his friends. They would only worship the One True God. But later Daniel is placed into a similar situation. The law of the Medes and Persians required all subjects to pray to the King. But Daniel would have none of that, he would only be faithful to the One who saved him, namely Jesus. Because of his unwillingness to bow to worship or pray to another god or king, Daniel was thrown into the lion's den. The den was sealed shut for the night, and in the morning when the king came to check in on Daniel, being certain the Daniel had finally met his end, this is what the Bible records of what took place: " <sup>19</sup> Then, at break of day, the king arose and went in haste to the den of lions. <sup>20</sup> As he came near to the den where Daniel was, he cried out in a tone of anguish. The king declared to Daniel, "O Daniel, servant of the living God, has your God, whom you serve continually, been able to deliver you from the lions?" <sup>21</sup> Then Daniel said to the king, "O king, live forever! <sup>22</sup> My God sent his angel and shut the lions' mouths, and they have not harmed me, because I was found blameless before him; and also before you, O king, I have done no harm."

These things have been written for our learning. There is only one True God, The Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. The Father in love sent His only Son to die for you so that by believing in Jesus, you would have everlasting life. Jesus has sent the Holy Spirit to give you faith in Jesus and to live out your faith in Jesus each and everyday.

But each of us is confronted with the choice of serving God in our lives or the gods of our culture and society. The question that God has for us is a simple one: Whom will we serve in our lives? Will we serve the One True God, who created us,

redeemed us, and made us holy? Will we serve God in our lives? Or will we serve ourselves, our desires; will we seek to live as the rest of the world lives? Whom will we serve?

A couple of weeks ago the Gospel lesson was the story of the poor widow's mite. Mark records in the Gospel: "Jesus sat down opposite the treasury and watched the people putting money into the offering box. Many rich people put in large sums. <sup>42</sup> And a poor widow came and put in two small copper coins, which make a penny. <sup>43</sup> And he called his disciples to him and said to them, "Truly, I say to you, this poor widow has put in more than all those who are contributing to the offering box. <sup>44</sup> For they all contributed out of their abundance, but she out of her poverty has put in everything she had, all she had to live on."

Think about this for a moment. People were coming to the Temple to give their offerings. Rich people put in large sums. But the poor widow put in two small copper coins, which amounted to a penny. The rich contributed out of their abundance, she gave all she had. But what is striking to me is what follows: "And as he came out of the temple, one of his disciples said to him, "Look, Teacher, what wonderful stones and what wonderful buildings!" <sup>2</sup> And Jesus said to him, "Do you see these great buildings? There will not be left here one stone upon another that will not be thrown down."

Did you catch it? Jesus while in the Temple commends the widow for giving all she has, and yet at the same time while leaving the Temple Jesus foretells what will happen to the Temple, that it will be destroyed and there will not be one stone

upon another that will not be thrown down. And that is exactly what took place 37 years later when Jerusalem and the Temple were destroyed.

Talk about a bad investment! Or was it? What happened to her gift was not the widow's concern. She acted out of faith. She trusted in the Lord to take care of her. So she worshipped God by giving to the Temple for the ministry. Her actions were not in vain, for Jesus praised her for she gave out of love for God.

What about our giving? God doesn't ask us to give so that we get a tax write off. We give because Jesus loves us. We don't know what will happen in the future. But we are called to love Jesus today, to serve Jesus today, and to give to Jesus today. The future is in God's hands, God only asks us to be faithful to Him.

You have in your hands the pledge card for 2019. You are invited to fill it out and come forward with your pledge for next year. Consider increasing it, consider giving regularly, consider that what you do, God calls you to do in faith, like the widow, who gave in love for the Lord. Whom will you serve? You may be like the widow and have only a little to give, but we give what we have, because all we have to live on is the love God has for us in Jesus Christ. May God give each of us the faithfulness of Daniel and willingness of the widow, so that we serve the Lord with our time, talent, and treasury!

Amen