

LAST SUNDAY of PENTECOST

November 21, 2021

**COLLECT:** ALMIGHTY AND EVERLASTING GOD, whose will it is to restore all things to your beloved Son, the king of kings and lord of lords: Mercifully grant that peoples of the earth, divided and enslaved by sin, may be freed and brought together under his most gracious rule; who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

**THE LESSONS:** Old Testament: Daniel 7:9-10, 13-14

Psalm: 93

Epistle: Revelations 1:4b-8

Gospel: John 18:33-37

**THE SERMON:** Today's lessons of Daniel and Revelation are apocalyptic writings. They deal with the last days or the end of time. Both talk about images that you are more likely to see in science fiction movies or even Star Wars. There are beasts with multiple heads and animals with multiple horns on their heads and other hard to imagine images. At some points they read as though you've had a nightmare after eating and going to bed on a full stomach.

I sometimes say that the writer of Revelation, John, there on the island of Patmos in the Aegean Sea, must have gotten into some mushrooms.

I also wonder what made the compilers of the Bible include Revelation? I have come to understand that Revelation uses a lot of symbolism or coded words so that it won't be understood by its foes.

In looking at today's lesson of Daniel, we find that Daniel is living during the Babylonian Exile. He is a Jew that has been transported to Babylon, He was

chosen because of his looks, intellect and his ability to interpret riddles and dreams. Because he has often interpreted dreams for Babylon kings he has been appointed to high positions. Yet, in spite of the honors he has received while in Babylon, he has remained true to his faith and promoted that all he has done is because of the God of Israel.

He was thrown into a lion's pit because he refused to acknowledge the gods of the Babylonians. Expecting Daniel to have been eaten by the lions, the Babylonian king was amazed to find Daniel alive and well when he had the sealed pit opened. Daniel had put his faith in God and God had sent an angel to keep the lions mouth closed and see that Daniel suffered no injury.

The Babylonian king, Darius, put out a decree, in many languages, in his domain that all men should fear and reverence the God of Daniel. In other words, he is saying that Daniels' God is the greatest.

When we see Daniel this morning, he has awakened from a dream where he had a vision. In this vision he saw an Ancient One sitting on his throne. His clothing was white as snow and his hair like pure wool. His throne was fiery flames and its wheels were burning fire. Streams of fire flowed out from his presence. Thousands of thousands were around him. He sat in judgment and the book of their lives were opened. This Ancient One was God.

As Daniel continued to watch in this vision, he saw one in human form coming to the Ancient One. He was coming in the clouds and he stood before the Ancient One. He had dominion, glory and kingship so that people of all nations and languages should serve him.

The one standing before the Ancient One was Jesus. The power and kingship that God gave to Jesus shall never be destroyed.

In Revelation, John also has a vision, His vision bears a message to the seven churches in Asia. He tells of Jesus loving us and freeing us from sin. He tells us that on the last day Jesus will be coming with the clouds. In other words, he will be coming from heaven, every eye shall see him, the believers and non-believers and even those who pierced him. God will declare, I am the Alpha and the Omega, the first and the last.

Indeed, God is the first, it is he who created the world and he is last, he has the power to destroy the world.

At first look, the Gospel seems out of place. We would normally hear this scripture as we prepare for Easter.

So, why are we dealing with it now? Jesus is being questioned about his being a king. In both Daniel and Revelation, God gave Jesus' kingship or dominion over all the world. This means he has a power that will never be diminished or destroyed.

Who is questioning his kingship or power? It is Pilate. The Jewish religious authorities have handed Jesus over to Pilate hoping he will kill him. Why are they so angry with Jesus?

Remember that just as Jesus began his ministry, he caused a great disturbance. The scriptures say that he cleansed the temple. He turned over tables, took a short whip, drove the money changers and animal sellers out. Now these merchants weren't wrong to be there. Jews were coming to the temple from all over the world and they had to exchange their money to shekels, the money accepted by the temple. And for the sin offerings, grain, birds and animals could be bought there in the temple yard instead of lugging

them from the places that the people came. So, this commerce was necessary and expedient.

What then was the problem? Corruption was the problem. The merchants were not honest, they were gouging the people. The money exchange rate wasn't fair, blemished animals instead of pure were also being sold. Dishonest weights were being used to measure and weigh the grains. So it is because of dishonesty that Jesus cleansed the temple.

After Jesus disrupted the commerce of the temple the religious authorities harbored a grudge against Jesus and began to watch him so that they could find something to let them get rid of him.

Then, there was the raising of Lazarus from the dead. The authorities then wanted to know where Jesus had gotten his power and how he planned to use it. They were alarmed that people; large crowds had begun to follow him. They saw him as a radical, he forgave sins, drove out demons, and healed people. He didn't require sacrifices and his disciples didn't wash their hands before eating. Jesus was a menace; he was causing a big rift in the way the Jews were practicing their faith.

He had to be stopped.

Jesus had come to Jerusalem to celebrate the Passover. At this point he had had the last supper, instituted the eucharist, washed the feet of his disciples and told Judas to go and do what he had to do. Judas betrayed him to the authorities for the 30 pieces of silver. The religious authorities took him to Pilate hoping he would kill him for them. Jewish law forbids them to touch blood and the Roman Authorities didn't allow the Sanhedrin Council or Court to put anyone to death.

So, Jesus is being questioned by Pilate. He has heard from the Jewish authorities that he is a king.

Where did they get this? The authorities got the information that Jesus could be a king from the books of Daniel and Ezekiel.

Pilate asked Jesus if he was a king, the king of the Jews? Jesus asked Pilate if he really wanted to know this for himself or was, he asking because he had heard it from the Jews. Pilate said he wasn't a Jew and he wanted to know what Jesus had done. Surely, he had done something why else would the Jews hand him over to the Roman authorities to be put on trial and hopefully condemned to death.

Jesus said. "My kingdom isn't from this world and if it were, my followers would be rioting and fighting to prevent me from being taken by the religious authorities and turned over to you. I am no earthly king."

Jesus then relays from the prophecies and writings of the Jewish scripture. He tells Pilate, I was born for this, I came into the world to bring truth.

Jesus does not try to stop Pilate from crucifying him. On the day we know as Transfiguration Sunday, Moses and Elijah had discussed with Jesus, on the mountain the events of how his life was going to end. Jesus knew and accepted this outcome,

When he was talking to his disciples for the last time, he told them of what would happen to him. But he told them he would come back. He would come in the clouds.

So, we, as Christians look for the Second Coming of our King. Amen.

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