

ILCW B
Daniel 7:13-14
November 25, 2012
Christ the King Sunday

PRAYER OF THE DAY

M: Lord Jesus Christ, by your victory you have broken the power of the evil one. Fill our hearts with joy and peace as we look with hope to that day when every creature in heaven and earth will acclaim you King of kings and Lord of lords to your unending praise and glory; for you live and reign with the Father and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

FIRST LESSON (Sermon Text) Daniel 7:13-14

Daniel's vision is glorious—for it is the sight of all believers with the Lord forever!

¹³ "In my vision at night I looked, and there before me was one like a son of man, coming with the clouds of heaven. He approached the Ancient of Days and was led into his presence.
¹⁴ He was given authority, glory and sovereign power; all peoples, nations and men of every language worshiped him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion that will not pass away, and his kingdom is one that will never be destroyed.

PSALM 45

1. How our hearts with joy abound, With your beauty all around;
We would try our love to express, We would speak your righteousness.
2. Fairer still than human frame, To our eyes for years the same;
Steadfast love shines from your face; From your lips flow words of grace.
3. Yours the scepter, yours the throne; You to us are God's alone;
Mercies, vast, to all are giv'n; Wealth of earth, and joy of heav'n.
4. Glorious gifts, for mercy's sake, We are chosen, we partake.
Come with joy and highest praise; Come to God's house, your voices raise.
5. Let your song of praise recall: God alone is Lord of all.
All the earth and heav'n above, Join to praise the God of love.

SECOND LESSON Revelation 1:4b-8

John's vision too, is just as glorious as Daniel's. We too eagerly await our Lord's return.

⁴John, To the seven churches in the province of Asia:

Grace and peace to you from him who is, and who was, and who is to come, and from the seven spirits before his throne, ⁵and from Jesus Christ, who is the faithful witness, the firstborn from the dead, and the ruler of the kings of the earth.

To him who loves us and has freed us from our sins by his blood, ⁶and has made us to be a kingdom and priests to serve his God and Father—to him be glory and power for ever and ever! Amen. ⁷Look, he is coming with the clouds, and every eye will see him, even those who pierced him; and all the peoples of the earth will mourn because of him. So shall it be! Amen. ⁸"I am the Alpha and the Omega," says the Lord God, "who is, and who was, and who is to come, the Almighty."

VERSE OF THE DAY* Revelation 22:13

Alleluia. I am the Alpha and Omega, the First and the Last, the Beginning and the End. Alleluia.

GOSPEL John 18:33-37

³³Pilate then went back inside the palace, summoned Jesus and asked him, "Are you the king of the Jews?"

³⁴"Is that your own idea," Jesus asked, "or did others talk to you about me?"

³⁵"Am I a Jew?" Pilate replied. "Your own people and chief priests handed you over to me. What is it you have done?"

³⁶Jesus said, "My kingdom is not of this world. If it were, my servants would fight to prevent my arrest by the Jewish leaders. But now my kingdom is from another place."

³⁷"You are a king, then!" said Pilate.

Jesus answered, "You say that I am a king. In fact, the reason I was born and came into the world is to testify to the truth. Everyone on the side of truth listens to me."

NICENE CREED**HYMN OF THE DAY* 728 Jerusalem the Golden****SERMON THEME**

The Vision is glorious... but the Reality can only be better!

THE VISION IS GLORIOUS... BUT THE REALITY WILL BE EVEN MORE SO!

The year 586 B.C. seems like quite a long time ago, about 50 years according to my calendar. That was the first of the mass deportations which King Nebuchadnezzar enacted. Many leaders and educated ones were the first to be carried off into captivity here in Babylon. In following years, he brought more of our people, along with all the sacred vessels from the temple. He put them in his royal treasury; at least he had enough sense not to disgrace them further. That certainly was not the case for his successor who currently rules over us, Belshazzar.

Belshazzar is so arrogant. He did not learn the lesson of humility which the triune God taught his father, Nebuchadnezzar. God caused him to go insane and eat grass like an ox, living out in the wild for a time. Even now, as Darius and the Medes are preparing to overthrow Babylon, Belshazzar, instead of preparing for battle, is throwing a huge feast in his own honor. It was during that feast that the very finger of God wrote on the walls inside the banquet room: *Mene, Mene, Tekel, Peres*. God was telling him: “Numbered, numbered, you have been weighed on the scales and found lacking!” In other words, your kingdom will now be taken from you and divided. His days as king were numbered; his time was ending. The balance of world power was about to shift from the Babylonians to the Medes and Persians, all which leads up to the vision the Lord gave to me, Daniel.

It happened during the first year of King Belshazzar. Life was getting worse for the Israelites in captivity. Even though our Lord had promised us that after 70 years we would return to Jerusalem, many folks were not only doubting the Lord’s promise, but worse, were becoming quite comfortable living away from the Promised Land. I guess that was part of the reason only a small remnant returned to rebuild Jerusalem and the Temple. But I digress. Back to the vision; allow me to give you the substance of it: (Daniel 7:1-12)

I saw four great winds churning up the sea and four great beasts came up out of the sea. The first was like a lion with wings of an eagle, but then it stood on two feet like a man. After that the second beast appeared looking like a bear with three ribs in its mouth. It was told, “Get up and eat your fill of flesh!” After that was another beast that looked like a leopard, but had four wings and four heads. It too was given authority to rule for a while. Finally, the fourth and most terrifying beast arose, with iron teeth. It crushed and devoured its victims and trampled whatever else was left under its feet. It was different however because it had 10 horns – and one of them, a little one, rose up and uprooted the first three horns. This horn had eyes like a man and a mouth that spoke very boastful words.

Next I saw what was like a great courtroom with the judge of all sitting on the judgment throne. His title was, “**The Ancient of Days.**” His clothing was white. The hair of his head was like white wool. A river of fire flowed before him. Thousands upon thousands attended him and stood before him. The court was seated and the books were opened.

For as fearful and awe-filled of a sight as it was, that little horn continued its boasting until it was slain. Its body was destroyed and thrown down into the blazing fire. Those other beasts also were stripped of their authority after they had ruled for a time. Then came these words:

¹³ *"In my vision at night I looked, and there before me was one like a son of man, coming with the clouds of heaven. He approached the Ancient of Days and was led into his presence.*

¹⁴ *He was given authority, glory and sovereign power; all peoples, nations and men of every language worshiped him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion that will not pass away, and his kingdom is one that will never be destroyed.*

What a wild and incredible vision! I won't be surprised if you are just as bewildered as I was at first. I asked what this all meant, and the Lord explained, "*The four great beasts are the four kingdoms that will rise from the earth. But the saints of the Most High will receive the kingdom and will possess it forever – yes forever and ever.*" (Dan. 7:17-18)

You have the advantage of time and the perspective of history. It's clear as you look back to see how each of these kingdoms came and went: first, the Babylonians; then the Medes and Persians; after that the Greeks; and finally, that 4th one was the Roman Empire. All those world powers ruled for a time; oppressing God's people more and more... trampling them under foot. Yet, all of them only succeeded in bringing God's ultimate plan to fruition in Jesus. And even though spiritual oppression and arrogant boasting against God has not stopped in your time, none of it happens apart from the watchful eye of the **Ancient of Days** himself. Perhaps you and I have more in common that we think – and one of those commonalities is the name God gives us:

The Almighty God calls us, "***Saints of the Most High God.***" Even though we live our days apart from the Promised Land, we know we have a citizenship and a belonging in another country, a heavenly one with an eternal King. In the Gospel lesson we heard Jesus himself testify before Pilate, "*My kingdom is not of this world.*" (John 18:36). In my vision, Jesus was that "one like a son of man" coming with the clouds of heaven. Those other kings came from the earth – but Jesus and his authority and power came from heaven above!

Another commonality is how God has rescued us from captivity and slavery to sin – even though we have been rebellious, perverse, hostile, enemies of God – as arrogant as Nebuchadnezzar or Belshazzar. Yet, instead of humbling us like an ox, or worse, God mercifully penned a message of hope. Moses and the Prophets recorded God's promises which foretold of a child to be born of a virgin who would sacrifice himself for the sin of the world! For centuries, those offerings and sacrifices were made upon the altar at the temple in Jerusalem. But on that hill, Jesus approached the Ancient of Days and offered himself. God accepted his sacrifice as full payment for all your sins and mine.

Because he defeated sin, death and Satan he was given all authority and glory and sovereign power. This is why all people from all nations and every language do worship him and will continue to worship him. His will be an everlasting dominion, a kingdom that will never be destroyed. This is what my vision is all about and it is glorious; but know this: our future will be even more so!

God repeated this glorious vision, allowing John to see and write it down. That was our second lesson today. He wants to assure you and all believers that He will rescue his people from Satan. That's exactly what happened on Calvary. Numbered, numbered indeed were, and are, the days of Satan's reign. And even though his influence through worldly rulers exists for a while, it too will come to an inglorious end.

Do know this – that no matter how haughty or arrogant or terrible the wicked things your leaders may do or boast about; the Ancient of Days stands above them all. The day is coming when every ruler, every worldly authority, every earthly power will stand before God – and the books will be opened. All their wicked deeds will be read, and they will be judged accordingly. Take heart dear friends, the future is fantastic.

In our days, it is quite common to have our young children ask us what it was like to live in Jerusalem, what it was like to go up to the temple to worship God. The picture so often brings tears to our eyes each time we tell it. "Jerusalem the Golden" is what we affectionately called it. Not that the streets were lined with gold – but that it was the very dwelling of God and the home

of his people. Jerusalem itself means “city of peace” for there we met the God of free and faithful grace. The Scriptures assured us that we were at peace with God because He alone is our eternal Savior and King! This is what truly made Jerusalem “golden.” The message of peace through the promised Messiah was echoed again and again in every aspect of our worship. Yes, worship at the Temple was glorious, just as it is here in your house of worship, but it’s glorious because you proclaim Christ Jesus as Savior and King. Yet remember, the final reality of the heavenly Jerusalem, with Christ upon his throne, will be far greater.

That remnant who returned to rebuild Jerusalem and the temple struggled. They struggled to remain focused on God’s word and his promises. They got distracted by surrounding political powers. They wept over how their rebuilt temple wasn’t as glorious as Solomon’s. A few things to learn from their mistakes would be not getting distracted by surrounding political concerns and that you don’t worship a building! Remember where the true Power and Glory is – in Christ Jesus and in the mission of proclaiming His peace. Our life is about serving the King who serves us so faithfully in Word and Sacrament during our earthly pilgrimage. And remember, the best is yet to come.

The day is coming when you and I all believers from every nation and tribe and language will be in the eternal house of God – before the Ancient of Days and with our Lord and Savior Jesus. The day is coming when there will be no more tears, or pain or sorrow or sadness. It will truly be thee Jerusalem the Golden – the home of God’s elect. There the hymns and praise will never end.

When your children ask you what it will be like – I know it’s hard to explain, because even the best of what we know of as “good” this side of heaven is pales in comparison. Using illustrations such as singing hymns all day long might not sound too appealing for some but perhaps the simplest way is to say that we will be “with the Lord.”

It’s no accident that believers both in the Old and New Testaments have long greeted one another with the phrase, “The Lord be with you – and also with you.” Yet when that day comes, it won’t be a vision or just a Christian cliché, it will be the reality – the Lord will be with us and we will be with the Lord... in person... in the flesh... forever... and from then on. It will never be anymore glorious or wonderful or amazing than that. We will be home. God be with you ‘til that day when he gathers all his believers home around the throne of Christ the King. Amen.

