

Faith Walk! - Sermon Discussion

Date : 3 January 2021

Sermon Title : Life in the World

Speaker : Rev Peter Koh

Text : Daniel 1:1-21

INTRODUCTION

We all struggle to remain pure and holy and undefiled in a world filled with temptations where we can be dragged aside and compromise in our faith. To tempt us into buying items from a particular brand, business owners often repeatedly play songs with the brand name in order to promote it and condition us into buying.

God's word in Daniel 1 has something to say about how we are to deal with this conditioning and temptation. In his siege on Jerusalem in 605B.C., king Nebuchadnezzar plundered the temple of God and had some sacred articles taken to Babylon where his gods were. He also chose young men he captured from Jerusalem and brought them over to Babylonia to be indoctrinated. It was a time of misery for Israel. Daniel and his young friends were probably only about 14-16 years old when they were dragged into captivity, influenced and tempted with nice royalty, given new names and taught literature, language and culture of the people in Babylon. That was the conditioning that had taken place in the lives of Daniel and his friends. Let us learn from how they fared living in the heathen or pagan world so we too may live our lives for God without compromise in our world, in this pandemic today.

A. Jerusalem Captured (vv. 1-7)

- In order to prevent the people who had been conquered from rebelling against him, king Nebuchadnezzar took some of their sacred articles and put them in his temple, basically telling them to give up on their faith and to join him as part of his subjects so as to be treated well.

Conquest:

Temple plundered and some sacred articles moved to Babylon temple god:

- My god greater than your God (v.2)
- Good looking young men without defect who were intelligent and teachable were chosen because of their royalty and nobility and brought to Babylon to be conditioned in body, soul and spirit.

For we walk by faith, not by sight. 2 Corinthians 5:7

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Conditioning:

Of young able man through:

- Food (Body)
Tempted with nice expensive food they normally did not get to eat
- Education and Culture (Soul)
Taught the main characteristic of this new nation to transform them to be more and more like a Babylonian instead of an Israelite
- Names (Spirit)
Their names were changed so they would reject their faith and join the faith of the pagan world with allegiance to the pagan gods

Identity Change (vv.6-7)

Daniel	God is my judge	Belteshazzar	Baal's prince
Hananiah	Beloved by the LORD	Shadrach	Illumined by sun-god
Mishael	Who is what God is to	Meshach	Who is like Shach
Azariah	The LORD is my help	Abednego	Servant of Nego

Nebuchadnezzar was intentional in influencing these young men who will in turn help shape his captives to be loyal to him because the young people were the future of his nation.

B. Daniel's Commitment to the LORD (vv.8-21)

Daniel in his wisdom and love for God pledged his allegiance to God alone.

1) Daniel's Conviction

Daniel resolved not to defile himself (v.8)

- they will not take the royal meat or wine and delicacy offered but only eat vegetables and water
- he requested that the guard test them for 10 days
- after 10 days they looked much healthier and stronger than those who ate the royal food and wine

God's hand was moving in the lives of Daniel and his friends.

2) Guard's Compassion

God had caused the official to show favour and compassion (v.9)

- to have courage to disobey king Nebuchadnezzar
- to take the risk of possibly losing his life and maybe even his family's too

Only God can move the official to do this and He did it for Daniel and his 3 friends.

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3) God Confers Gifts to the Faithful

To these four young men God gave knowledge and understanding of all kinds of literature and learning. And Daniel could understand visions and dreams of all kinds. (v.17)

- They were brought into the king's presence to be questioned and the king remarked they were above all the magicians and enchanters
- they were 10 times stronger and brighter than the other people

When they were faithful to God, God honoured their faith by rewarding them 10 times more.

In this pandemic, when we remain faithful, we know God is watching and is there for us. God will bless us when we align ourselves with Him and He will honour our faith. "When God is for us, who can be against us?"(Romans 8:31) Such is the amazing God we serve!

CONCLUSION

Like Daniel, we are living in a predominately heathen world. Although we are not snatched out from our familiar surroundings, we still find ourselves in circumstances and environments over which we have no control. Often, we find policies and laws that go against what we believe in scriptures. Media promotes and provokes the values we embraced. We face temptations to compromise our faith and loyalty to Christ almost daily.

But we are to present ourselves holy (Romans 12:1-2); have nothing to do with their works of darkness (Eph. 5:11-12), and to please God (2 Tim. 2:4). For:

We are in (sent into) the world and not of the world but for the world.

As God's new creation, let us not behave like the world, for God has empowered us with the Holy Spirit to live a holy life so as to serve the world, to point people to Jesus Christ as their Lord and Saviour.

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As a group, spend some time to share your success and struggle in fulfilling what you/your group had committed to do at the previous meeting.

A. Review Sermon Content

Purpose: Reflect on one key takeaway.

Appoint someone to read Daniel 1:1-21 twice, slowly.

1. At the end of the reading, the reader will say, 'This is the Word of the Lord.'

All to respond, "Thanks be to God." Our response reminds us that this is the Word of the Lord. Just as God had spoken to His people in the past, He is still speaking to us even today, right now."

- a.
 - (i) As God's word was read, which verse speaks to you the most?
 - (ii) What is the key takeaway for you from the sermon "Life in the World"?

- b. How will you align the way you live to your key takeaway?

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B. Relate Sermon Content

Purpose: Relate with the Truth and Resolve for Transformation.

- 2a. What does Nebuchadnezzar's conquest of Jerusalem and conditioning of its captured young men tell you about Daniel's life in his world?
- 2b. (i) What are some sacrifices and risks Daniel and his friends made to honour God?

(ii) What are some sacrifices and risks Christians today can make to honour God in our world?
- 2c. What does God's hand working in the lives of Daniel and his friends and also in the official guard tell you about:
 - (i) God?
 - (ii) The relationship between God and man?
- 3a. As God's new creation, with the Holy Spirit empowering you, are you able to live in the world,
 - (i) and are not of the world?
 - (ii) but for the world ?
- 3b. What is one thing that is hindering you from making sacrifices or taking risks to honour God?
- 3c. How can your group members encourage or help you to overcome 3b above for the next week(s) until your next meeting?

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C. Testimonies and Prayer

Purpose: Give glory to God and seek Him.

4. Share your testimony on how by the Holy Spirit's empowerment, you were able to make a sacrifice or take a risk to honour God in this world filled with temptations and conditioning?

OR

Give thanks to God for His faithfulness in honouring your commitment to Him despite challenges in this world.

5. Take turns to pray for God's blessings upon one another as you begin this New Year. Bring all that have been shared in 3b and 3c to God and commit to helping one another stay faithful to God by the Holy Spirit's empowerment: to "not behave like the world", but live a holy life so as to serve the world and point people to Jesus Christ as their Lord and Saviour.

Seek the Spirit's guidance on how your SG can be in the world, and not of the world but for the world in this New Year. Listen to God's prompting in the following week(s), until your next meeting, and share with one another the revelation received.

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