

John 17

¹³ But now I am coming to you, and these things I speak in the world, that they may have my joy fulfilled in themselves. ¹⁴ I have given them your word, and the world has hated them because they are not of the world, just as I am not of the world. ¹⁵ I do not ask that you take them out of the world, but that you keep them from the evil one. ¹⁶ They are not of the world, just as I am not of the world. ¹⁷ Sanctify them in the truth; your word is truth. ¹⁸ As you sent me into the world, so I have sent them into the world. ¹⁹ And for their sake I consecrate myself, that they also may be sanctified in truth.

²⁰ “I do not ask for these only, but also for those who will believe in me through their word.

My thesis is that the practice of non-violence requires a belief in divine vengeance...My thesis will be unpopular with man in the West...But imagine speaking to people (as I have) whose cities and villages have been first plundered, then burned, and leveled to the ground, whose daughters and sisters have been raped, whose fathers and brothers have had their throats slit...Your point to them [and say to them that] we should not retaliate? Why not? I say—the only means of prohibiting violence by us is to insist that violence is only legitimate when it comes from God...Violence thrives today, secretly nourished by the belief that God refuses to take the sword...It takes the quiet of a suburb for the birth of the thesis that human nonviolence is a result of a God who refuses to judge. In a scorched land—soaked in the blood of the innocent, the idea will invariably die, like other pleasant captivities of the liberal mind...if God were NOT angry at injustice and deception and did NOT make a final end of violence, that God would not be worthy of our worship.

- Miroslav Volf, *Exclusion & Embrace*, 334.



At Home In Exile

SERMONS IN THE BOOK OF DANIEL

One image Scripture uses to interpret our current place in the world is that of “exile.” Since Genesis 3 and mankind’s treasonous rebellion against God, the entire world is in exile and separated from their created home—the presence of God. In the midst of this exile, Christians find themselves having begun their journey home in Jesus. United to Christ, Christians are presently secure in the world that is to come even as they live in the world that “is passing away.” In Jesus, we are at home in exile.

In this overlapping reality of being “in the world” and “in Christ,” we experience pressures to both isolation from the world and assimilation to the world. However, Jesus calls us to a faithful presence in the world. He empowers us to live as his distinct people in a world that desperately needs to find its home in him. Further, he marks us out as a people who intentionally live under him as the reigning King in the middle of a world drunk on the power of empire and autonomy. All this requires careful clarity and courageous devotion – both of which God furnishes to his people.

The book of Daniel is historic “exilic” literature that captures these dynamics well and displays God’s nourishing power and wise ways for his people in exile.

The Writing on the Wall

February 4, 2024 | Daniel 5 | Pastor Roger Williams

In exile, God strengthens his people for sober faithfulness by revealing the fragility of worldly powers.

Daniel 5

King Belshazzar made a great feast for a thousand of his lords and drank wine in front of the thousand.

² Belshazzar, when he tasted the wine, commanded that the vessels of gold and of silver that Nebuchadnezzar his father had taken out of the temple in Jerusalem be brought, that the king and his lords, his wives, and his concubines might drink from them. ³ Then they brought in the golden vessels that had been taken out of the temple, the house of God in Jerusalem, and the king and his lords, his wives, and his concubines drank from them. ⁴ They drank wine and praised the gods of gold and silver, bronze, iron, wood, and stone.

⁵ Immediately the fingers of a human hand appeared and wrote on the plaster of the wall of the king's palace, opposite the lampstand. And the king saw the hand as it wrote. ⁶ Then the king's color changed, and his thoughts alarmed him; his limbs gave way, and his knees knocked together. ⁷ The king called loudly to bring in the enchanters, the Chaldeans, and the astrologers...

Worldly power is marked by the fragility of foolishness.

¹⁰ The queen (mother), because of the words of the king and his lords, came into the banqueting hall, and the queen declared, "...Let not your thoughts alarm you ..."¹¹ There is a man in your kingdom in whom is the spirit of the holy gods...Daniel, whom the king named Belteshazzar. Now let Daniel be called, and he will show the interpretation."

¹³ Then Daniel was brought in before the king. The king answered and said to Daniel, "You are that Daniel, one of the exiles of Judah, whom the king my father brought from Judah. ¹⁴ I have heard of you that the spirit of the gods is in you, and that light and understanding and excellent wisdom are found in you. ¹⁵ Now the wise men, the enchanters, have been brought in before me to read this writing and make known to me its interpretation, but they could not show the interpretation of the matter. ¹⁶ But I have heard that you can give interpretations and solve problems. Now if you can read the writing and make known to me its interpretation, you shall be clothed with purple and have a chain of gold around your neck and shall be the third ruler in the kingdom."

¹⁷ Then Daniel answered and said before the king, "Let your gifts be for yourself, and give your rewards to another. Nevertheless, I will read the writing to the king and make known to him the interpretation.

Sober faithfulness is marked by patience, distinctiveness, and freedom.

¹⁸ O king, the Most High God gave Nebuchadnezzar your father kingship and greatness and glory and majesty. ¹⁹ And because of the greatness that he gave him, all peoples, nations, and languages trembled and feared before him. Whom he would, he killed, and whom he would, he kept alive; whom he would, he raised up, and whom he would, he humbled. ²⁰ But when his heart was lifted up and his spirit was hardened so that he dealt proudly, he was brought down from his kingly throne, and his glory was taken from him. ²¹ He was driven from among the children of mankind, and his mind was made like that of a beast, and his dwelling was with the wild donkeys. He was fed grass like an ox, and his body was wet with the dew of heaven, until he knew that the Most High God rules the kingdom of mankind and sets over it whom he will.

²² And you his son, Belshazzar, have not humbled your heart, though you knew all this, ²³ but you have lifted up yourself against the Lord of heaven. And the vessels of his house have been brought in before you, and you and your lords, your wives, and your concubines have drunk wine from them. And you have praised the gods of silver and gold, of bronze, iron, wood, and stone, which do not see or hear or know, but the God in whose hand is your breath, and whose are all your ways, you have not honored.

Worldly power is marked by the fragility of forgetfulness.

²⁴ "Then from his presence the hand was sent, and this writing was inscribed. ²⁵ And this is the writing that was inscribed: MENE, MENE, TEKEL, and PARSIN. ²⁶ This is the interpretation of the matter: MENE, God has numbered the days of your kingdom and brought it to an end; ²⁷ TEKEL, you have been weighed in the balances and found wanting; ²⁸ PERES, your kingdom is divided and given to the Medes and Persians."

²⁹ Then Belshazzar gave the command, and Daniel was clothed with purple, a chain of gold was put around his neck, and a proclamation was made about him, that he should be the third ruler in the kingdom.

³⁰ That very night Belshazzar the Chaldean king was killed. ³¹ And Darius the Mede received the kingdom, being about sixty-two years old.

Worldly power is marked by the fragility of the future.