



**DATE:** November 29 (First Sunday of Advent)  
**SCRIPTURE:** Daniel 6:6-27  
**TITLE:** Daniel's peace in the lion's den.

On this first Sunday of Advent, we remember the Hope of Christ and share the story of Daniel in the Lion's Den. This is not a typical Advent story, but it is one that the Gospel writers clearly knew.

There are many parallels between Daniel in the Lion's Den and Jesus in the tomb. As we begin our journey toward Christmas, it may seem odd to remember the Cross, but it is the Cross and empty tomb that makes Christmas matter in the first place.

Daniel is a story that takes place in the time of the Babylonian exile, yet it was written down many hundreds of years later. The book itself is probably the last book written of the Old Testament. In the passage for today, is easy to see how Daniel himself acts as a forerunner to the story of Christ crucified and risen.

Daniel is a Jew in the Babylonian court. His people are a conquered people and he is among an exile community. He rises to power through dream interpretation. Much like Joseph before him, he uses his ability to interpret dreams to rise to power under a foreign King.

Daniel's story also has a parallel to Esther. Like Daniel, Esther is Jew under a foreign leader. She too finds herself in a precarious position because of her Jewish identity. As is the case with the story of Esther, the Jews are perceived as a threat to Imperial power because they do not acquiesce to worshipping the King. In this story, Daniel is arrested and thrown into the lion's den for praying. He is sealed in the lion's pit with a stone, but

when it is rolled away, he is alive. This part of the story should sound familiar.

The many Biblical parallels aside, there some Christians who want to apply Daniel's story to our time as well. They see COVID and the pandemic as today's Lion's Den, and that as Christians we should have faith like Daniel to know that

God will protect us. They believe that not gathering for worship is to live in fear and we are not trusting God.

The problem with this is simple. Daniel did not defi-

antly step into the Lion's Den

and dare God to save him. He was put there by fearful men who wanted to hold onto their positions of power and privilege. He was hated because he was different, a foreigner who they felt threatened their place with the King. This virus is not like the lions. The lions were only a threat because of their hatred and fear. COVID is a threat to all, but especially to the most vulnerable in our midst and in our churches.

Those who are clamoring for churches to worship together again—despite the dangers it poses to our congregations, wider communities, and health care workers, they are the like the conspirators to the King who are living in fear. They are fearful that they will lose their position in the world if they don't stand in front of crowds and keep passing their collection plates. They are the ones pushing people into the den.

We will continue to draw inspiration from Daniel, who simply wanted to pray. We will resist the evil men who wish to shove us out into the Lion's den, and we will hold onto hope that God will guide us through even this trial.

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