
Narrative Lectionary

Year 3 | The Year of Luke

Scripture Readings

November 29, 2020

*The First Sunday
of Advent*

..... **About the text**

IT'S THE LAW, AND laws are not to be broken. That straightforward principle applies equally to the highest official in the land as it does to the most ordinary inhabitants. It encourages transparency and clarity about behavior and decisions.

That same principle—a beacon of equity and fairness—can be used to weave snares and set traps when it suits the ill-intentioned.

So, King Darius finds himself in a bind. Daniel, like Joseph with the Pharaoh, was a great supervisor of the king's business. And great supervisors make great enemies.

Those enemies circle those nets around the king himself. His anguish at carrying out his own decree draws us closer.

Despite the certainty of Daniel's fate, Darius calls into the lion's den with...hope.



Daniel 6:6-27

6 So the presidents and satraps conspired and came to the king and said to him, "O King Darius, live forever! ⁷ All the presidents of the kingdom, the prefects and the satraps, the counselors and the governors are agreed that the king should establish an ordinance and enforce an interdict, that whoever prays to anyone, divine or human, for thirty days, except to you, O king, shall be thrown into a den of lions. ⁸ Now, O king, establish the interdict and sign the document, so that it cannot be changed, according to the law of the Medes and the Persians, which cannot be revoked." ⁹ Therefore King Darius signed the document and interdict.

10 Although Daniel knew that the document had been signed, he continued to go to his house, which had windows in its upper room open toward Jerusalem, and to get down on his knees three times a day to pray to his God and praise him, just as he had done previously. ¹¹ The conspirators came and found Daniel praying and seeking mercy before his God. ¹² Then they approached the king and said concerning the interdict, "O king! Did you not sign an interdict, that anyone who prays to anyone, divine or human, within thirty days except to you, O king, shall be thrown into a den of lions?" The king answered, "The thing stands fast, according to the law of the Medes and

6 The vice-regents and governors conspired together and then went to the king and said, "King Darius, live forever! ⁷ We've convened your vice-regents, governors, and all your leading officials, and have agreed that the king should issue the following decree:

For the next thirty days no one is to pray to any god or mortal except you, O king. Anyone who disobeys will be thrown into the lions' den.

8 "Issue this decree, O king, and make it unconditional, as if written in stone like all the laws of the Medes and the Persians."

9 King Darius signed the decree.

10 When Daniel learned that the decree had been signed and posted, he continued to pray just as he had always done. His house had windows in the upstairs that opened toward Jerusalem. Three times a day he knelt there in prayer, thanking and praising his God.

11 The conspirators came and found him praying, asking God for help.

¹² They went straight to the king and reminded him of the royal decree that he had signed. "Did you not," they said, "sign a decree forbidding anyone to pray to any god or man except you for the next thirty days? And anyone caught doing it would be thrown into the lions' den?"

"Absolutely," said the king. "Written in stone, like all the laws of the Medes and

New Revised Standard

Persians, which cannot be revoked.”

¹³ Then they responded to the king, “Daniel, one of the exiles from Judah, pays no attention to you, O king, or to the interdict you have signed, but he is saying his prayers three times a day.”

¹⁴ When the king heard the charge, he was very much distressed. He was determined to save Daniel, and until the sun went down he made every effort to rescue him. ¹⁵ Then the conspirators came to the king and said to him, “Know, O king, that it is a law of the Medes and Persians that no interdict or ordinance that the king establishes can be changed.”

¹⁶ Then the king gave the command, and Daniel was brought and thrown into the den of lions. The king said to Daniel, “May your God, whom you faithfully serve, deliver you!” ¹⁷ A stone was brought and laid on the mouth of the den, and the king sealed it with his own signet and with the signet of his lords, so that nothing might be changed concerning Daniel. ¹⁸ Then the king went to his palace and spent the night fasting; no food was brought to him, and sleep fled from him.

¹⁹ Then, at break of day, the king got up and hurried to the den of lions. ²⁰ When he came near the den where Daniel was, he cried out anxiously to Daniel, “O Daniel, servant of the living God, has your God whom you faithfully serve been able to deliver you from the lions?” ²¹ Daniel then said to the king, “O king, live forever! ²² My God sent

The Message

Persians.”

¹³ Then they said, “Daniel, one of the Jewish exiles, ignores you, O king, and defies your decree. Three times a day he prays.”

¹⁴ At this, the king was very upset and tried his best to get Daniel out of the fix he’d put him in. He worked at it the whole day long.

¹⁵ But then the conspirators were back: “Remember, O king, it’s the law of the Medes and Persians that the king’s decree can never be changed.”

¹⁶ The king caved in and ordered Daniel brought and thrown into the lions’ den. But he said to Daniel, “Your God, to whom you are so loyal, is going to get you out of this.”

¹⁷ A stone slab was placed over the opening of the den. The king sealed the cover with his signet ring and the signet rings of all his nobles, fixing Daniel’s fate. ¹⁸ The king then went back to his palace. He refused supper. He couldn’t sleep. He spent the night fasting.

¹⁹ At daybreak the king got up and hurried to the lions’ den. ²⁰ As he approached the den, he called out anxiously, “Daniel, servant of the living God, has your God, whom you serve so loyally, saved you from the lions?”

²¹ “O king, live forever!” said Daniel. ²² “My God sent his angel, who closed the mouths of the lions so that they would not hurt me. I’ve been found innocent before God and also before you, O king. I’ve done nothing to harm you.”

²³ When the king heard these words,

New Revised Standard

his angel and shut the lions' mouths so that they would not hurt me, because I was found blameless before him; and also before you, O king, I have done no wrong." ²³ Then the king was exceedingly glad and commanded that Daniel be taken up out of the den. So Daniel was taken up out of the den, and no kind of harm was found on him, because he had trusted in his God. ²⁴ The king gave a command, and those who had accused Daniel were brought and thrown into the den of lions—they, their children, and their wives. Before they reached the bottom of the den the lions overpowered them and broke all their bones in pieces.

²⁵ Then King Darius wrote to all peoples and nations of every language throughout the whole world: "May you have abundant prosperity! ²⁶ I make a decree, that in all my royal dominion people should tremble and fear before the God of Daniel:

For he is the living God, enduring forever. · His kingdom shall never be destroyed, and his dominion has no end.

²⁷ He delivers and rescues, he works signs and wonders in heaven and on earth; · for he has saved Daniel from the power of the lions."

The Message

he was happy. He ordered Daniel taken up out of the den. When he was hauled up, there wasn't a scratch on him. He had trusted his God.

²⁴ Then the king commanded that the conspirators who had informed on Daniel be thrown into the lions' den, along with their wives and children. Before they hit the floor, the lions had them in their jaws, tearing them to pieces.

²⁵ King Darius published this proclamation to every race, color, and creed on earth:

Peace to you! Abundant peace! · ²⁶ I decree that Daniel's God shall be worshiped and feared in all parts of my kingdom. He is the living God, world without end. His kingdom never falls. His rule continues eternally.

²⁷ He is a savior and rescuer. He performs astonishing miracles in heaven and on earth. He saved Daniel from the power of the lions.

The Narrative Lectionary presents the story of God's work in humanity through a single Gospel each year. This is Year 3: The Year of Luke.