

**Hurst Green**  
**27<sup>th</sup> May 2018**  
**Daniel 2:1-49**

**Daniel & Nebuchadnezzar's Dream**

Two weeks ago we started our trip through Daniel – I found I had put myself on a spot as people came up and told me it was their favourite book.

Well I will just have to preach it as I see it and hope I do not offend any of you or put you off a wonderful book.

There are many takes on Daniel including how he is similar to Jesus in the way he relies on the father and speaks what he hears and only what he hears and that is shown in our reading today.

But the great thing to take away from that approach is not to elevate Daniel to some sort of pseudo Jesus but to take Daniel to show us that we can also be like Jesus. All those commands we are given are actually achievable by ordinary humans like you and me.

As we sing in that Hymn – An army of ordinary people! That is all that is needed.

But from two weeks ago we looked at plain vegetables rather than the kings' rich fare and how that made Daniel and his friends stand out – do not forget those friends they are a key part of the whole of this book as the four of them stand together.

Did you remember the challenge for you – are there areas of your life where you should be eating vegetables – keeping it simple so that you stand out. Did you find any?

And of course that linked very nicely into last week and Pentecost – the gifts of the Spirit – eagerly desire the greater gifts and the challenge to get out of the trenches and embrace the Spirit.

Of course you have to leave your comfort zone behind but that is true of our faith – just look at those disciples all those years ago – not just the twelve but all of them. Having been sent out they come back rejoicing that even the spirits obey and they are told to rather rejoice that their names are written in the book of life.

Do you rejoice in that? Is that a major part of who you are and how you see yourself? Is that your testimony – you overcome because your name is written in the book of life.

That's powerful stuff and from that flows all the powerful stuff.

So Daniel and his friends have chosen to be different – to be holy and God has honoured that and we have seen how the Spirit can work in our lives if only we will let it. All this is achievable in our lives today.

So Daniel is teaching us how to resist the culture around us and be different – to be Holy because our God is Holy in a world that is anything and everything but holy!

And so as we end Chapter 1 we find the four friends in the Kings service despite being young teenagers and we are told:

***Daniel 1:20 (ANIV)***

<sup>20</sup> *In every matter of wisdom and understanding about which the king questioned them, he found them ten times better than all the magicians and enchanterers in his whole kingdom.*

As always there is so much that I could pull out of this passage but we all have Sunday lunch waiting and so I must be disciplined and anyway if I make too many points you will lose them all while if I am selective there is a chance one or two will remain with you.

For the first point I am going to an obvious one - Nebuchadnezzar had a dream.

I meet many people of many walks of life who have a real problem with this. Here we have a pagan king, albeit a successful one who reigned in a relatively benign way, but a pagan king playing a lead part in Gods actions in the world.

There are those who seem to hold the belief that God only uses the good guys as his tools of choice but I believe the Old Testament shows us in several places that God uses who he chooses.

This may be a King who is willing to execute all the wise men in Babylon (see verse 12 of our reading). The King could of course do this because he would simply import some more wise men from elsewhere in his empire to rule Babylon.

So while relatively benign not exactly a soft touch and yet God is going to use him several times in Daniel to promote and enrich Daniel and his friends despite their continued opposition to his gods and their absolute faithfulness to their God.

So God uses who he chooses and I have quoted before from the Don Francisco song Balaam's donkey

“If God uses you don't pay it any mind, he could have used the dog next door if he'd been so inclined”.

But also note that God is on Nebuchadnezzar's case. He has not just given him this strange dream but he is not going to let him just forget it – he makes him desperate to find out what it means even if he has to kill all the wise men of Babylon to achieve this.

So this King is now going to set a challenge because he has obviously noted something from when he has consulted his wise men before. If he tells them his dream they can come up with an interpretation. Time will tell if it is right and if they have been vague enough in their words whatever happens they can claim is covered by what they said.

This time however he has got them.

***Daniel 2:5-6 (ANIV)***

<sup>5</sup> *The king replied to the astrologers, "This is what I have firmly decided: If you do not tell me what my dream was and interpret it, I will have you cut into pieces and your houses turned into piles of rubble. <sup>6</sup> But if you tell me the dream and explain it, you will receive from me gifts and rewards and great honour. So tell me the dream and interpret it for me."*

They don't like this – verse 10 says no King has ever asked this before but Nebuchadnezzar is steadfast in this and so Daniel who is rounded up as one of those to be put to death goes to the King and asks for time.

Did you see the confidence there? He did not whine about the judgement and how unreasonable it was – he left that to all the other wise men – he simply asked for time so that his God might interpret the dream.

And then he did the key thing – he rounded up his friends to pray for this situation.

How often is that our first reaction to a major problem or issue in our lives? OK we are not likely to be summarily executed but we all face problems and when they come over the horizon at us is our first reaction to get our friends to join us in a prayer meeting?

If you are like me (and I suspect most of you are) then your first reaction is to get stuck in and sort this out.

It is only when you have been up against it and you are not making any progress that you think about getting some prayer.

And how often has that prayer sorted things out? And usually in a different way than you were trying to.

So Daniel and his friends pull an all-nighter. And at some point in the night Daniel is convinced that God has come through and revealed both the dream and the interpretation.

That's confidence that God has done what he was asked to do – we would be surprised – we would wouldn't we.

We might even doubt it – come on; a funny statue, a flying rock and a huge mountain and this all meaning empires are going to rise and fall.

Daniel has no such doubts and does what we should do – he leaps into a song of praise thanking God.

This takes me back to Christmas and the way everyone praised God at the announcement rather than waiting to see if it actually came to pass.

I think I am still a bit like Sarah when she heard she was to become a mother in her old age – you know the story from Genesis Chapter 18. It all seems impossible but to God all things are possible and as the three visitors say to Abraham “*Is anything too hard for the Lord?*”

And that is a point to remember – nothing is too hard for God – he can do anything and he listens to our prayers. Now you know that this is not an invitation to name it and claim it because that is about your glory and our faith is all about God's glory.

Not that he needs reminding – he knows his glory but it is us who keep on forgetting and taking God back to being limited and small.

Too often it is the pagans who know how powerful our God is – certainly the demons do for we see them in the New Testament acknowledging Jesus even when they want to keep quiet so that we do not notice that God is at work.

Look at this though.

***Daniel 2:46-47 (ANIV)***

<sup>46</sup> Then King Nebuchadnezzar fell prostrate before Daniel and paid him honour and ordered that an offering and incense be presented to him. <sup>47</sup> The king said to Daniel, “Surely your God

*is the God of gods and the Lord of kings and a revealer of mysteries, for you were able to reveal this mystery."*

This is one of two times that the almighty King Nebuchadnezzar acknowledges our God in this way.

Do we acknowledge our God in this way?

Our God is above all gods and is Lord of kings. That is a pretty awesome God.

This is a God that can sort Brexit out, solve the refugee crisis in southern Europe, sort the Middle East out and all that before breakfast – not that he needs breakfast.

All he needs is his people to turn to him – a famous verse from the dedication of the temple that is still true today:

**2 Chronicles 7:13-14 (ANIV)**

<sup>13</sup> *"When I shut up the heavens so that there is no rain, or command locusts to devour the land or send a plague among my people, <sup>14</sup> if my people, who are called by my name, will humble themselves and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then will I hear from heaven and will forgive their sin and will heal their land.*

Nothing is too hard for our God – the problem tends to be that it is too hard for us to believe.

Doesn't our land need healing? Are not the locusts devouring our land? Is not all in chaos? Don't we need God to hear?

But do we believe he can and will? Or is he still that distant God waiting with his sceptre to strike us? I don't know that God – I know the God who wants to heal our land but wants us to play our part – Humble ourselves, pray. Seek his face and turn from our wicked ways.

Now hold that thought; hang onto that idea while I take you to Daniel's interpretation of the Dream in verse 44 and 45

**Daniel 2:44-45 (ANIV)**

<sup>44</sup> *"In the time of those kings, the God of heaven will set up a kingdom that will never be destroyed, nor will it be left to another people. It will crush all those kingdoms and bring them to an end, but it will itself endure for ever. <sup>45</sup> This is the meaning of the vision of the rock cut out of a mountain, but not by human hands—a rock that broke the iron, the bronze, the clay, the silver and the gold to pieces. "The great God has shown the king what will take place in the future. The dream is true and the interpretation is trustworthy."*

That is the time in which you are living.

God has set up his kingdom that will never be destroyed and you are part of it – do you believe that or are you in awe of other god's and see your own God as weak and slow to act?

God is all powerful and his will will come to pass; he will use who he chooses but are you ready to be part of that army of ordinary people or are you going to sit this one out while God does amazing things?

Come on; join in lets have some fun.