

May 20, 2007
Daniel 2: 17-23
First Parish UCC, Brunswick
Children's Musical Sunday
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Nightmares, Dreams, Visions

The stories in today's musical are from the first three chapters of the Book of Daniel, which is one of the books in the Hebrew Scriptures. That means it is one of the stories that Jesus would have heard when he was a boy. I wonder if Jesus and some of his friends dramatized this story for their families and their village when he was young. I wouldn't be surprised. If so, I'm sure they appreciated it as much as we appreciate you young people taking the time and effort to share this story with us today.

The stories in Daniel are not actual history. They are a collection of stories that were folktales and have been brought together under the name of the hero Daniel. They are stories that are meant to give people courage and hope in the midst of difficult times. When we are being picked on, being bullied, being encouraged to do something wrong sometimes it is hard not to lose our way. These stories are meant to help us be true to ourselves and to trust in God.

The reading from Daniel I've selected is in Chapter 2, beginning with verse 17. These are Daniel's words of thanks and praise to God, when God helps him to solve a riddle (which we'll hear more about later.)

*Then the mystery was revealed to Daniel in a vision of the night, and Daniel blessed the God of heaven.
Daniel said:*

*"Blessed be the name of God from age to age, for wisdom and power are God's. God changes times and seasons, deposes kings and sets up kings; gives wisdom to the wise and knowledge to those who have understanding, reveals deep and hidden things; knows what is in the darkness, and light dwells with God.
To you, O God of my ancestors, I give thanks and praise, for you have given me wisdom and power, and have now revealed to me what we asked of you, for you have revealed to us what the king ordered."*

This king that Daniel mentions is the other primary character in the story. Daniel is our hero, the thumbs-up guy. The thumbs-down guy is King Nebuchadnezzar. He fluctuates a bit in the story between thumbs-down and thumbs-up, but he starts off as a definite thumbs-down.

This story is a three-act drama. First we have a Nightmare, then a Dream, and then a Vision.

Chapter 1 begins with a nightmare kind of experience. King Nebuchadnezzar sends his Babylonian army into Judah to conquer the Judeans, the Jewish people. He takes some of them, including Daniel, captive back to Babylon. They lost their home, some of their friends, and some of their family. They didn't

want to go. It was a real nightmare of a time.

Then in chapter 2, the focus is on a dream. The Bible is often interested in dreams and how God communicates with people through dreams. The hero in the Bible is often a dream interpreter, and that is true in this story as well. King Nebuchadnezzar has a dream that upsets him. He calls together all his wise guys and tells them he wants to know what the dream means. And as a further test they have to tell him what the dream itself was. Our hero, Daniel, is the one who is able to do that because God reveals the answer to him, as we heard in the scripture reading.

Finally, in chapter 3, we come to a vision. Now, vision is not just about what we can see with our eyes. It is also about what we know in our heart and soul. Daniel helps his people to keep a vision of faithfulness to God. "Our God is the one true God." Daniel helps his people to be true to who they are and to trust that God will be with them no matter what happens. Which brings us to Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego.

(The musical:

It's Cool in the Furnace!

Music by Buryl Red

*Lyrics and Book by Grace Hawthorne
1973)*