Pinebrooke Community Church 19 January 2025 Daniel 2 – “When the impossible is possible” Daniel 2:19-23

 In God’s kingdom character trumps talent and in the kingdom of man, talent trumps character. I had a conversation with a young friend a few years ago as he described a situation in his church…. As followers of Jesus, we live in the midst of competing kingdoms, contrasting cultures. It doesn’t matter the place you are in when you observe this. The choice we have is which kingdom do we want to live accordingly to, one or the other. How then shall we live is the question? The story presented in the movie, *The Forge* the screen play reveals how to live in the one kingdom, the temporal but according to the other the eternal the kingdom of God. Our episode today in Daniel’s biography shows us how to do the same as *The Forge* and what it looks like when we serve a God who is in the business of making the impossible possible. I trust you have read the whole chapter, so we are only going to listen to Daniel’s prayer of thanks to God for His intervention in this impossible circumstance, vv. 19-23.

 *“During the night the mystery was revealed to Daniel in a vision. Then Daniel praised the God of heaven and said: ‘Praise be to the name of God forever and ever; wisdom and power are his. He changes times and seasons; he sets up kings and deposes them. He gives wisdom to the wise and knowledge to the discerning. He reveals deep and hidden things; he knows what lies in darkness, and light dwells with hm. I thank and praise you, O God of my fathers: you have given me wisdom and power, you have made know to me what we asked of you, you have made known to us the dream of the king.”*

 Remember, when we choose righteousness, God goes before us! And we serve a God who is in the business of making the impossible possible. The king has a dream. This was just after Daniel and his three friends had completed their three-year training cohort. If you notice they were not brought to the king’s palace with the veteran counselors. As novices, they were not included in the group. They had theoretical training, but no internship or experience yet but that was soon to change. Nebuchadnezzar was a smart guy, and this wasn’t his first rodeo. He demands the impossible, knowing the wise men and their sketchy ways. It was time to put them to the test. He commands not only tell me the interpretation but tell me the dream itself. Upon their push back the king upped the ante. If you can’t tell me the dream and its interpretation, then it is death for all of you. Old and new were now subject to the king’s order assuming the old guard had trained up the new guard thinking that wisdom was in the training. A new character enters the storyline, Arioch. Arioch was in charge of the slaughter, so Daniel went to him, which was a bold move in itself, as he was still a teenager most likely. (p. 42). Wise beyond his years, Daniel knows that he needs space for a “time-out” with God, so he asks Arioch for a “time-out” to go to God. He knows where his Source and Resource is. Do you, do I? Daniel shows us what we should know but most often don’t. Prayer makes possible the impossible. Daniel knew who his Resource was, and he knew to meet Him in prayer. He engaged his friends in the task of prayer. He seemed to know what Jesus said in Matthew’s gospel, *“Where two or three are gathered in my name there I am in the midst….”* These companions knew what most adults forget. They prayed and God answered. Also, different than most of us once they had their answer, they stopped and thanked God. When Daniel enters the king’s palace and his court, Daniel gives God credit publicly. The dream recounting and its interpretation was not about him it was about God. Even in the king’s response he heard Daniel and recognized God for who he is. It was an acknowledgment not a conversion. In the kingdom of man, that kingdom is essentially governed by an atheistic worldview which espouses a closed system of cause and effect. God continually shows that He governs the universe not man. Without the Holy Spirit, one cannot be expected to understand spiritual things. Is it not interesting that Nebuchadnezzar, the pagan king of Babylon understood that better than rational modern man. The dream and its interpretation are revealed to Daniel. The five kingdoms were important to the king, and they are important for us. God is a God of history. He raises up kingdoms and he demolishes kingdoms. Nebuchadnezzar knew there was something important for him in this dream. Some of what was in it was present and some of it was future. We understand the specifics of the dream because we live in the fifth part of it. The present was the Babylonian kingdom which sooner than later would be replaced by the Medo-Persian kingdom which would be replaced by the Greeks and Alexander the Great, then the Roman Empire followed by the kingdom that would cover the whole earth, the kingdom of God. The king’s response to the explanation was profound and immediate. A prostrated king directly acknowledged Daniel’s God as the God of heaven. He followed that with blessing Daniel in the only way that he knew, gifts and political promotion. Daniel’s gratitude was only complete when he secured authority and promotion for his companions as they formed the prayer cohort. As I look over this episode in Daniel’s story there is much to learn about God in how God worked with Daniel within a circumstance. To begin with, God has a plan that transcends our usual thinking. The exile was a context for God to reveal himself among us. In God’s mind one thing leads to another since his is not limited to time and space. The exile was an essential part of God’s purpose for Daniel’s existence and life. God uses a dream in a pagan king to reveal future history. He connects Daniel and Nebuchadnezzar in a very intimate way to reveal both His ways and His ways among His created ones. He gives Daniel the solution to an impossible circumstance to reveal that God is the God of history. This episode sets God’s glory apart from time and space. The glory of God is not limited to a closed system of existence, simply a cause-and-effect existence. What do we learn about ourselves through the lens of Daniel’s life? How does Daniel’s character speak to us? His character is rooted in humility. Humility is foundational for holy healthy living. Daniel knew and declared that no power or glory in this phenomenon was about him, but God alone. Giving all the glory – really giving God the glory, not just saying the words revealed what he knew in his heart of hearts. Daniel was a genuine dude; no wonder I fell in love with his example at such a tender age. No persona with him – just the real deal. It could be easy to miss, but Daniel demonstrates a profound character quality as well. Having spent time among the other wise men he no doubt knew their personal folly that Nebuchadnezzar perceived but his love for others stood out like a shining light. He could have gone passive once the dream and interpretation took place, but he didn’t. He knew who and what these “wise men” were and yet he interceded for them and their families. No need for slaughter. It takes great love to truly be a peacemaker. It seems that Daniel had a real hold on the kingdom of God in his character which is where it first resides. Just as he lived loyalty to God, so he lived loyalty to his friends. Loyalty is loyalty. These young men were a severe community of faith, hope, and love with one another. At the events that the king put in place, Daniel made sure that his friends were promoted with him. That’s what it looks like when our love for God is for the sake of others. We never lose sight of the good for the other which is love in the flesh. As the biography continues there will more tests and for Daniel’s friends with greater responsibility greater challenges arise that test faith and obedience to God. Greater tests tend to follow greater responsibility. For the four of them there is no more hiding, the two standards the ways of God and the ways of the evil one will grow in a stark and daily contrast with one another. Faith is always being refined in those who choose to follow God. It wasn’t heaven yet for them and it isn’t heaven yet for us.