

Sermon for Confirmation Sunday — Lord of Life Lutheran Church, Westfield, IN—4/27/2003

Title: “Is There Enough Evidence to Convict You?”

Text: Daniel 3: 13-28

Intro: *Ills.: Suspected killer of Jill Bearman let go because of lack of enough evidence*

Theme: When we are so convinced of our deliverance and Deliver in Jesus Christ, not only will our walk of faith and conviction of witness be compelling but it also will be what God uses to convince the world around us of its truth.

The Firey Furnace: A Time when God needed a “few good men”

- The Background . . .
 1. **Jewish captivity** — in a far off land – very hostile to true faith – tempting “*to go along to get along*”
 2. **Nebuchadnezzar stellar rise to power** — the “*superpower*” of that day
 3. **Daniel, Shadrach, Meshach, Abednego divinely ordered rise to power** – despite politics/wickedness of Babylon
- The setting of the story
 4. **Print vs. 1** – World powers and their success are still under the rule of **THE KING**
 - **Ills.: How to treat a wildcat**
 5. **Print vs. 2-3** – Be careful not to be overly impressed with worldly pomp and circumstance
 - Gold statue 90 feet tall and 9 feet wide — millions of dollars in precious metal value
 6. **Print vs. 4-7** – We must obey God rather than men
 - “*We gave you strict orders not to teach in this name,*” he said. “*Yet you have filled Jerusalem with your teaching and are determined to make us guilty of this man's blood.*” Peter and the other apostles replied: “*We must obey God rather than men!* Acts 5: 28-29

Our courageous witness is often a conviction honed under fire

- Because the “world” is looking to have you (the believer) for lunch (**Print and read verses 8-12**)
 1. “*denounced*”(vs. 8) = “*ate the pieces*”
 2. Conviction to them because of the evidence of Jesus in your word and conduct
 3. Envy over God’s blessings in your life (you didn’t earn it/scam it the way we did)
 4. Driven by Satan’s thirst for believers blood
- When asked for the hope within, you, let it shine (**Print and read verses 13-14**)
 5. “*But sanctify Christ as Lord in your hearts, always being ready to make a defense to everyone who asks you to give an account for the hope that is in you, yet with gentleness and reverence.*” 1 Peter 3:15
- Refuse to negotiate with the Devil (**Print and read verse 15**)
 6. “I’ll give you another chance to *save* yourself” (don’t let Satan pander your pride of self-idolatry)
 7. “There’ll be hell to pay” (even though there is real consequences “**Greater is He within you than he in the world.**”
 8. God can’t help you, now” (blaspheme to speak and to give credibility by treating it as a valid consideration)
- Courageous faith is not winning the **argument** but standing in your **conviction** (**Print and read verse 16**)
- Trust only in what can save you (**Print and read verse 17**)
 9. **Ills.: Rock in your pocket**
- Because of the resurrection truth, we win no matter what the world does to us (**Print and read verse 17**)
 10. “*For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor any other created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.*” Romans 8:38-39
 11. “*The Lord will deliver me from every evil deed, and will bring me safely to His heavenly kingdom; to Him be the glory forever and ever. Amen.*” 2 Tim. 4:18

And we already know the rest of the story . . . (Print and read verses 19-28)

- The world may turn the heat up but . . . **God is able to put out the fire**

- God will not take you where . . . ***He himself will not go before you***
 1. “a fourth like a son of the gods” (“*Lo, I am with you always to the end of the age.*” Matthew 28: 20)
- God’s intent is to astound the world . . . ***with your witness to bring about His glory***
 2. The miracle of no harm, no signed skin or clothes, no smell of smoke/fire — ***God loves to do God-things in our lives***
 3. God wants to bring the nations of the world to faith in him through the simple conviction of your singular faith

Jill Bearman Killer Released Because of Lack of Evidence

Those of us in Indiana, who have followed with some interest the Jill Bearman murder case, have watched with horror over the first reporting of an initially senseless murder; than with a sense of resignation over three years of dead end lead; springing with hope born in a renewed confidence in justice as confirmed details of the murder and potential leads to a suspected killer have surfaced, and finally being stunned beyond believe as that same incarcerated convict was let go from a previous, unrelated jail term because of the lack of solid evidence linking him to the Bearman murder. We all suspected that he did it since the circumstantial and hearsay evidence points undeniably to him. Yet, because there is not a direct link, our judicial system assumes him to be not-guilty of the charges until proven otherwise. Strangely and in a similar way, many modern day, American Christian resemble this scene when it comes to being suspected of being a Jesus follower. The world is suspicious that we might be “*one of them*” but it is not really sure because of the lack of enough evidence in action or word to accuse us of our faith and devotion to Jesus.

How to treat a wildcat

Writing in “Moody Monthly,” Carl Armerding recounted his experience of watching a wildcat in a zoo. “As I stood there,” he said, “an attendant entered the cage through a door on the opposite side. He had nothing in his hands but a broom. Carefully closing the door, he proceeded to sweep the floor of the cage.” He observed that the worker had no weapon to ward off an attack by the beast. In fact, when he got to the corner of the cage where the wildcat was lying, he poked the animal with the broom. The wildcat hissed at him and then lay down in another corner of the enclosure. Armerding remarked to the attendant, “You certainly are a brave man.” “No I ain’t brave,” he replied as he continued to sweep. “Well, then, the cat must be tame.” “No,” came the reply, “he ain’t tame.” “If you aren’t brave and the wildcat isn’t tame, then I can’t understand why he doesn’t attack you.” Armerding said that the man chuckled, then replied with an air of confidence, “Mister, he’s old—and he ain’t got no teeth.”

A Rock in Your Pocket

Dan Benusak tells about his friend Wayne who took an interim job after graduating from college: “It was in a factory making ropes, huge ropes, the kind of ropes capable of holding a ship in dock. At his machine the individual strands would enter the machine on one side and rush out the other end all woven together. It seemed so simple. His job was to see that the individual strands were fed in properly and then as the single rope came out the other side to grab it and put it into place. The man at the next machine said, ‘Do you got a rock in your pocket?’ Not wanting to appear dumb, Wayne mumbled, ‘Oh, yeah, sure.’ It was simple to feed the ropes in but the huge rope came out with such force and power that when he grabbed it, it swept him off his feet and lifted him into the air. He came down with an embarrassing crash. He now knew what the fellow meant about a rock in his pocket.” Benusak relates, “That’s life—some things require a rock in your pocket, a point of reference to keep you from getting blown off your feet.”

Daniel 3:1-7

¹King Nebuchadnezzar made an image of gold, ninety feet high and nine feet wide, and set it up on the plain of Dura in the province of Babylon. ²He then summoned the satraps, prefects, governors, advisers, treasurers, judges, magistrates and all the other provincial officials to come to the dedication of the image he had set up. ³So the satraps, prefects, governors, advisers, treasurers, judges, magistrates and all the other provincial officials assembled for the dedication of the image that King Nebuchadnezzar had set up, and they stood before it. ⁴Then the herald loudly proclaimed, "This is what you are commanded to do, O peoples, nations and men of every language: ⁵As soon as you hear the sound of the horn, flute, zither, lyre, harp, pipes and all kinds of music, you must fall down and worship the image of gold that King Nebuchadnezzar has set up. ⁶Whoever does not fall down and worship will immediately be thrown into a blazing furnace." ⁷Therefore, as soon as they heard the sound of the horn, flute, zither, lyre, harp and all kinds of music, all the peoples, nations and men of every language fell down and worshiped the image of gold that King Nebuchadnezzar had set up.

Daniel 3: 8-12

⁸At this time some astrologers came forward and denounced the Jews. ⁹They said to King Nebuchadnezzar, "O king, live forever! ¹⁰You have issued a decree, O king, that everyone who hears the sound of the horn, flute, zither, lyre, harp, pipes and all kinds of music must fall down and worship the image of gold, ¹¹and that whoever does not fall down and worship will be thrown into a blazing furnace. ¹²But there are some Jews whom you have set over the affairs of the province of Babylon--Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego--who pay no attention to you, O king. They neither serve your gods nor worship the image of gold you have set up."

Daniel 3:13-28

Furious with rage, Nebuchadnezzar summoned Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego. So these men were brought before the king, ¹⁴and Nebuchadnezzar said to them, "Is it true, Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, that you do not serve my gods or worship the image of gold I have set up? ¹⁵Now when you hear the sound of the horn, flute, zither, lyre, harp, pipes and all kinds of music, if you are ready to fall down and worship the image I made, very good. But if you do not worship it, you will be thrown immediately into a blazing furnace. Then what god will be able to rescue you from my hand?"

¹⁶Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego replied to the king, "O Nebuchadnezzar, we do not need to defend ourselves before you in this matter. ¹⁷If we are thrown into the blazing furnace, the God we serve is able to save us from it, and he will rescue us from your hand, O king. ¹⁸But even if he does not, we want you to know, O king, that we will not serve your gods or worship the image of gold you have set up."

¹⁹Then Nebuchadnezzar was furious with Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, and his attitude toward them changed. He ordered the furnace heated seven times hotter than usual ²⁰and commanded some of the strongest soldiers in his army to tie up Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego and throw them into the blazing furnace. ²¹So these men, wearing their robes, trousers, turbans and other clothes, were bound and thrown into the blazing furnace. ²²The king's command was so urgent and the furnace so hot that the flames of the fire killed the soldiers who took up Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, ²³and these three men, firmly tied, fell into the blazing furnace.

²⁴Then King Nebuchadnezzar leaped to his feet in amazement and asked his advisers, "Weren't there three men that we tied up and threw into the fire?"

They replied, "Certainly, O king."

²⁵He said, "Look! I see four men walking around in the fire, unbound and unharmed, and the fourth looks like a son of the gods."

²⁶Nebuchadnezzar then approached the opening of the blazing furnace and shouted, "Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, servants of the Most High God, come out! Come here!"

So Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego came out of the fire, ²⁷and the satraps, prefects, governors and royal advisers crowded around them. They saw that the fire had not harmed their bodies, nor was a hair of their heads singed; their robes were not scorched, and there was no smell of fire on them.

²⁸Then Nebuchadnezzar said, "Praise be to the God of Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, who has sent his angel and rescued his servants! They trusted in him and defied the king's command and were willing to give up their lives rather than serve or worship any god except their own God. [NIV]