

Saints Triumphant
November 15, 2015

Text: Daniel 12:1-3

Theme: Daniel's Prophecy about the End Times

Vladimir Putin's Russia. Xi Jinping's China. Ali Khamenei's Iran. Bashar Assad's Syria. If you've followed world events and politics lately, you know that these are hotbeds of unrest and oppression. They are leaders and countries that continue to foment against the United States and our allies. And if you follow too closely or pay attention too much, it can become downright depressing, fill you with angst and lead you to say, what's the use. We haven't even mentioned Isis, al Qaeda, terrorism or the apathy that inflicts the church of this day.

Our text for today speaks to this with words of comfort and reassurance. Chapter 12 begins, **At that time** which indicates we're jumping in in the middle of something or at least at the tale end of something that is important for setting the context. And the context is this, that the prophet Daniel saw a strikingly similar series of unrests in reality and in prophetic visions that God gave him. Remember Daniel is a prophet in Babylon at the time of the captivity of Judah. And the series of visions that God gave Daniel reveal the coming transitions of kingdoms from Babylon to Persia to Greece and ultimately to the Roman Empire. What he also sees in the immediate preceding is the advancement of an archenemy of God that wreaks spiritual havoc and destruction. And it seemed so hopeless. **There will be a time of distress such as has not happened from the beginning of nations until then.**

Look around you. Listen to the news. Terror. War. Crime. Poverty. Suffering. Anxiety. Stress. Apathy. Bullying. These are all on the rise. And we wonder, how much longer? Why do we have to deal with it? How can we deal with it? Left to ourselves, we would surely wither and die. **But at that time your people—everyone whose name is found written in the book—will be delivered.** There is hope. Whether from the external forces that cause fear, panic and anxiety or from the internal things, like our sins and their guilt that cause distress and fear. There is hope for God's people. **Everyone whose name is found written in the book will be delivered.** That book contains the names of all those who are part of his family registry and a depiction of those who have been chosen by God from eternity. The terror of war and crime and the dread of our sins will come to an end. The anxiety and loneliness will be gone not only today, but forever.

And so God's reminder to Daniel as he saw many of his fellow Jews returning to Israel and heard the reports of disarray and chaos is a reminder that this place is not our home. And when we begin to live with our eyes fixed mostly or entirely on this life, we lose our way. Those are the root causes of the discord that inflicts us near and far. Without making excuses for sin or sinful behavior, life in this world because of sin is a far cry from what God created and intended. It's also far from what will be for us. And if that is what we focus on, we would surely give up in despair. Listen again to Daniel. **Multitudes who sleep in the dust of the earth will awake: some to everlasting life, others to shame and everlasting contempt.**

Contrary to many in our world today who think and live as if this were it, there is nothing more, so live it up while you can. God's Word is abundantly clear. We will face judgment. There can be no escaping. For all of us it's a warning for some will be condemned for all eternity **to shame and everlasting contempt.** Such a happy picture. And yet, because of our sins, it's precisely what a just God should give to every man, woman or child that's ever lived in this world. We don't deserve the deliverance God promised. We haven't earned the life in heaven that we can anticipate.

But because God acted in mercy, we can look forward to it with joy and confidence knowing that what awaits is not the shame we deserve but the life he freely gives. He highlights a characteristic about those how receive such things. He says, **Those who impart wisdom will shine like the brightness of the heavens, and those who lead many to righteousness, like the stars for ever and ever.** This is the ongoing work that is given to

each and every believer without exclusion. See it's not just formal instruction by pastors and teachers that is highlighted. But the natural outflow of faith is to share that faith, to impart that wisdom that God alone gives through his Spirit. And it's not done just by words in a classroom or pulpit, but by our works and deeds to. The example that parents set for the children of what is right behavior for the child of God. The discipline they instill in their family. The habits they use to help them see that God is first in their lives and in the lives of their family. The kindness shown to others in any time of need. To you will be given that day, a radiance that shines forth with the holiness of God himself.

It's Saints Triumphant Sunday, and I think sometimes when we talk about saints, much as when we talk about the church, we have this nebulous group of people, super-special ones perhaps even. But when we talk about the saints whose triumph we celebrate today, I'm talking about you. You are those whom God will make to shine. You are those who stand triumphant, not on account of your deeds, but on account of Christ who has rescued and delivered you from sin and Satan and death. You will stand as radiant and here well-done, good and faithful servant because Jesus' blood covers your sins.

The last day isn't something to be feared. Neither is it a time of mourning for those who believe in Jesus as Savior and Lord. Rather it is a time so celebration and victory. Not too long ago, the Royals won the World Series. They celebrated in the clubhouse with a champagne shower and they celebrated back in Kansas City with a victory parade in front of thousands of their adoring fans. What we see and celebrate on Judgment Day will make it pale in comparison. For those who are showered in the blood of the lamb with join the festal procession to the throne of God in heaven, never again to face hardship or trouble or anxiety or war. Our struggles will end in the life that has no ending in the heavenly Jerusalem with our God and Savior forever.