



MORRISON ZION EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH

www.mzluth.org

December 4, 2022

Pastor Randy Ott

2nd Sunday of Advent

First Lesson/Sermon Text: [Daniel 4:19-37](#)

Psalm of the Day: Psalm 14

Second Lesson: [Acts 3:19-26](#)

Gospel Lesson: [Matthew 3:1-12](#)

Repent! God Will Humble the Proud

Welcome to worship today at Morrison Zion Lutheran Church. We exist to glorify God. We have set out to do this by gathering around the Gospel so that we may grow in the Gospel and go to others with this Gospel.

Grace, mercy and peace to you from Him who is, who was and who is to come: Amen.

In Christ, dear fellow redeemed:

Pride is kind of an interesting thing in many ways. It can be good and Godly when we are satisfied with completing the task God has given us faithfully. And using the gifts He has given us faithfully, it can be good and Godly. But it can cross over into sinful pride when we take pride in things that God tells us is wrong. We shouldn't be taking pride in that. Or, if we take pride in what we do and forget that our gifts and abilities come from God and forget that it's Him we are serving, pride leads us at times just to serve ourselves.

I think there is another thing that is really kind of interesting about pride. I would think that for many of us we're a lot better at seeing sinful pride in others than we are at seeing it in ourselves. Don't you think so? I have to believe most wives are better at seeing sinful pride in their husbands than the husbands are at seeing it in themselves. There's another way it might be true (but I'm not going to say it in public). As a child, could I see what I consider sinful pride in my parents when they disciplined me at times? Yes. Was I wrong? Sometimes, but parents aren't perfect. Parents can be wrong too.

I would say too you we're often better at seeing it in the world around us than we are at seeing it in our own hearts. Today our God comes to us and warns us against that as we hear the Baptist's call to repent for the Kingdom of Heaven is near to us. It's all around us. It's His rule in our hearts by His grace. If we fail to repent and see our own sinfulness and how desperately we need His grace, then we're in trouble of losing the Kingdom. So as we listen to it, we hear the warning to make sure that we need to repent for ourselves; that we listen to this warning and take it to heart and always

remember that everything in our life is all about God and His love for us in Christ. It's not about our response to Christ. It's not about the things we have or things we can do that others don't have or can't do. For us as Christians, it has to stay all about Christ in a very real sense or we're in spiritual danger.

Today we hear how God warned a Babylonian king against the sin of pride. He told him "This is what is coming because you are oppressing the weak and the needy and you are taking pride in this kingdom you have built and you don't understand that I gave you the ability to do all of that. I raised you up so that you could be the axe at the root of the kingdom of Israel." God had raised Nebuchadnezzar up and sent him and he had carried off people from Israel, from Jerusalem, the Southern Kingdom of Judah, early on—even before he had completely destroyed Jerusalem. He had taken away the brightest and the best of the land. He gave the orders that those who were the most gifted be brought back to Babylon and be trained for a number of years in the king's court so they could serve as the king's advisors or king's servants. One of them was Daniel. He was given the Babylonian name Belteshazzar, which means "may Bel, the god of the Babylonians, protect you." It is kind of an ironic name as we'll see in a little bit in these events.

You might remember three other guys that were carried off early on, before Jerusalem was completely destroyed. They were given the Babylonian names Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego.

Daniel was trained for those years and Daniel excelled and Daniel showed that God was with him by his ability to interpret dreams that Nebuchadnezzar had earlier that his wise men couldn't. Now, in Chapter 4, really we have the whole long chapter with Nebuchadnezzar telling what had happened to him and giving an edict (which we heard at the end) to acknowledge God because Nebuchadnezzar didn't.

The dream troubled Nebuchadnezzar. He knew it was something but he didn't know what it meant. It was something that troubled his soul. So he called his advisors in and his advisors (who served Bel) couldn't interpret the dream. So he sent for Daniel again, by the chief of his wise men, because Daniel had demonstrated this before. He told the dream to Daniel and then we meet this at the start of what I read to you where Daniel is terrified by the dream.

Who really wants to go tell the king, "King, you're going to go nuts and live like an animal for seven times," or the fullness of time. Seven often means "completeness" in Daniel. "The complete time God has set aside for you to do it." Who wants to go give the king bad news? We don't like bad news. You all aren't talking about the Packers all that much anymore because you don't like bad news. But having to give it to the king? That's something different.

Daniel is terrified because he doesn't want to tell the king this stuff. But the king says, "Don't let it trouble you. Tell me what the dream means. I need to know." He does trust Daniel. So Daniel lays it all out for him. "I wish this dream applied to someone else besides you because this tree that you saw, it's your great kingdom, it is a great kingdom that extends through most of the known world" (at that time).

For a time, Nebuchadnezzar ruled from the Gulf all the way to Egypt. He even had control over Egypt for a time. He had conquered a lot. Babylon, the city that he ruled over, had one of the seven wonders of the ancient world—the Hanging Gardens. It straddled the river and it was impressive. They had made canals. He was also a great builder. He had done a lot. So this tree that all people were looking to with envy, it makes sense that it is the kingdom.

But then that messenger from heaven was God sending His divine messenger, perhaps God Himself coming and telling him, "You are going to lose it all because you don't acknowledge me—because you're proud; because you think it's all about you. Then for seven times" (a number of completeness; we don't know what it means exactly) "you are going to live like an animal. You are going to think you're an animal. You're going to be out and eat grass like an animal. You are going to live out in the wilderness and the dew of the morning will be on your back because you won't ever seek shelter. You'll just live like an animal." "I wish this applied to your enemies," Daniel told him, "but it doesn't. It applies to you. This isn't my understanding. This comes from the Most High" Daniel tells him.

And then the courage it took for Daniel to say the next thing, after what he had done what the king asked him—the king just asked him to interpret the dream—and he says, "May it please you king, if you would, here is some advice for you to consider." That's a bold thing to say. To say to the king, "Hey king, maybe you ought to stop oppressing the poor and the needy and the weak and you ought to start being more kind and compassionate since God has given you this kingdom and not think it's all about you. Maybe if you turn away from your wickedness and you turn away from this, God will relent and your kingdom will continue even longer." If he didn't want to tell him the meaning of the dream, can you imagine then wanting to say to the king, "Hey king, get off your high horse! Knock it off!" That took some courage!

It tells me one thing about Daniel—he was concerned about the king he served, which to me is amazing because he had been carried off from his homeland! He was carried halfway across the known world at that time and was now serving a king who had made him captive! Yet he reaches out to him with a message from the Lord and points him to the Lord as the answer to his pride and his sin. Isn't that a Christ-like love? Concern for everyone, not just the ones you like.

As we heard, all those things happened; the king himself records all of this and says, "Then I finally lifted up my eyes to heaven and acknowledged God. I'm telling everyone in my kingdom this because God will humble the proud, so don't be proud. Acknowledge the Kingdom of heaven. Acknowledge God." Everything that was said came true and Daniel (I suppose) rose in stature in the king's eyes. But Daniel had served His God faithfully and the king had come to understand his own sinfulness. Whether he believed in a Messiah to come or not, I don't know, but I have to believe Daniel talked about it because if you're willing to tell the king "Get off your high horse," you're probably willing to tell him about a Savior that is going to come to redeem him.

There is much in the Book of Daniel and it's just fascinating. We think about the lions. We think about the fiery furnace. We think about some of those things. But put yourself in his shoes as someone who was carried off as in exile and still serving faithfully because this is where God had put him; still sharing messages from God because of his love and his concern for those people. I find that fascinating.

I think in our society today, I don't know that we're all that good at it. We're not real good at seeing our own pride, like a said earlier, but I think one thing we really are good at is repenting for someone else. How many times have you heard (talking with other Christians) about how terrible the world is today and how people are doing all kinds of things that God says is wrong and how terrible that is? It is terrible—I get all that. But it seems to me at times we spend more times wringing our hands about how terrible things are out there or people are out there or ideas are out there than we do talking about what is good and right and pleasing to God.

He has put us here to be His voice. We are His vocal chords. We can wring our hands all we want and repent for "those" terrible people out there, or we can lead them through Law and Gospel to see the answer for every sin, including the sin of pride. We can share the message of Christ. We can talk about who God is and what He has done in spite of who we are and how we have failed Him. We can talk about what sin is and what grace is. This is what our God has called us to do, but we're happier to talk about the sins of other people. Is it because of pride? "I thank you God that I'm not like people that believe that." "I thank you God that I don't do that." "God, you must love me because I'm doing this and this and this for you and look at what those people are doing." Have we crossed into sinful pride? We have to ask ourselves that question honestly. Each of us ask ourselves, not look around and start pointing fingers, "Yeah, you're right pastor, but that person over there I'll point out so I'm not pointing at anyone. That's the person who is proud." That's not what we're called to do.

Look at our own hearts. Admit our own sins. Maybe what we ought to do as individual Christians or as a congregation is not look at how terrible things are but what we can do about it and repent that we haven't done what we could do about it; that we have sat on the message of Christ and said "Hey, we're hiding it. You want to find it, come seek it

someplace here at worship or at school or at this or at that because we aren't going to share it with you." We've done that. We've sinned against our God, and we have failed our God. We need to just say "Lord, have mercy on me, a sinner."

And here is the most amazing truth that you will hear today. God forgives you. For every sin of pride you've ever committed, as well as every other sin, Jesus came and was perfect in your place. Jesus died in your place. God loves you so much that He poured out the Holy Spirit into your heart through Word and Sacrament because He is desperate for you to know not only that you're a sinner—He isn't doing that to rub your nose in it—He wants you to know that you're a sinner so that you find healing and relief and peace in the message or the Gospel. He wants you to know God has washed away every single one of your sins. Beyond that, He has done it for the whole world. Now He says you are His vocal chords to get that message out.

Don't let the sin of pride keep you from talking about Jesus. Overcome the sin of pride with the forgiveness Christ has given you and then share that message of that forgiveness with others. That's what we're called to do. Amen.

And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. [\(Philippians 4:7\)](#) Amen.