

It's good to be back from our trip to Chincoteague and Assateague Islands off the coast of Virginia. We saw some neat things on our travels. We saw the ocean and the beach. We saw Ospreys, Seagulls, and Pelicans. We saw wild ponies. We saw mosquitoes the size of Airforce One (not exactly). We took a boat ride around the Islands and saw dolphins swimming all around our boat. But do you know what the most beautiful things we saw were? The most beautiful things we saw in our travels were the mountains of Pennsylvania, covered with their trees of many colors. It was nice to be away but once again we have found: there is no place quite like home.

But, I have some questions for you this morning: Whose is the kingdom? According to the Lord's prayer, to whom does the kingdom belong? Whose is the power? Whose is the glory? For how long? That's right. Our Father in heaven rules over all. All authority in heaven and on earth belongs to Him.

All glory belongs to Him; forever and ever and ever. Sometimes we just need to be reminded. When our economy is in turmoil, when our country seems to be going in the wrong direction, when enemies threaten, when its hard for us to make ends meet, when our teenagers are in rebellion, when marriages are in conflict, when health issues have us scared, when our grief seems to have no end, we need to be reminded. Once a day or sixteen times a day or as often as it takes, we need to be reminded that our God reigns; His kingdom is coming; His will will be done on earth as it is in heaven. We need to remember: **Our God is good. His will is perfect. His power is unequalled. In Him, His people will find sanctuary.**

It seems to me that the sermon I preached on the Sunday before I left for vacation was an indication that I needed a vacation. Although it did offer some reassurance and presented an important challenge to deeper commitment to the Lord, I think it was probably weighted too much toward the negative. I called it "Spiritual Training for Tough Times," but I'm afraid I talked more about the "tough times" than the "spiritual training." I want to go in a more positive direction this morning.

Psalm 67:1 begins with a request: "May God be gracious to us and bless us and make his face shine upon us." Isn't that what we need as we gather together here this morning? Isn't that why we've come? We've come desiring to be refreshed by God's grace. We've come hoping for God's blessing. We want to be reminded that we are God's

people and that His face is shining upon us. We want to know that our sins are forgiven and that God is pleased with us.

And this is not just a selfish desire. Psalm 67:2-4 point to a purpose greater than our own wants and desires; they say "that (or so that) your ways may be known on earth, your salvation among all nations. May the peoples praise you, O God; may all the peoples praise you. May the nations be glad and sing for joy, for you rule the peoples justly and guide the nations of the earth."

You see, this is the same thing we pray for in the Lord's prayer when we pray "Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven." This is always the goal, and this is always the mission. We are here to celebrate God's goodness and to receive God's blessing so that we can be a blessing and make His goodness known to others, even to all the nations of the world. We want everyone to know the goodness of God. We want everyone in all nations to experience God's justice, mercy, and guidance. We want the whole earth to experience His rule and His peace.

In the last stanzas of Psalm 67, the psalmist changes direction. There is a commercial on Television at present that features the word "how." Between noble dreams and desires and their accomplishment stands the word and the question, "how?" Those who know how to get things done, how to turn goals into accomplishment, are the folks we desperately need in our complicated world. The future we desire is dependent upon answering the question "how?" How do we get from here to there?

Notice Psalm 67:5-7: May the peoples praise you, O God; may all the peoples praise you. Then the land will yield its harvest, and God, our God, will bless us. God will bless us, and all the ends of the earth will fear him." The tip off in these verses is the word "then;" "Then the land will yield its harvest," then "God, our God, will bless us;" then "God will bless us, and all the ends of the earth will fear him."

What is important for us to see here is the order of things, and to understand that our praise to the Lord is not just a result of being blessed but a means to receive that blessing. Praising God in the midst of difficult circumstances and in the midst of tough and troubled times is "how" we survive, "how" we witness to others, and "how" we prevail. Praising God and worshiping Him from the bottom of our hearts is "how" we invoke God's favor; it's "how" we cause His face to shine. It's "how" we position ourselves for our lives, our families, and

our land to be blessed. The psalmist makes this a theme and much repeated phrase in Psalm 107: Over and over again he says, "Oh that men would praise the LORD for his goodness, and for his wonderful works to the children of men!" Or, as the NIV translates it, "Let them give thanks to the Lord for his unfailing love and his wonderful deeds for men."

Paul says in Philippians 4:4, "Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice!" Do you know where Paul was when he penned or dictated those words? He was in prison, under house arrest--probably in Rome, not long before he was put to death. His exhortation to every Christian was to praise the Lord at all times, rejoice in the Lord always in all situations, whether good or bad. This stretches our faith and demonstrates our confidence in God. This pleases God and causes His face to glow in our direction.

Some of you here today are very troubled. There is trouble in your home, trouble with your bank and with your credit, trouble at work; you are troubled over your shrinking investments or troubled by the latest diagnosis from your doctor. "How" are we to face and get above such troubles? The psalmist says, **"O that men would praise the Lord for his goodness, and for his wonderful works to the children of men."**

Paul says in I Thessalonians 5:18: "give thanks in all circumstances, for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus." You see, when we give thanks, when we rejoice in the Lord, when we praise the Lord, it sends a signal to our own brains reminding ourselves that God is still on the throne, and that we are not alone, and that no problem is too big for God in us to solve. When we rejoice in the Lord it sends a signal to others that God is alive within us and reminds them that He may also be able to help them. When we praise the Lord it sends a signal to the devil that we are no easy mark for his works of discouragement and destruction; we are not going to roll over and play dead at his bidding. When we rejoice in the Lord it sends a signal to the Lord that we are putting our trust in Him, and He cannot and will not ignore that faith. What's more, our faith in the Lord's blessing will not be in vain.

I read through the book of Daniel in my morning devotions last week, and what I found there offers us a great promise. Did you know that the people of God are destined to rule the world? I mean right now we are all in a tizzy about who's going to be the next president of the United States. The election is in news day and night. And, yes, we should be concerned about this and avail ourselves of the privilege and

responsibility to vote. Even though the pollsters are already telling us who is going to win, we need to vote anyway. We need to pray for wisdom and vote as God leads us to vote. I believe God wants us to pray for our nation and participate in the election process. I believe it is our Christian duty as well as our civic duty. Jesus said, “give unto Caesar what belongs to Caesar,” which means ‘do your civic duty.’” In I Timothy 2:1-3, Paul tells Timothy: “I urge, then, first of all, that requests, prayers, intercession and thanksgiving be made for everyone--for kings and all those in authority, that we may live peaceful and quiet lives in all godliness and holiness. This is good, and pleases God our Savior.” We need to pray and we need to vote.

But regardless of the outcome of this year’s election, and regardless of the circumstances we may face in this nation as the future unfolds, there is coming a day when the Kingdoms of this world will become the Kingdom of our Lord, and those who belong to Him will reign with Him. That’s what Daniel receives from the Lord in his visions of things to come.

The book of Daniel is first written for the Jewish people when their nation and the holy city of Jerusalem had been destroyed. Many of the people had been taken captive to Babylon, which was in modern day Iraq, somewhere not too far from modern Baghdad. Much that is written in the book of Daniel is written to remind the exiles there that they are in the shape they are in not because God has failed them but because they have abandoned their God. It is also written to call them to repentance and to show them that Yahweh, the God of Abraham, Issac, and Jacob, is mightier than the gods of the nation where they now dwell. The story of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, and God’s protection of them in the fiery furnace, and the story of Daniel’s deliverance from the lion’s den, are stories that illustrate the supremacy of the God of Israel.

The other major theme in Daniel is that the people who repent of sin and then remain faithful to the Lord will be honored by the Lord and will reign with Him. This is what we see modeled for us in the story of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego; they survive the fiery furnace, and Daniel 3:30 says, “Then the king promoted Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego in the province of Babylon. Those who had been exiles and slaves in a foreign land are born again from the furnace of affliction to rule over the land. This is also what we see with Daniel himself. After His escape from the lion’s den, Daniel 6:28 says of Daniel: “So Daniel prospered during the reign of Darius and the reign of Cyrus the Persian. After they were tested and found faithful Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego were promoted and Daniel prospered.

Then, in the 7<sup>th</sup> chapter of Daniel, Daniel has a dream in which he sees a series of four powerful beasts rising from the sea and coming on land to conquer the earth and to rule. The first beast looks like a lion with wings. The second one looks like a bear. The third beast looked like a flying leopard with four wings and four heads. The fourth beast was most powerful of all and appeared to have great iron teeth and ten horns. Daniel was greatly troubled by his strange visions and asked the Lord for their meaning. The Lord revealed to Daniel that the beasts he saw were four empires that would rise to conquer and rule the world. During the successive reigns of these earthly kingdoms, the people of the world will suffer and the people of God will be tested and will also suffer, but in the end, they will triumph.

Daniel 7:16b-18 say, "So he told me and gave me the interpretation of these things: 'The four great beasts are four kingdoms that will rise from the earth. But the saints of the Most High will receive the kingdom and will possess it forever--yes, for ever and ever.'" Daniel 7:27 adds: “Then the sovereignty, power and greatness of the kingdoms under the whole heaven will be handed over to the saints, the people of the Most High. His kingdom will be an everlasting kingdom, and all rulers will worship and obey him.”

The point is that life is a struggle; life is hard and it may not get any easier for a long time. But each of us who has trusted Jesus Christ as Savior and is seeking to honor Him as Lord is destined to rule with Him now and forever. We are kings and queens, princesses and princes of His kingdom.

We are destined to rule. And we can begin to rule over our circumstances and over our temptations right now, as we praise the Lord, thank the Lord, and give Him glory. **If we honor Him, He will honor us.**

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Sermon for October 26, 2008

**Destined to Rule**  
Psalm 67; Daniel 7:15-18, 23-28

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