

## Pastor Roy's Sermon from Nov. 18, 2012

Readings: Daniel 12:1-3, Psalm 16, Hebrews 10:11-25, Mark 13:1-8

Children's sermon—Daniel and King Darius of Persia. Daniel had worked for all the kings since the exile began in Babylon. Other princes were jealous. They wrote a new law that everyone must worship the same God in the same way. That God was King Darius. If anyone disobeyed this law, they would be thrown in the lion's den. Darius signed the law. Daniel and others would only worship God. We will not do something just because everyone else is doing it. Even if we are punished. They saw Daniel worshiping his God, and brought him before the king. The king realized how stupid his law was, but according to other laws, it could not be changed. The King was miserable. What happened to Daniel? Daniel explains the next morning to the king, God shut the lions' mouths because I was innocent. Darius issues a new decree, that everyone must worship the God of Daniel. Kings were sort of bossy back then, weren't they?

Grace, mercy, and peace to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

How many different world views are there? Different understandings of what makes “the world go round.” Personally each of us sees through our own eyes. It's hard work to appreciate how others view the world. Different religions, different politics, different continents, different social and economic groups, different ages and sexes. But here is a question—Who sees for God? Of course, nobody sees for God. But we are tempted to assume that **our view is God's view**.

But what about animals? Moths? Birds? insects? A fern or a tree? Is God in the creature's world view? What about the eyes of a rock? What about the stream or ocean? How do they view the world even with vast sums of life within their boundaries? And here's the big question--Whose perspective matters most?

Yes, we see things very differently from the horse, or butterfly, river, mountain or plain? We, and those who have gone before us instinctively think we are personally and as communities—the center of the universe. I imagine the horse, butterfly, river, mountain, and plain think likewise. Yet our elements and genetic codes are shared and sometimes very similar.

Through whose eyes does God see?

Then, there is the perspective of the eternal, the vast time frame of billions of years. We can't even fathom 100,000 years, let alone another 6 or 7 decimal points beyond that. And what about the vast distances between stars and planets, unimaginably dense, solid area versus the vast nothingness. Such diversity around us and far beyond us. So, what about that tendency we have to think that everything else has meaning in relationship to us?

The more we learn, the more we realize that we are part of something much, much bigger than us and must consider that our responsibility to care for God's creation goes far beyond our personal survival or that of our own kind.

Apocalyptic Daniel, who writes very differently than the Daniel of the Kings of the exile, Daniel who writes of fantastic symbols and cataclysmic events—the same style as that of the book of revelation, this Daniel speaks of a time of anguish, such as has never occurred since nations first came into existence. There is a great deliverance. The dead will arise, some to a bright and good life of honor because they have led the way into good wisdom, and some to lasting contempt because their lives were out of sync with the goodness of the creator. In a time of great oppression and misery, apocalyptic Daniel knew that this was the true end of all things. He sought of God courage, comfort, and compassion for his people. Surely this is the meaning behind all of the unimaginable suffering. Surely there is meaning. Surely there is judgment beyond the meaningless suffering of his people. Apocalyptic Daniel speaks it into existence! He testifies to a judgment beyond that of kings, rulers, acts of violence and natural disasters. There is a judgment greater than us. This judgment cannot be manipulated by humanity or public opinion. This judgment is. But what is it?

The writer of Hebrews sees judgment in Christ's offering up his own life as a sacrifice for sin. Love trampled by fear, intimidation, and cruelty. He quotes a prophet, "I will put my laws in their hearts, and I will write them on their minds." The opinion of the writer of Hebrews is that judgment is found in forgiveness, which will have a final word. The writer of Hebrews sees judgment as a day approaching which cannot be avoided. The judgment of loving forgiveness, mercy, and grace. Here is the question: Has love formed us as it formed our Lord, and the Word of our Lord?

Mark writes his gospel during or right after a time of great turmoil, most likely right after Jerusalem was destroyed by the Romans. Apocalyptic Daniel spoke of such times. As Jesus and the disciples emerge from the temple, his followers marvel at the surrounding buildings. Jesus questions their trust, their misplaced awe. He says, "This will all be flattened. There will be wars, earthquakes, and famine." Nothing and no one will be spared trouble. That the sun and moon will be darkened is another way for Mark to express that these will be and are very difficult times. Mark recalls Jesus saying that sky and earth will pass away but not his words. All these things are held by God. When we find the bedrock of truth, it is non-negotiable. The call to us at the end of Mark 13 is to stay awake. Be alert for the work of God, the coming of God, the mercy of God, the truth of God. Like Daniel, make no assumptions that what everyone else believes is true. Even if they are very good, very religious people.

Judgment for Mark is that those who follow the words of Jesus will be profoundly formed by those words. Life will not be easy, but those who trust in mercy will also know freedom. Any limits to mercy are limits to freedom. Here is life that never ends. They will know wisdom and peace and a quality of life that stands the test of time.

We sometimes misunderstand judgment as a Day of Wrath or a day in which our sins are weighed against our good deeds and God decides whether we are ok or not. In the Scriptures the outpouring of God's wrath is always against those who oppress and oppose mercy.

The judgment of God is a judgment for mercy and it began a long time ago and continues today. The more we bring our lives into alignment with God's judgment of mercy, the more we will be spiritually, emotionally, and even physically healthy. Jesus calls us to live in God's mercy. Here we must ask, "How can I better live in God's mercy. The answer is different for each of us. But the question is the same... "Do I live for mercy? Do I live for Love?" Fortunately the answer to that questions is also bathed in God's mercy. You cannot lose. Let us all deepen our relationship with this mercy and fear nothing. Amen.