

Title: Stand Up and Be Seen
Text: Daniel 3
Theme: Light up this present darkness
Series: Living for Eternity, November 2008
Prop Stmt. As a fellow citizen of the Kingdom of Jesus Christ, I've been redeemed in order to make Him famous in everything I do.

Read Text: Daniel 3.16-18

It was one of the largest political rallies that people had ever seen. Leaders from every province were there. The who's who list of the undisputed world's superpower were all assembled. Pomp, and protocol, ruled the day. Tailors and musicians were extremely busy. The event was carefully staged, every detail was in place, and the buzz of excitement was at a fever pitch. Every one knew what to do. The orders were very clear; when you hear the music, bow down to the statue of the king. The moment arrived. The music began and the massive sea of people bowed like an enormous rippling wave. It was pretty impressive. But then a dull murmur was heard from one sector. It was not part of the script. Something was out of place. People began to look around and it didn't take them long to see what the commotion was about. There in the midst of the throng of people bowed low, were three men; boys, really, almost men. They were standing. They were standing together, and together, they were standing alone. When the whole world bows down, it's not too hard to be seen if you just stand up.

In November, I usually preach a series of messages on the theme of Living for Eternity. The purpose in the past has been to help you sort through the barrage of commercialism and materialism that is unloaded on us every year at this time. What often happened was that too many people would buy into the false dream that a good holiday was determined by how much money you spent. Credit cards would melt from overuse. Irrational debt would pile up and the long-term strain would overwhelm any short-term thrill. Lurking behind this "spend 'til you die" attitude was the idolatry of money and the worship of stuff. So, I usually try to get out ahead of the madness by challenging us to put our affections on that which is greater. For some of you, this annual series is something to which you look forward.

Our context is a little different right now. This year, commercialism and materialism have taken a hit in the popularity department, which frankly, I find rather refreshing. The economy around here is pretty bad, according to our own recent history. However, that does not mean that people have seen the light and are now living for eternity. Most people are just looking for the simple silver bullet that can be shot so that manufacturing can come back, jobs can come back, the stock market and 401's can rebound, and the almighty, eternal giver of happiness and joy, home values and housing market will soar again so that the happy days will return.

What if it comes back? What if the economy comes roaring back? Is that all there is to us? Is that it? Are we that shallow? Is our true sense of joy that cheap? Is that what makes us breathe easier in life? And of course, what if it doesn't? What if our life's

circumstances go through a major restructuring? Is the only difference between us and our world the fact that on Sundays we spend time in a church building? If you cut open our hearts, do we have the same values and priorities as our world? Are we an echo church in that we only reflect our world instead of being a light? Are we really just a bunch of surfacy do-gooders but internally we all bow down to the same idol? Is there truth to the accusation that the church is full of a bunch of hypocrites?

This year, as in the past, I certainly want to challenge you to look at your priorities and values. I want you to take a hard look at the way you spend your time, and your money and the way you invest your talents and abilities. But, I want to do it in a way that helps you connect all of the pieces together for life, because that is how Christ taught. I want you to see the big picture of life from God's perspective, so that you can see how your life and all of the facets of your life fit into this. I want you to see God's view of the church, so that you understand how your life in the body is part of His eternal plan that is being carried out to perfection. I am convinced that when you see it, I mean really see it, then it will revolutionize the way you look at every detail of life. I want you to know who you are.

1. Know Who You are

“But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light. Once you were not a people, but now you are the people of God; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy.” 1 Peter 2.9-10

- a. You belong to the King (Christ) – and,
- b. You belong to His Kingdom (the church). 2 Pet. 1:10-11

Knowing who you are means that you know that you belong to God. People who belong to God will be given the Kingdom of Jesus Christ. All of history is rushing like a mighty current to this ultimate end.

In Luke 12, Christ is dealing with the issue of worry and the issue of money. Sinful worry is a symptom of unbelief. Hoarding and materialism is a symptom of unbelief. So how does Christ deal with this? He goes back to the big picture. He challenges us not to worry about your life (what to eat, your body, what to wear) [well there goes 85% of television]. And in v.23 Christ says, ***“Life is more than food, and the body more than clothes.”*** He goes on to give good reasons why we should not worry. If God takes care of birds and lilies and the grass of the field, then He is going to take care of you. In fact, instead of worrying about food, clothes and stuff, (v.31) He then says this. ***“Seek his kingdom and these things will be given to you as well.”*** In other words, instead of worrying about all of the “what if” scenarios of life, put your affections and attention upon the kingdom. And then in v.32, Christ makes a very profound statement that really gets to the heart of the entire issue. ***“Do not be afraid, little flock, for your Father has been pleased to give you the kingdom.”*** He goes on to challenge us on how we use our money on the basis of the fact that “where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.”

(v.34) The point is, Christ told us that His kingdom is the ultimate priority for our lives. We must seek it above all else. That command, while demanding, is good, because He commands us to seek that which is a rock solid guarantee. As followers of Christ we are commanded by Christ to have a Kingdom-value life. This morning I want you to understand how the kingdom of Christ is the ultimate reason for everything that you do. Now, some of you may be thinking, wait a minute, I thought that we were supposed to live for the glory of God. God has chosen to put His glory on display through the Kingdom of Christ. There is no competition between the two, they are permanently tied to other. And, I might as well throw in this thought as well. Your joy and God's glory and the Kingdom of Christ are all three eternally bound to the other. God's glory is dependent on Himself alone. But God has chosen to put is glory on display through the Kingdom of His Son, which guarantees and secures the joy of all of His followers..

I know that I have stated this before, but it is such a different way for some of you to think that I need to say it over and over. But, it is like riding a bike; that once you get it, it will change the way you think about everything. God's big plan from eternity past was to create a Kingdom for the glory of His Son Jesus Christ. A Kingdom has two parts: 1) a King and 2) a domain. God created the universe as the domain for His Son, the King. God the Father is so infinitely delighted with His Son, that His design is to publicly praise and exalt His Son. So, God created a public by creating a universe. That is what the kingdom is. His plan was that the kingdom would be a dazzling universe without end with the focus being placed on one seemingly insignificant planet revolving around a medium grade star. But that planet would be the home to land, seas and sky that housed an array of plants, birds, fish and animals, over which a creature called a human would be given the responsibility to rule. The human race was a unique part of the creation because it alone was made in the image of God, because the human race was called to rule the world under the authority of the King. The human race was created to be a people who lived under and with the King. God's plan was for us to live in a happy relationship of trust and obedience so that the glory of the King would be enjoyed by all in a safe and fascinating setting. God's glory as God was enjoyed so deeply and infinitely by God, that He made us with the capacity to enjoy Him, even as we enjoy each other. Our ability to relate to each other and love each other and enjoy each other is all driven by God's love and glory as God. What a blast to extend that love and joy! But God's instructions were ignored. The human race rebelled and instead of living under the reign of the King, the human race wanted to be king. Ever since sin became part of life on the earth, the human race has been out of sync with its own Creator and of course, out of sync with each other. In trying to live apart from God, we have tried to live without the one who gave, defined and makes life. Sin crushed us all. Alienated from God, we became alienated from each other. This world of over 6 billion people is lonely. And our cities are the worst. What happened?

Families became communities which became cities, which became regions which became nations. Nations formed armies and went to war in order to get more land and rule over more people. What was going on between people groups was no different than what was going on in hearts. People were in conflict with each other because they were at war with themselves as a result of being at war against God. With sin came death and the earth

smelled like death. Decay had set in. It was only a matter of time before everything died. God could have wiped out the entire planet, and the entire universe for that matter and start over. But that was not his plan, at least, not yet.

Instead, God started calling people to follow Him. Out of the darkness, out of the death, out the decay, His call was for people to follow Him and be part of what His plan had been from the beginning. But this time, the people that would follow Him would have to be re-created. They were born once, but in order to know Him and live for Him, they would have to be re-born. The people of this present darkness had to be delivered out of the reign of sin and death. God's call came with it a new creation or new birth that would change these people forever. They would be re-born so that they could do what the first humans did not do. Each one would be re-born when they would believe the promises of the King.

One of the first examples of this was a man named Abram. His story is found beginning in Genesis 12 and he helps us see what this chosen race is all about. God made a series of promises to Abram and Abram believed them. In fact, in Genesis 15.6 the Bible says that "Abram believed the LORD, and he (the LORD) credited it to him (Abram) as righteousness." Abram was the father of a nation. But he was the father of more than just an ethnic line of people. Abram became the father of people who by faith believed in the promises of God. There was now a people who were here to take back what belonged to the Creator/King. To these people God began to give them more and more promises. He told them that He would give them a domain, a land. They were to be a kingdom, a people a nation that was to be a mini-example of the big picture. If they obeyed Him, they could keep the land. If they rebelled they would lose it. But even if they lost it, there was coming a time when the true people of God would have a King who would rule perfectly, and whose kingdom would never end, because that is what He established from the beginning.

The OT story of Israel is full of the promises that God made of a King who was coming. Some of Israel believed those promises, many did not. Those who did were the real members of his people. They looked forward to the day of the King. That day finally came. For hundreds of years the OT prophets had described what it would be like. A final prophet named John the Baptist announced that the Kingdom had arrived because the King was here. But like a bad dream, the people rebelled again. They did not want this King to rule over them. They killed their King. They crucified their King. However, what they did in malice, God ordained as the means for our salvation. The death of the king was the basis for God to forgive sin. Not only that, but we saw what kind of a King this was. This was as a King who was unlike any King this world had ever known. He was humble yet all-powerful. He was perfectly righteous, yet incredibly compassionate. He was omnipresent, but taught in a way that every common person could understand. No greater travesty of justice has ever been committed than the crucifixion of the King, who chose to consent, so that we could be forgiven. But that was not the end. The King who died, rose again. The promises of the kingdom were true. The King who rose again, had called a group of people to be his followers. And before He ascended back into heaven He told them, you go all over this world. There are people

all over this world whom I have called to be part of my people. There are people in every nation who belong to me, whom I have elected and chosen. Go get them! You go to every people group and you tell them about the real King who died for them and the real Kingdom that is coming because just like I came the first time, I am coming back. I came as a Lamb, I am returning as a Lion. Since you surrendered your life to the King, you are already part of that kingdom. Right now, the King sits on a throne in heaven. But the day is coming when that throne will be set up here on the earth. So, who are we? We are the people of God; called out of this present darkness into the people of God. Known as the church, which is the present-day expression of the coming Kingdom. We live now as a taste and example of what life is going to be like.

When his kingdom comes, when his throne is here, then his will will be done here on earth, just like it is done in heaven. So, even though we are already under His reign and in his kingdom, not yet do we experience life in the kingdom like we will. Life under the King right now is good. Life, with and for the King, is what gives our lives meaning and understanding. But life yet, is not what life is going to be like. When that day comes, every single part of your life will be lived in perfect harmony with the King and His people. Every decision made, every action taken, every reaction, every thought, every conversation, every job performed, every song sung, every single fiber of your being will be done with meaning, and in perfect conformity to life in the Kingdom. Until that day comes, you are to live now, as an ambassador of the eternal kingdom of Jesus Christ. Until that day comes, you are to seek His kingdom by making the priorities of His kingdom your priorities.

2. **Know why you are here.**

As a member of Cornerstone Baptist Church I am a fellow citizen of the Kingdom of Jesus Christ. I am part of the community of the redeemed in order to make Christ famous in everything I do.

Right now, you live in the temporal, broken, decaying, inconsistent kingdoms of this world. These temporary kingdoms do not define us. Is our nation in a mess? Yes! Will it get better? Maybe. Will it get worse? Eventually they all do. What do you expect, they are man-made kingdoms. But even though we live in these temporary kingdoms, we have in reality been rescued out of them and placed into Christ's eternal kingdom. In the eternal kingdom, the glory of the King will be seen by all and worshiped by all who are part of the kingdom. So, what is the church? What is the purpose of and the role of the church now? The church is ground zero, or the very nerve center for God's plan to put his glory on display to the nations. Each authentic NT church is a kingdom hot spot. Each true church is a visible display of what life in the kingdom is going to be like. God raised up the church as the means to display his glory to the nations. That is why the church is so enormously important. The church is the vehicle that God has chosen to carry out his plan to prepare the way for the Kingdom. Seeking first the kingdom means living for the advancement of the gospel through the church. The way we live right now is not perfect. We are learning and working at this, and when the kingdom comes in its fullness the glory of God will be seen in its fullness. Right now, we live as the people of

God for the glory of God by living lives that point to the kingdom of God. The church is like an outpost for the coming Kingdom. As the people of God, we have been redeemed from darkness and brought into light. Now that sounds wonderful in theory, but what exactly does that look like?

Let me describe the darkness. Let me describe life in the kingdom of darkness. The darkness is that realm of life where meaning is sought apart from God. For example, in what ways are we as human beings different? We are different in appearance. We are different in ethnicity. We are different in age. We are different in gender, background, IQ, personalities, skill, athleticism, education, economically, artistically, musically, etc. What does the darkness do with all of those things? Life that attempts to find meaning apart from God is forced to find meaning in other things. So, life takes the areas in which we are different and turns them into ranking systems. Tall people are great, short people are shunned. The thinner the better. You are white, or too white, or too black or not black enough. You are too old, too rich, too poor, and on and on it goes. People take differences and turn them into spectrums of approval or disapproval in order to gain a false sense of power over others. People build plastic kingdoms on the basis of these shallow groupings. The wealthier you are, the higher up the ladder you go. The prettier you are, the more talented you are, the funnier you are, are all measured against others and your value is assessed by this world according to these things. But those spectrums as David Powlison points out are like ladders that lead to nowhere. You can be at the very top rung of the money ladder or the top rung of the thin ladder or the athletic ladder and you have nothing. People who live in darkness are looking for meaning in things that ultimately lead them to nothingness. They spend their lives climbing ladders that lead to nothingness. As the people of God, we have been redeemed out of that. We reject those empty pursuits.

“For you know that it was not with perishable things such as silver or gold that you were redeemed from the empty way of life handed down to you from your forefathers, but with the precious blood of Christ, a lamb without blemish or defect.” 1 Peter 1.18-19.

All of life is different now. We look at life through the lens of the Kingdom of Jesus Christ. We live according to the values of the King, so that He is seen. Every day is an opportunity and a calling to make the King and the Kingdom seen. When you stand up for the real King, you are putting Christ on display. That is what will give you opportunities to speak about the gospel of Christ.

In the OT era, the nation of Israel was the means that God had chosen to provide to this world a taste of what life in the Kingdom is supposed to be like. That is why we study the OT. The OT is our story, our history and our foundation. But the kingdom that God had in mind was always much larger than just one nation. Today, the church is the home to believers from nations and languages all over this world. All of us trace our history back to the people of God in the OT. Many of them are the heroes of the faith, whose lives reflect the values by which we are called to live. Some of these people showed us what it was like to serve the real King even while part of a broken, earthly kingdom.

They knew who they were. They knew why they were here. So, even though it seemed as if the whole world was bowing down. They stood. If you know who you are and you know why God has you here. Then brother and sister, it's time to stand up and be seen.

3. Stand Up

Because we are not here to promote ourselves, we stand humbly.

a. Stand humbly

Because we are part of a people, we stand together.

b. Stand together

Because we have been given a kingdom that will never end, we stand straight.

c. Stand straight

When people are being persecuted for righteousness, stand up and be seen. When lies are being told and the weak are being trampled, stand up and be seen. When everyone around you is afraid of doing the right thing, stand up and be seen. When you are being pressured to seek the approval of those around you, when you are asked to set aside your convictions and conscience for the sake of your career, when everyone in the class is doing it and it is wrong, stand up and be seen. When people pretend that sin is okay or that there are many ways to God, stand up. Stand up humbly, stand up with brothers and sisters, but stand up, stand, straight up.

Cornerstone, "You are the light of the world. A city on a hill cannot be hidden. Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before men, that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven."