**Reformation Sermon**

**Text:** Daniel 6:10-12, 16-23

**Theme:** God, keep us faithful!

 I can only imagine the fear that filled their hearts. Standing there before their accusers. They knew what they had said and done. It was punishable by death. Not a peaceful death but a purposefully, painful, violent, excruciating death!

 But what could they do? It was either death or deny the truth. And to deny the truth was to deny God. So, they boldly took their stand.

            The prophet Daniel refused to pray to the king of Babylon. He was and about to be thrown into a den of hungry lions. Martin Luther was under the threat of punishment, for heresy—to be burned at the stake. Both men were put to the test. They both took their stand. They did not deny their God. How could they do it? Who gave them the strength? God did! **He kept them faithful.**

 Today our faith is being put to the test. We may not have to face a pit of lions or the threat of a fire being lit at our feet, but the tests we are facing today are just a serious and real. The Devil uses everything at his disposal. He uses the times and circumstances we live in, social media, politics, social norms and more--to keep us from God. To rob us of our salvation.

 Christians are being tested more and more today. If you stand up for God’s truth today, I promise you this…you will be attacked. Voice your opposition to evolution, abortion or declare what God has to say about Homosexuality-- immediate you will be canceled by the new so called culture of “political correctness”, strangers you have never met and perhaps even members of you own family will attack. This is where we can be tempted to remain silent. Say nothing. Do nothing. Turn a blind eye or stick our heads in the sand. Is that what God wants us to do?

 How can we take our stand in such difficult circumstances? God is here for us! He promises to protect us and through us, and through us, bring people to faith. Listen to the Apostle Paul. **But the Lord is faithful, and he will strengthen you and protect you from the evil one.**  (2 Thessalonians 2:3) This is not an idle promise. He can and will do it. I can just imagine Daniel and Luther whispering this as they took their stand. **God, keep me faithful!**  As he has done it in the past, he will do for us today! We can ask the same thing. “**God keep us faithful!”**

 Our Text for today is a story about Daniel. He was a prophet who lived in a time of trouble and turmoil for Israel. God had sent his prophets to Israel again and again to warn them to repent, to turn from their wicked ways and return to God. But they refused. So, God sent a foreign nation, the Babylonians, to discipline them and make them see their sin and repent. Jerusalem had been destroyed and many of the people taken as slaves to Babylon.

 Daniel was a young man when he was taken captive. He was a slave in the king's service. God had blessed him. Daniel served under several kings in Babylon. The Kings liked him. He was given a place of authority over many of the local authorities who were serving the king.

 But as a foreigner, there was some jealousy from those under him. They wanted his position and longed to remove him from power. So, they plotted against him. They tried to dig up some dirt from his past; something, anything, with which they could accuse him of misconduct in office. But, because Daniel was trustworthy and neither corrupt nor negligent, they found nothing. So, they came up with a plot to trap him into breaking the law. Here was their plan: "We know Daniel's habits. He prays to his God every day at set times. Let's use our king's vanity to get him to pass a law forbidding prayer to anyone but the King. If anyone does not pray to the King they should be thrown in the lions den. “Daniel will surely keep praying. Then we've got him!" they said! Then they had the King sign this into law.

 **Now, when Daniel learned that the document had been signed, he went to his house. It had windows on its upper story that opened toward Jerusalem. Three times each day he would get on his knees and pray and offer praise before his God. He continued to do that, just as he had been doing before this. 11Then these men came as a group and found Daniel praying and seeking favor from his God. 12They then went and asked the king about the decree. “Your Majesty, did you not sign a decree that anyone who prays to any god or person for thirty days except to you, Your Majesty, would be thrown into the den of lions?” The king answered, “Indeed I did. The order is established as a law of the Medes and the Persians that cannot be revoked.” 16Then the king gave the order, and Daniel was brought and thrown into the lions’ den. The king said to Daniel, “May your God, whom you serve continually, rescue you.” 17A stone was brought and placed over the mouth of the pit. The king sealed it with his signet ring and the signet rings of his nobles so that nothing could be changed with regard to Daniel’s situation. 18Then the king went to his palace. He spent the night without food, and no entertainment was brought before him. But he could not sleep.**

 Daniel was a dead man walking. These animals were kept starving a majority of the time until the victims entered the cave were torn to pieces even before they hit the ground.

 In the same way Martin Luther was in great danger. He knew full well what was the fate of heretics. The soldiers were right there in the room. He could be bound and take out at any time. Yet, like Daniel, both stood their ground. They did not cut and run.

 I think to myself. What would I have done? This is where the Devil is cunning and active. He whispers in my ear. Why suffer? There is no need to be attacked. The lions are hungry. They will rip you to pieces! Just give in. Don’t cause waves. Go with the flow. **Don’t take your stand.**

I can’t help but think of Peter in this situation. How Jesus warned him, yet he denied him three times. Then I remember the scene. When Jesus looked right at him. How Peter must have felt. How I would feel. If I denied Jesus. Because he will never deny me or you! He stood there before Pilot. Accused of being a traitor. When asked, he answered. He stood his ground. Are you a King! Yes! But my kingdom is not of this world. He knew his answer would lead to one think. Yet he willing answered! It resulted in his conviction and painful, excruciating death to the cross. Denying himself to make us right with God.

God cares for us so much, he loves us so much that he promises us he can and will keep us faithful. We see this in action in our text.**19At dawn the king arose as soon as it was light and hurried to the lions’ den. 20As he came near the pit, he cried out in a fearful voice. The king said to Daniel, “Daniel, servant of the living God, was your God, whom you serve continually, able to rescue you from the lions?”**

**21Then Daniel spoke with the king. “Your Majesty, may you live forever! 22My God sent his angel and shut the mouth of the lions. They have not hurt me because he found me innocent in his presence. Also before you, Your Majesty, I have committed no crime.”**

 What a wonderful witness it was to God’s glory and Daniel’s and faith when he came out unscathed—not a scratch on him! And Daniel’s faithfulness resulted in God’s glory and his name being made know to the nations. Daniel 6:25-27 we read: ***25Then King Darius wrote to all the peoples, nations and men of every language throughout the land: "May you prosper greatly! 26"I issue a decree that in every part of my kingdom people must fear and reverence the God of Daniel. "For he is the living God and he endures forever; his kingdom will not be destroyed, his dominion will never end. 27He rescues and he saves; he performs signs and wonders in the heavens and on the earth. He has rescued Daniel from the power of the lions."***

 Daniel wrote the account down so that we're still learning from it today, some twenty-six hundred years later. To remind us that God is keeping us faithful! Likewise, God kept Martin Luther faithful so he could reform the church, restore the gospel to the people and put into writing books and hymns.

 Why does God keep us keep us faithful? Why not just whisk us out of this life the moment we come to faith and spare us from any opposition any chance that we might fall away? Well, he keeps us faithful in times of fierce opposition, through his Word, in order that we might share that Word with others.

 Martin Luther in his senior years, experienced bouts of sickness, the loss of two of his children to the plague and suffered from depression. I can just image him whispering the same plea; **God keep me faithful. A passage from scripture sounds loud and clear! No temptation[**[**a**](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=1%20Corinthians+10:13&version=NIV#fen-NIV-28581a)**] has overtaken you except what is common to mankind. And God is faithful; he will not let you be tempted[**[**b**](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=1%20Corinthians+10:13&version=NIV#fen-NIV-28581b)**] beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted,[**[**c**](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=1%20Corinthians+10:13&version=NIV#fen-NIV-28581c)**] he will also provide a way out so that you can endure it.** And at the height of his low he wrote the famous song we just sang. **A Mighty fortress is our God!**

 God promises to keep us faithful for a good and great purpose. So we can share with others that God in his grace and mercy has forgiven all our sins through Christ. Think of someone that you can share that message with this week. I know I can. Someone who needs it now. And God has kept me faithful so I could meet him. God has that person in your life too. Don’t waste it. Take you stand. Let's celebrate this Reformation Day by telling others what God has done for them. And God will keep us faithful though his Word. **Amen!**