

St. Paul's Lutheran Church, Muskego, Wisconsin
November 18, 2018

What Time Is It? A Time to Shine

The message begins with a video of a mother writing in her diary:

Dear Diary,

I overslept so my day started late. I never caught up. The emails were unending. The phone constantly interrupted. Hours wasted in meetings. Another day when it seemed like nothing got done.

I wish I could say that home was a place of peace and rest. Instead I walked in the door to more unending tasks. The breakfast dishes were still in the sink. Sports uniforms were scattered on the floor. I just started dinner and my daughter reminded me that practice started early. Dad and daughter hurried out the door with junk food in hand.

Wasted. It wasn't just the hours at work. Sometimes it feels that way at home too.

My kids are growing up and somehow I feel I'm failing them. We are pulled in so many directions that my husband and I hardly even have time to talk. What's the use!

Thank goodness we paused as a family at the end of the day for a family devotion. Today's email from church suggested we read Daniel 12:1-3. I am so thankful I opened that email.

"At that time Michael, the great prince who protects your people, will arise. There will be a time of distress such as has not happened from the beginning of nations until then. But at that time your people—everyone whose name is found written in the book—will be delivered. Multitudes who sleep in the dust of the earth will awake: some to everlasting life, others to shame and everlasting contempt. Those who are wise will shine like the brightness of the heavens, and those who lead many to righteousness, like the stars for ever and ever."

There is a lot we didn't understand about these verses, but one thing was clear to me. I told everyone that there is really only one thing I want for them: that their names are written in God's book, that each one of them rise to eternal life.

Lord, maybe the distress that I feel at home and at work is part of your plan. Star light can only be seen in the darkness. When it is a dark day for me, let my faith in you shine so that my family can see it. That's my purpose. Now is the time to shine.

A Time to Shine

Daniel was a bright star in a very dark place.

The word of God that we are studying today is from the last chapter of the Bible book of Daniel. The book began with Daniel, perhaps as young as an 8th grader, being snatched from his family and his home and taken 1000 miles away into exile in Babylon.

Away from family, away from home, would he be faithful to his God? The answer was yes! He and his friends would not compromise. The first six chapters of Daniel show Daniel and his friends shining like stars in a very dark place.

Historical Introduction – A Glimpse into the Heavenly Warfare Around Us

The last six chapters of Daniel are primarily visions that God gave to Daniel. Our lesson comes near the end of the last vision.

The vision began in Daniel 10 with Daniel seeing the Son of God in all his glory (Daniel 10:5,6). The Son of God describes a heavenly warfare that cannot be seen with our eyes.

“The prince of the Persian kingdom resisted me twenty-one days. Then Michael, one of the chief princes, came to help me, because I was detained there with the king of Persia” (Daniel 10:13).

We find Michael in just a few other places in the Bible. He is called an archangel or ruler of angels in Jude 8. In Revelation 12:7-9 he battles against the devil and his evil angels. Daniel saw a glimpse of what the Apostle Paul talks about in Ephesians 6: “Our struggle is not against flesh and blood... but against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms” (Ephesians 6:12).

Brothers and sisters, when you are in a dark place, remember that you aren't alone! Michael and God's angels are carrying out a heavenly battle around you. Take comfort in this truth: “The angel of the Lord encamps around those who fear him, and he delivers them” (Psalm 34:7).

Historical Introduction – A Glimpse into the Spiritual Warfare Around Us

Daniel's vision then goes into a detailed foretelling of about 200 years of warfare. It is confusing for anyone, but perhaps I can simplify it for you.

Imagine two champion mixed martial arts fighters in a match ... and I am standing between them. Once in a while one will hit the other and perhaps hurt him. But most of the time the punches will fall on me and I'm the one who will get hurt.

In Daniel 11, the professional fighters are two powerful kingdoms. The King of the South is Egypt. The King of the North is Syria. And poor Israel, called “the Beautiful Land,” is the punching bag in the middle of them.

What is the purpose of all this bad news? God didn't want his people to be surprised by the distress that they would go through. The Apostle Paul did the same thing when he told his newly

founded congregations, “We must go through many hardships to enter the kingdom of God” (Acts 14:22).

After Daniel foretold those days of distress, Daniel recorded our text.

“At that time Michael, the great prince who protects your people, will arise. There will be a time of distress such as has not happened from the beginning of nations until then. But at that time your people—everyone whose name is found written in the book—will be delivered. Multitudes who sleep in the dust of the earth will awake: some to everlasting life, others to shame and everlasting contempt. Those who are wise will shine like the brightness of the heavens, and those who lead many to righteousness, like the stars for ever and ever.”

Shine in the Midst of Spiritual Warfare

What can we learn from this lesson to apply to the young mother in our diary for today and apply to us all?

First of all, do not be surprised by the **distress** of these days.

When you see how successful the devil is tearing families apart so that divorce is common place and parents and children can’t get along, don’t be surprised!

When you see the temptations that your children are facing, when you see them making life changing, life destroying decisions, do not be surprised!

These are visible evidence of the heavenly warfare that is going on around us.

But at the same time, remember your **ally** in the warfare. “Michael, the great prince who protects your people, will arise.”

Brothers and sisters, remember that as you fight for the spiritual life of your family, of your children, of your grandchildren, of the people around you, Michael, the archangel and all the powerful angels of God are your allies in this fight. By faith look around you and see that the angel of the Lord is encamped around you and your home.

Then too, let’s keep our eyes focused on the **present certainty**. “Everyone whose name is found written in the book—will be delivered.”

Over and over again in the Bible, God promises: “The Lord knows those who are his” (2 Timothy 2:19). In the midst of the distress, in your family, in your personal life, in God’s church, take comfort in knowing that God is able to carry out his plan to save us. “No one will snatch them out of my hand” (John 10:28).

We may not see it now, so keep focus also on the **future certainty**. “Multitudes who sleep in the dust of the earth will awake: some to everlasting life, others to shame and everlasting contempt.”

On the last day, those who have fallen asleep in Christ will rise from the grave to a life that will never end. That is why we call today Saints Triumphant Sunday. We celebrate this future certainty that we shall see their victory over death.

But how can we know any of this is true? I can see the distress in my life, in the lives of others. But I can't see angel armies with the Archangel Michael in the lead. I can't see a scroll with my name and my kids names written in it. I have never seen anyone victorious over death.

If you and I can't see it, then how are we to believe it?

It all goes back to one event. Did Jesus rise from the dead? If Jesus didn't rise from the dead on Easter morning, then none of these words are true. But if he rose, then everything he said has to be true, about the angels, about our safety in his hands, and about our victory over death.

Are you certain that Jesus has risen from the dead? If you aren't, join the club. I read through the New Testament every year and I'm constantly asking the Lord, "Prove it to me. Prove that it is true that Jesus has risen!"

I invite you to join in that search. Put on the Connection Card that you want Pastor Nate to contact you about the *Following the Promise* Bible study. Let him help you see how Jesus' resurrection was foretold in the New Testament. Examine with him the Easter accounts. It is ok to have doubts and questions. What isn't ok is to ignore the need to find the answers.

And in the midst of this present distress, God invites us to look forward to the eternal victory.

Shine in the Midst of Eternal Victory

Those who are wise will shine like the brightness of the heavens, and those who lead many to righteousness, like the stars for ever and ever.

Who are the wise? The Bible uses that term for those who are spiritually wise, who know the true God who sent his Son into the world to die for our sins.

If you trust that Jesus is your Savior, you are going to shine. Paul in Philippians 3:21 tells us that we shall rise with glorified bodies like Jesus. In 1 Corinthians 15 the Holy Spirit gives us more details about that resurrection body.

So will it be with the resurrection of the dead. The body that is sown is perishable, it is raised imperishable; it is sown in dishonor, it is raised in glory; it is sown in weakness, it is raised in power; it is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body (1 Corinthians 15:42-44).

Your bodies will shine in immortality and power! Your bodies now are "natural" bodies. So often now, your body and mine is controlled by the sinful nature. We do what we don't want to do. We say things that hurt those we love. We fail to keep promises. Bitterness and anger, pride or despair fill our minds. But our bodies will be raised spiritual bodies, bodies completely controlled by the Holy Spirit. Never again will we have to try to control our temper, or apologize for hurting someone, or battle depression, or regret a poor choice. That spiritual body is part of what makes the resurrection body shine brightly in the distance for me right now. I can't wait!

"And those who lead many to righteousness, like the stars forever and ever."

Friday afternoon, when the Muskego High School football team won the championship, I won. They rejoiced and I rejoiced with them.

That's the way it will be at the resurrection. Who of us won't celebrate as we see a crowd of people stepping up to the Apostle Paul or the Apostle Peter and saying, "Hey, thanks for being willing to sacrifice so much so that I learned about Jesus!"

But it won't only be the Paul or Peter glory. I can't wait to celebrate the Lois and Eunice glory. In 2 Timothy 1, Paul mentioned the faith that Timothy's mother and grandmother passed on to him. Perhaps we won't be able to say, "Lots of people came to know Jesus through me," but who knows how many will come to faith through our spiritual children, those we taught in Sunday School or those we supported in our Christian grade school?

But what if I'm not one of those God uses to lead many to righteousness in Christ? What if I don't shine brightly compared to Paul or one of you?

That is when I claim again the glory of "no comparison." This is part of what it means that our bodies will be raised spiritual bodies, completely under the control of the Holy Spirit. There won't be any comparisons like that going through our minds. Instead, it will be like the Friday night Muskego championship celebration. Their victory is my victory.

Shine Now to Shine Forever!

Does your life seem wasted? Does your life seem to be filled with frustration and defeat? Don't get discouraged. It is in the darkness that the light of the stars shines brightly. Now, in the midst of the spiritual darkness, is the time to shine.

Shine in the midst of the spiritual warfare in your **home**. Seek a stronger relationship with your Savior so that he can shape your life so that your family and friends see in you that peace that surpasses all understanding.

Shine in the midst of the spiritual warfare in your **community**. Let's look for ways to be a blessing to the people around us so that they can see the hope that lives in us.

Shine in the midst of the spiritual warfare in your **world**. During this season of the year when we are planning what more we as a family of believers can do together to reach more people for Christ, let's resolve to consider carefully the opportunities God is giving us to respond generously with offerings that can bring the good news of forgiveness and eternal life in Christ Jesus to more people.

Often people ask, "When do you think the world will end?" As I get older, as more of my contemporaries get sick and more are dying, I ask, "How much longer do I have?"

The answer to both is, "I don't know." All I know is that now is the time. Now is the time to share the hope that I have in Christ. Now is the time to shine. Amen.

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My Next Steps so that I Shine!

- **Prepare for the spiritual warfare.** This week, read or listen to the 12 chapter book of Daniel several times. Let the victories of God’s people give you hope for the spiritual battles you face.
- **Pray for eternal glory.** Pray that God would use you to bring the people in your area of influence (family, work, school, neighborhood) closer to Christ.
- **Celebrate your victory.** Post this memory verse on your refrigerator as part of your Thanksgiving celebration: “At that time your people—everyone whose name is found written in the book—will be delivered” (Daniel 12:1). Let your family know that you want them to be part of the “your people.”

Group Work

1. Each person mention one thing for which they are especially thankful for this year.
2. The lesson introduced the great prince Michael. What can you learn about Michael from each passage?
 - Daniel 10:12-14
 - Daniel 12:1
 - Jude 8 & 9
 - Revelation 12:7-9
3. How does it make you feel knowing that he is the great prince who protects you?
4. Read 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18. What do find most comforting as Paul describes the day of Jesus’ return?
5. Read 1 Corinthians 15:35-58. Our bodies are going to come out of the grave on the last day. What will your resurrection body be like?
6. Pastor talked about the “Lois and Eunice Glory” based on 2 Timothy 1:5. Did your grandparents have an impact on your spiritual life? If so, how?
7. Break up into groups of three or four. Each person share a prayer request and the person to their right pray about that issue. Go around the circle and pray for each other in this way.