

Homily For Tuesday of the 34th Week of Ordinary Time - Year 1

St Peter's 8:30 AM & 7:00 PM Mass - November 23, 2021

Daniel 2:3,9,10,27,31-45 "The God of heaven will set up a kingdom that shall never be destroyed."

Daniel 3:57-61 "Sing praise to the Lord and highly exalt him forever."

Luke 21:5-11 "Not one stone will be left upon another. Beware that you are not led astray. "

Of Kingdoms and Stones

Introduction

Last week, I was visiting a Grade Two class. I wanted them to know how much God loves the children, so I told the story of Jesus welcoming the children, to the chagrin of the adults gathered around him. After blessing the children, Jesus looks up at the adults and tells them that, unless they become like these children, they cannot enter the kingdom of heaven. Now, I could just have said 'heaven' to keep it simple. Children always have some idea about being with God in heaven. But I said 'kingdom of heaven'. A boy sitting on the floor right in front of me looked up and asked, "Why is it a kingdom?" It was an amazing question and I don't think I did it justice. Sooner or later, even the youngest of children will ask me a question that makes me think more deeply.

We might no longer call the nations of the earth kingdoms. We don't see so many kings or queens strutting around with the power to say "Off with his head." However, I think you know that everywhere there is still a grasping for power and authority, even in our democracies. Everywhere we see, and hear of, leaders who give the impression of enjoying a little too much the position of being looked up to and respected.

Daniel

Judah was the kingdom of the Israelites, which had been ruled by increasingly corrupt kings at the time when Babylon was the great world power, ruled by a power hungry king. Despite being cruel, Nebuchadnezzar was also pretty smart in some ways. When Babylon conquered Judah, he took the best and brightest back

to Babylon. Daniel and his companions were in the first of three waves of those deportations.

This week, the last of the liturgical year, the Church gives us significant passages from the book of the prophet Daniel. It is good for us to ask why. The king recognized Daniel's wisdom immediately. It says he had ten times the wisdom of the sages of Babylon.

The king has a troubling dream about a statue. First, we have to recognize that, in the ancient world, a statue was an object of worship. Kings had statues of themselves made so people could adore them in every place. In the Gospel passage, when people around Jesus are admiring the beautiful stones of the temple, Jesus treats their admiration of a man made object as if they are worshipping it. It has become a kind of statue built by a king who wants to be worshipped. In that case it is Herod.

This king, Nebuchadnezzar, obviously wants to know what the dream really means. He doesn't want fake news, so he asks his own wise men to tell him what the dream before he will trust their interpretation. To fail is to be executed. To a person, they refuse to give it a shot since, as they say, no one *on earth* can reveal such hidden information.

Daniel is called before the king. He can interpret the king's dream because he has prayed for the knowledge of the mystery that only God can reveal. The different metals represent a sequence of kingdoms. Later, we see the truth of Daniel's interpretation. The gold head of the statue is the kingdom of Babylon. The silver chest is Persia, which will conquer Babylon. The bronze thighs represent Greece, which will conquer Persia. And the iron legs and feet are Rome.

But then there is this stone, not cut by human hands, which destroys the rest of the kingdoms. This is Jesus himself, whose kingdom is not of human making. The birth of Christ is the arrival of that kingdom, which begins within the Roman Empire, outlasts that empire and spreads throughout the world. The faith which begins in Israel overshadows all other worship. Daniel's prophecy is fulfilled. But there is more to that prophecy. The small stone grows and becomes a mountain

which fills the whole earth. That is the second coming of Christ and the final victory of God over the kingdoms of the earth. At the end of time, God will ultimately bring about the final promises in the book of Daniel of the second coming of Christ. The wicked of today have their time, but every kingdom falls. This will not be the case for the kingdom of God.

Nebuchadnezzar was called the king of kings because he had that kind of earthly authority. But we await the birth, once more, of the true king of kings, whose authority transcends all earthly authority. That continues to be our dream. As Daniel says: "The great God has informed the king what shall be hereafter. The dream is certain, and its interpretation trustworthy."

Luke

Jesus reveals more about that end time, but not everything. The gold of the temple, and even its beautiful stones, will be overcome. Which stone is the greater one? Is it the temple, cut by human hands, or is it the stone the builders rejected, the cornerstone of our faith, Jesus Christ, who is the fulfilment of history and the culmination of human destiny.

There has never been a time when wars, earthquakes, famines and plagues have not been a part of the picture. Jesus explains that what is important is for us to be prepared, to prepare the way of the Lord into the world and into our hearts.

Call To Action

Can we be faithful, even as we see ourselves scattered amongst a people who are unbelieving, who love the kingdoms of the earth so much that they have no room for the ultimate kingdom?

The Church again gives us the opportunity to look for the ways God's kingdom has made a mark in our lives but still needs to be completed. Let us thank him for the graces he has already worked in your life and ask him in trust to continue that grace.

Passages

Entrance Antiphon: *You are just, O Lord. Treat your servant in accord with your merciful love.*

Collect: *O God, look graciously upon your beloved sons and daughters, that those who believe in Christ may receive true freedom.*

Daniel: *King Nebuchadnezzar summoned the sages of Babylon and said, "I have had such a dream that my spirit is troubled. Tell me the dream, and I shall know that you can give me its interpretation." They answered, "There is no one on earth who can reveal what the king demands." But Daniel answered the king, "There was a frightening statue. The head was of fine gold, its chest and arms of silver, its middle and thighs of bronze, its legs of iron, its feet partly of iron and partly of clay. As you looked, a stone was cut out, not by human hands, and it struck the statue on its feet and broke them in pieces. Then the iron, the clay, the bronze, the silver and the gold were all broken in pieces. But the stone became a great mountain and filled the whole earth. You, O king, the king of kings, to whom the God of heaven has given the kingdom, the power, the might, and the glory, into whose hand he has given human beings, you are the head of gold. After you shall arise another kingdom, and yet a third of bronze, a fourth, strong as iron. The feet of potter's clay and iron shall be a divided kingdom. And, in the days of those kings, the God of heaven will set up a kingdom that shall never be destroyed. The dream is certain, and its interpretation trustworthy.*

Psalm (Daniel): *Bless the Lord, you heavens. Sing praise to him and highly exalt him forever.*

Luke: *Some were speaking about the temple, how it was adorned with beautiful stones and gifts dedicated to God. Jesus said, "As for these things that you see, the days will come when not one stone will be left upon another. All will be thrown down." They asked him, "Teacher when will this be and what will be the sign." Jesus said, "Beware that you are not led astray; for many will come in my name and say, I am he, and the time is near. Do not go after them. Nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. There will be great earthquakes and in various places famines and plagues. and there will be dreadful portents and great signs from heaven.*