

Sermon draft

Text: Daniel 12:1–3

Sermon: “He’s Coming”

Can you remember a time in your life when you were afraid because you were by yourself and you needed someone to come to help you?

Can you remember hoping that someone would get there soon? People look for and love heroes, especially when they’re in need of protection or need to be rescued. Even fictional (super!) heroes fascinate us.

It’s really amazing when we look back at our life and see how often someone rises up and comes along just in time at the right time. For example, take Martin Luther. He stood before the Holy Roman Emperor and representatives of the pope of Rome, literally laying his life on the line so that all people could know not just temporal freedom but the even greater eternal deliverance that comes by grace through faith in Jesus Christ alone.

That was a moment when a man with a message was just in time. In many ways, the whole Western world was born in the Reformation that came through the fearless leadership of one man, Martin Luther.

Certain people arrive just in time. And when they do, many are glad, even saved! At just the right time, He comes!

That's what's going on in our text for today. The Book of Daniel is a book about struggles, battles, and war. Daniel arrives on the scene as God's people are taken into exile in Babylon, a thousand miles from home. The first six chapters of the book are the history of God's people as they were taken and lived in Babylon. Daniel became an advisor to King Nebuchadnezzar by interpreting the king's dream. He was thrown into a den of lions for continuing to pray to the true God. His friends, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego were cast into a fiery furnace for not bowing down to an idol. But the triune God, the Ancient of Days, was with his people as they fought their battles against the old evil foe and the world around them. These men were heroes of the faith, bright shining stars for the Lord!

The second six chapters of Daniel describe more battles that God and his people would fight. These chapters are prophecy. Most of Daniel's prophecies are in symbolic, picture, language.

We see many of the same pictures in the Book of Revelation: strange creatures, symbolic numbers, battles between spiritual forces in heaven and on earth.

Thus, the Book of Daniel is divided into two distinct sections: one historical and the other prophetic. Some of the prophecies had immediate fulfillments in the decade and centuries that followed Daniel, while there were also prophecies that had in mind an even greater fulfillment. Such is the case before us in our text, looking ahead to when Jesus will return to judge the living and the dead. Today we look at the last battle in the Book of Daniel.

Daniel says, “*And there shall be a time of trouble, such as never has been since there was a nation till that time*” (v 1b). He’s describing a time that will take place just before the last judgment. It’s a struggle for the children of God living in a world ruined by sin. It’s a world that hates God’s message and hates God’s messengers.

The people of God also struggle as they wrestle with temptations and with the weakness of their own sinful flesh. We speak of this troubling time between Jesus' first coming and second coming as the "end times." Everything before Christ was preparation. Christ came and brought fulfillment to God's Law and promises. Christ died for our sins and rose again for our justification. And now things are being brought to a close for the final fulfillment: the deliverance of Christ's people as he is coming again and will take us to be where he is. We will live eternally with him.

Every generation thinks it's going to be the last generation because every generation thinks society can't get any worse than it already is. And yet the world continues to get further and further away from Christ and his Word. When we look in the newspapers, on the internet, on TV, we wonder: Where has the love for God gone? Where is the concern for one's neighbors? We are pilgrims in an unwelcoming and unholy land.

The apostle Paul wrote that “*creation is groaning,*” but how much more must it be groaning today, two thousand years after Paul wrote? And how much more is it going to be groaning as we draw ever closer to Judgment Day? To look at the world as it is today and ponder how much worse it will get between now and Judgment Day is a frightening thought! It’s going to get worse, says our text, such as never has been. This is a prophetic statement. Our Lord has allowed his prophet to peer down the corridors of time before Judgment Day. And what Daniel sees is horrific.

Jesus echoed Daniel’s warning about those last days: “*For then there will be great tribulation, such as has not been from the beginning of the world until now, no, and never will be. And if those days had not been cut short, no human being would be saved. But for the sake of the elect those days will be cut short*” (Matthew 24:21–22).

Today, Jesus' word rings ever true. There are wars and rumors of wars. Our nation is losing its way. It doesn't respect life in the womb or before the tomb. More and more people lambaste Christian teachings, wanting to silence us, and religious freedoms are being taken away.

It's all happening just as foretold, a time of unparalleled trouble, a time of all-out opposition to God, a time of false prophets and persecution, of famines and earthquakes. Trouble is all around us and in us. When pressured, the light of our faith life sometimes flickers to dim. We may even try to cover up our faith-light, because we're just too tired or too afraid to stand up for our Lord and the message of his Word.

How can we get through this mess called "life"? God gives Daniel the answer—an answer that was as good back then as it is now. God has given us more than a prophecy of doom. He gives us a promise of deliverance. *“At that time,” he says, “shall arise Michael, the great prince who has charge of your people”* (v 1a).

Michael is the only archangel specified in the Bible. He is the general of God's army of angels, which protects God's people from the forces of evil in the world, from the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms. Michael serves as God's special agent to keep his people from the devil's plans and purposes. In these last troubled times, in the midst of "it's-only-getting-worse" troubles of this world, the Lord, our Emmanuel, remains present with his people. He is here to save! We will not be abandoned.

The Bible repeatedly calls on us to remain faithful unto death because that final time of reckoning is definitely coming. God promises that there will be a time of final and ultimate deliverance.

“But at that time your people shall be delivered, everyone whose name shall be found written in the book” (v 1c). Daniel is seeing the final deliverance on the Last Day, which Paul described with these words: ***“For the Lord himself will descend from heaven with a cry of command, with the voice of an archangel, and with the sound of the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first.***

Then we who are alive, who are left, will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so we will always be with the Lord” (1 Thessalonians 4:16–17).

In the midst of a world gone mad, God reminds us that he will deliver us. Through faith in Jesus, we belong to the people of God, and we will be saved. At the last trumpet call, in the blink of an eye, God’s angels will gather up all of his people. Not one left behind.

It’s a breathtaking picture God gives: Jesus coming down out of the clouds with the archangel shouting the command for all to appear before the Christ. At his call, the graves give up their dead, and body and soul are reunited.

That trumpet call of God, that voice of the archangel, will bring about the resurrection of all flesh. ***“And many of those who sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt”*** (v 2). “Many” here is all inclusive. The word Daniel used is better translated “the multitudes, everybody.”

There will be a perfect restoration of our bodies so that they are imperishable, no longer subject to the effects of sickness, suffering, and death. And those bodies, our bodies, will be reunited with our souls.

Then the judgment will commence. All will be gathered before the throne, both believers and unbelievers. On that throne will be Jesus, our Savior. He was given that position by his Father as the Redeemer of all mankind, the One who gave his life on the cross for the sins of all mankind, all those gathered before him on that day.

Those who do not believe in him as their Savior and Lord awake to shame and everlasting contempt—which is hell, eternal separation from God, a place of suffering and pain with no joy, only sorrow.

“And those who are wise shall shine like the brightness of the sky above; and those who turn many to righteousness, like the stars forever and ever” (v 3). Whoever believes in Jesus will be saved.

Where he is, there they will be also, at home with him forever in heaven, where there will be no more suffering, pain, tears, or death.

There they will shine like the brightness of the heavens and sing God's praises together with the angels. Here is the source of courage we need to face our own death and the source of comfort we need as we mourn the deaths of our family and friends who loved the Lord.

Jesus will return physically until then He comes to us through the preaching of his Word, the splashing of Baptism's water, and the eating and drinking of his body and blood in Holy Communion.

Jesus will come soon on the Last Day (a date only the Father knows). Jesus wants us all to be ready to meet him. And we are ready, because he is with us to protect us and is coming to deliver us.

“Amen. Come, Lord Jesus!” (Revelation 22:20).

Amen