

McCabe United Methodist Church
Uniting Scripture with Life: Faith (part 4)
Daniel 6:19-23, Matthew 17:20-21
Sunday, July 8, 2012
Pastor Rick Fossum

Today, I'm continuing our series called *Uniting Scripture with Our Daily Lives*. For the past four weeks, we've been asking the question "What does Scripture say and how can we apply it to life . . . our life?" Today, we look at FAITH.

Someone once said, "Every tomorrow has two handles. We can take hold of it by the handle of anxiety, or by the handle of faith." It's our choice.

Jesus said, "Truly I tell you, if you have faith as small as a mustard seed, you can say to this mountain, 'Move from here to there,' and it will move. Nothing will be impossible for you."

Do you believe that? Do you have that kind of mountain-moving faith?

Daniel had that kind of faith in God. Daniel was working for King Darius, the king of Babylon . . . of Babylonian Empire fame. According to the Bible, Daniel had 'exceptional qualities'. Qualities like integrity and wisdom and trustworthiness. King Darius chose Daniel to be one of three men to govern his kingdom or empire. Daniel did such a great job that King Darius planned to put Daniel in charge of the entire kingdom thus eliminating the other positions.

Well, as you can imagine, that didn't go over well with the other officials. Especially, the ones he replaced. They became jealous. These jealous officials decided to do some investigating and dig up all the dirt on Daniel they could find. The problem was this: They couldn't find any dirt. None! They said, "**We will never find any basis for charges against this man Daniel unless it has something to do with the law of his God.**"

So, the jealous officials went to a plan 'B'. They decided to trap Daniel. They knew Daniel was a religious person so they hoped to use his faith against him. They did it by tricking King Darius into making a decree or law. This is how it happened: "**May King Darius live forever,**" they began their trickery. "**We think that you, King Darius, should make a decree or law that says anyone who prays to any god or human being, during the next thirty days, except to you, your Majesty, shall be thrown into the lion's den.**"

You could call this *Daniel's Law* because they knew Daniel was a religious person and he prayed every day.

They reminded the king that once a law or decree was issued it couldn't be altered or changed. And so, for some reason, King Darius put the decree into writing.

Daniel heard about the decree. He read the decree. He knew what the decree meant. He understood the consequences, but it didn't stop him from praying to his God. In fact, three times a day, Daniel would get down on his knees and pray, giving thanks to God, just as he had done before the decree. He wasn't going to change.

The jealous officials, the ones trying to trap Daniel, didn't have any trouble catching Daniel praying to God because Daniel didn't try to cover it up. And so, they caught him.

The jealous officials went back to the king and put the king in the proverbial corner. **"King,"** they said, **"didn't you make a law that during the next thirty days anyone who prays to any god or human being except to you would be thrown into the lion's den?"**

"Yes," said the king, **"I did make that law and it cannot be changed or repealed."**

And now, down came the hammer. **"Well, King,"** they said, **"Daniel, the one you set over the entire government . . . the one who took our positions . . . the one you like and trust is paying no attention to your law. He still prays three times a day to his God."**

When King Darius heard this, he was greatly troubled. He liked Daniel. He trusted Daniel. He depended on Daniel. Now, he was faced with throwing him into the lion's den.

The king tried to rescue Daniel. He made every effort to save him, but still, a law is a law and a decree is a decree. It couldn't be changed.

"What do you say, king," the officials demanded? **"Are you going to throw Daniel into the lion's den or not?"**

The king was caught. He gave the order and Daniel was brought before him. The king said to Daniel, **"May your God, whom you serve, rescue you."**

Daniel could have made it a lot easier on himself if he had given up praying to God for thirty days. Just thirty days is all the law required. He wouldn't have been in the pickle he was in if he had simply stopped praying for a while. But, no, Daniel kept praying and thanking God.

This is faith. This is called *'mountain-moving faith'*.

One night, a house caught on fire and a young boy was forced to escape to the roof. The father stood on the ground below with his arms outstretched, calling to his son, **"Jump! I'll catch you."**

He knew the boy had to jump to save his life, but all the boy could see was the darkness and the smoke from the fire. As you can imagine, the boy was afraid to jump into the unknown. His father kept yelling: "**Jump son! I'll catch you.**"

Finally, the boy called out, "**But daddy, I can't see you.**"

The father replied, "**But I can see you and that's all that matters.**"

Faith is putting our hand into the hands of God whether its in complete darkness or bright sunshine. Faith is trusting God to be there for us no matter what.

Daniel trusted God. He went into the lion's den knowing his life was on the line. He was in God's hands.

The king sealed the lion's den with his official seal. The king went back to his palace. He couldn't eat or sleep all night. He paced back and forth worrying about the fate of Daniel.

At dawn, the king hurried to the lion's den. When he came near the den, he called out to Daniel, "**Daniel, servant of the living God, has your God, whom you serve, been able to rescue you from the lions?**"

And Daniel said, and this is our first clue, and Daniel said, "**May the king live forever! My God sent his angel and he shut the mouths of the lions. They didn't hurt me.**"

King Darius was filled with joy. He gave orders to lift Daniel out of the den. And when Daniel was lifted from the den, no wounds were found on him, because, according to the Bible, he had faith in God.

The story goes on. It's a bit gruesome. The king gave orders to take the jealous officials who tried to trap Daniel and throw them into the lion's den. This time, the mouths of the lions were not closed.

It's about faith. From faith as small as a mustard seed to mountain-moving faith, God can be trusted. Yes, the story of Daniel is several thousand years old, but faith is faith whether its yesterday's faith or today's faith . . . whether its Daniel's faith or ours. God can be trusted from the den of lions to your life and mine.

Maybe today, you're facing your own lion's den. Maybe you're worried about one of your children or your spouse or one of your parents. Maybe you're concerned about your health or financial problems or job problems and you don't know where to turn.

Our den of lions can be anything, anywhere and anytime. Sooner or later, we come face to face with the reality that we are limited. There are some things in life we can't overcome on our own. We need help. We can't run away forever from our worries and troubles and fears. Like Daniel, we can only turn to God and trust that God will help us through every part of life. This is faith.

Do you need help today? God's hand is already there. It's waiting for you to take hold and grasp. I believe that God takes great pleasure in helping us through life's most difficult situations. I also believe that God and only God has the ability to turn our bad into good, our darkness into light.