



Three enduring principles from the book of Daniel for our emerging church.

14 June 2020 Rev David MacGregor
2nd Sunday of Pentecost

#2. We live as distinct people, engaged in the world

To access the worship service go to
<https://livestream.com/ggsservices/ssuc>

Families with children are encouraged to use family faith materials
Ps Richard Moors has made available.

Preparing for worship
Find a comfortable space,
e.g. around a table or living
room ... and light a candle

Welcome

Prayer of Adoration & Confession

You are invited to pray this prayer aloud.

God of noise and fear,
God of quiet and storm,
as we gather in your presence,
may we see you enlivening our worship today.

Come, Lord Jesus,
come and upset our carefully guarded routine,
our carefully ordered structure.

Come crashing in
making yourself heard in the cacophony.
Come tiptoeing in
making us sit up and take notice.

Surprise us with all the ways
you are present for us.
Bring calm and reassurance
that your love never falters
and that your spirit never leaves us.

Come, Lord Jesus,
be known in our imperfect lives today
and by your presence, cleanse and renew us
with your unpredictable spirit today.
Amen.

Song

Only a Holy God

We engage with the Word of God

- *Daniel 3:1-30; 1 Peter 2:9-10*

Song

Take Time to Be Holy



1. Take time to be holy
Speak often with God
Abide in Him always
And feed on His Word
Make friends with God's children
Help those who are weak
Forgetting in nothing
His blessing to seek
2. Take time to be holy
The world rushes on
Spend much time in secret
With Jesus alone
By looking to Jesus
Like Him you shall be
your friends, in your conduct
His likeness shall see
3. Take time to be holy
Let Him be your Guide
And run not before Him
Whatever betide
In joy or in sorrow
Still follow your Lord
And looking to Jesus
Still trust in His Word
4. Take time to be holy
Be calm in your soul
Each thought and each motive
Beneath His control
Thus led by His Spirit
To fountains of love
You soon shall be fitted
For service above

George Coles Stebbins
William Dunn Longstaff
Words: Public Domain

Offering

We take a moment to set aside our offering to God's mission and pray a prayer of blessing over it.

Prayers of Thanksgiving & Intercession

response: *How long? O God, how long?*

God, as the world holds its breath,
wondering what is next
as we cry out for ourselves and others:
"How long, O Lord?"

Convict us with the knowledge
that we can answer our prayer.

Remind us that "How long, O Lord?" depends on us.
You have given us all that the world needs:
abundant resources for sharing;
hearts that can accommodate infinite love;
hands that can work wonders when held open in mercy.
"How long, O Lord?" is up to us.

response: *How long? O God, how long?*

May we look on the suffering of others
and see what you would have us do.
May we look on the despair of those around us
and see the hope you want us to share.
May we hear the cry of your children
and listen for what you would have us do.

response: *How long? O God, how long?*

"How long, O Lord?" is within our gift.
May we be moved to generosity today. Amen.

Affirmation / Blessing – Love Has Not Been Cancelled

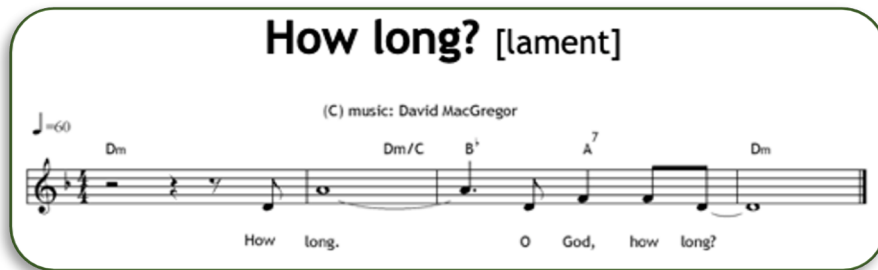
Say this aloud. If with another person or more, share the sentences around.

Love has not been cancelled.
Mercy has not been cancelled.
Prayer has not been cancelled.
Attentiveness has not been cancelled.
Goodness has not been cancelled.
Thanksgiving has not been cancelled.
Loving relationships have not been cancelled.
Kindness has not been cancelled.
Music has not been cancelled.
Conversations have not been cancelled.
Learning has not been cancelled.
Poetry and storytelling have not been cancelled.

Courage has not been cancelled.
Meditation and contemplation have not been cancelled.
Families have not been cancelled.
Faith has not been cancelled.
Hope has not been cancelled.
And ... God's presence with us, has not been cancelled.

David Haas

God of the waiting:
fire us up
to walk bravely
and speak boldly
wherever we are this week
in the name of God,
Creator,
Immanuel,
Breath.
Amen.

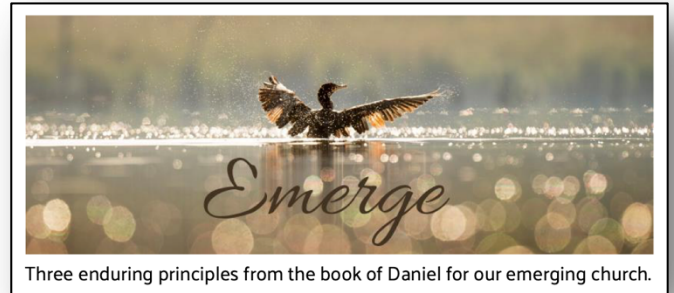


Prayers adapted from resources
in *Spill the Beans* issue #25.
spillbeans.org.uk

Sermon notes

We live as distinct people, engaged in the world

Daniel 3:1-30 (focusing on vv:16-18).



The story of Daniel 3 is set against the backdrop of the plight of the exiles during the Babylonian exile after having been forcefully removed from their homeland around 587 BC by King Nebuchadnezzar, the main perpetrator in this chapter. It raises a key question for us today as followers of Jesus:

How do we as church, as disciples of Christ, as people of the living God not only survive but thrive under an all-pervading post-Christian worldview?

As many have written, and as our theme of EMERGE points us to, we are a people in exile, far removed from a "homeland" where the voice of the church, of the Christian believer was *the* core worldview. We live in a post-Christian age; where God, Christianity, organised religion has been pushed to the margins; maybe even off the radar.

In his book: **THE CHURCH IN EXILE: LIVING HOPE AFTER CHRISTENDOM**¹ American author Lee Beach suggests exile as a potential motif for the church, and Daniel being written at that time as a resistance story. What does one do, as a Jew living a century or so before Christ, when someone says they're not allowed to keep the first commandment?

How does a disciple of Christ resist (or importantly - engage) a culture going in directions we don't want to go?

As Paul muses in Romans 12, how do we be *in* the world as disciples of Christ, but not *of* the world? How profoundly amazing it is that Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego stay true to their faith:

If we are thrown into the blazing furnace, the God we serve is able to deliver us from it ...But even if he does not ... we will not serve your gods or worship the image of gold you have set up."

I put these thoughts together at a time when another resistance story has been playing out across the United States and beyond – as people in their thousands, perhaps millions – take to the streets in protest, in solidarity, in resistance against what they see as the oppressive systems in play that led to the tragic homicidal death of George Floyd on the streets of Minneapolis.

When we reflect on Daniel 3, and ask ourselves: what *will* it mean to live as faithful people of God as an exilic people, we're pointed to a life of **holiness** ... living out that other way. Daniel and his companions never compromise their ultimate commitment of holiness and faithfulness to God. When it comes to the crunch, when faced with the prospect of being burned to death if they do not comply with the Royal decree, they express that their allegiance is ultimately to the One God. They will worship and serve no other.

At its core the biblical version of holiness is relational, says Beach. The scriptures set out the way people can live holy lives, in relationship with God - as a community set apart for his worship. At its heart, holiness is about communion with God, but because his communion takes place in the realities of the physical world, it is an embodied holiness. This changes the motivation for holiness from the idea of obeying God or the Bible - to the idea of participating in the life of God and seeking to express that Life faithfully. This deeply relational approach to holiness invites us to know God in relationship as core to what it means to be holy - to be holy as God is holy. As a holy community God's people are called to engage with the world, not retreat from the world ... they must also reflect their relationship with Jesus in a way that shows himself as distinct from those with whom they rub shoulders on a day-to-day basis existence.

The online community will watch a brief video from Lutheran pastor Susan Briehl who points us to living in the presence of God – a holiness enacted through practices such as: Nurturing Friendship, Living as Community, Doing Justice, Making Peace and Living a Goodly and Godly Life.

¹ https://www.amazon.com.au/Church-Exile-Living-After-Christendom-ebook/dp/B00SHGYPOU/ref=sr_1_1?dchild=1&keywords=THE+CHURCH+IN+EXILE%3A+LIVING+HOPE+AFTER+CHRISTENDOM&qid=1591156612&sr=8-1