

THE DANGEROUS ACT OF WORSHIP

Sermon-Based Study Guide
Good Shepherd Presbyterian Church

Daniel 3

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I. Introduction to this Study

This weekend we continue our series The Dangerous Act of Worship. Worship is the first of three components included in our mission statement that, we believe, a disciple does: Connect with God.

But, how is worship dangerous?

II. Connecting with One Another

Describe a time you were in danger. What happened? Was the danger resolved? If so, how?

III. Study the Text

a. Read Daniel 3.1-7.

We aren't told what this statue was of – perhaps it was of Nebuchadnezzar himself, perhaps it was an idol of some sort. Either way, it was impressive (in a sense): it was made of gold and measure 90 feet in height.

We're told that "satraps, prefects, governors, advisers, treasurers, judges, magistrates and all the other provincial officials" gathered, and, after a call to worship (in a sense) they were to bow down at "the sound of the horn, flute, zither, lyre, harp and all kinds of music."

Describe this scene, as you see it in your mind's eye. What's going on? What would this look like today?

b. How do you understand verse 6, "Whoever does not fall down and worship will immediately be thrown into a blazing furnace"? An ancient Babylonian text notes that throwing someone into a furnace was a punishment for an offense.

What, then, is the chargeable offense?

c. Reread verse 7, noticing that, "all the nations and peoples of every language fell down and worshiped." Is it easy to worship – or difficult? Is worship something that comes naturally to humans – or not? Why – or why not?

d. Read Daniel 3.8-12.

Why do you think the astrologers repeat Nebuchadnezzar's decree word for word? Has it become a sort of liturgy!?

e. Why do these astrologers care that Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego don't bow down to the statue? Does their accusation cause you to rethink the above question "What, then, is the chargeable offense?"

Do you think Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego would have gotten in trouble if it weren't for these astrologers?

- f. Read Daniel 3.13-18.

Trying putting verses 16-18 in your own words. How would you say it in common English?

- g. Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego declare boldly that "even if" God doesn't rescue them, they will not bow down to Nebuchadnezzar's image or serve his god.

How do you think Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego can make such an "even if" statement? What does that say about their faith? Obviously, they would want God to save them... So, how can they be so committed to God, "even if" He doesn't!?

Have you ever had an "even if" moment? (That is, even if this happens, it's not changing my commitment) If so, what was it? What could prompt you to an "even if" statement?

- h. Read Daniel 3.19-25.

Who is the fourth man in the furnace, the one who looks like a "son of the gods"!??

- i. Read Daniel 3.26-30.

What is the result when Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego refused to bow down to any god but God?

What is the result when we refuse to bow down to any god but God?

How do we bow down to other gods?

- j. Read Isaiah 43.1-3. What waters or fires have you passed through? Or are you passing through now?

IV. Pray

- a. Thank God for the promise of Isaiah 43, that no matter what we have gone through, are going through, or will go through, He is with us.
- b. Pray that we would worship dangerously! That we wouldn't be fearful of the worship of those around us, but rather, that we would be committed to true worship of the true God no matter what.
- c. Ask God to continue to unite us as His people seeking His will as we continue our dismissal from the PC(USA), praying that we would do so lovingly and peacefully, to God's glory – and not our own!