

Faith in the Furnace

Foundations

Daniel 3:13-18

EXPLORING THE SERMON

- * What did you hear?
- * What did you think or feel about what you heard?
- * What is one thing you can take away from the sermon this week?

KEY VERSES

But if you do not worship, you shall immediately be thrown into a furnace of blazing fire, and who is the god that will deliver you out of my hands?' Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego answered the king, 'O Nebuchadnezzar, we have no need to present a defence to you in this matter. If our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the furnace of blazing fire and out of your hand, O king, let him deliver us. But if not, be it known to you, O king, that we will not serve your gods and we will not worship the golden statue that you have set up.

REFLECTION AND DISCUSSION

This week's focus from The Apostles' Creed is "the communion of saints." The Apostles' Creed can help us to recognize the things that do not change, especially during times of trial. In today's passage, Daniel's three companions, stationed alongside him in the king's court, are under threat of being thrown into a furnace for not worshipping the king's gods. Their faith was likely strengthened by their memory of how God had rescued them when they first became part of King Nebuchadnezzar's court (Daniel, chapter 1). This confidence, less in outcomes, but in a sovereign God, can be found in our own rescue stories. ***What rescue stories of your own give you confidence of God's faithful presence? How have you learned to be strengthened less by outcomes and more by God's presence?***

Our faith in God's presence is always strengthened by community. In *The Boys in the Boat*, a lonely young man who trusts no one finds community through teamwork with his rowing teammates. After Daniel's three friends are thrown into the furnace for disobedience, King Nebuchadnezzar is astonished at the sight of not three, but four figures emerging unharmed. An immediate faith was incited within the king upon witnessing this angel of God appearing alongside them. God did not rescue them from the furnace, but rather found them within it. ***How has God come to you through the presence of community? Reflect on this Bonhoeffer quote: "The Christ in his own heart is weaker than the Christ in the word of his brother; his own heart is uncertain, his brother's is sure."***

If we are to live with hope and faith, it is essential to form our lives around community. Community helps us find our way back to the One who will always be faithful. ***Who has helped you have "faith in the furnace" this year? Who are the people with whom you become "more alive?" How might you attend to this need for genuine community?***

Heavenly Father, thank you for the gift of community in each of our lives. Reveal to us new ways to love and serve one another, as we together validate our belovedness in your eyes. Draw us closer to one another this week. Amen