

10/18/20 Message

Part of Anything Goes

October 17, 2020

Message: Culture's Greatest Culprit

Series: Anything Goes

Recap: We're in the 4th message in our **Anything Goes** series which is taken from the Old Testament book of Daniel. As a review, Babylon (King Nebuchadnezzar) attacked Judah, and took control of Jerusalem. Nebuchadnezzar stole precious items from the Temple of God in Jerusalem. He had his chief of staff seek and find several young men (intelligent, good looking, strong) to be trained to work in royal service for the king. Daniel was one of those men. They spent three years training, learning the Babylonian language and literature, and were given new Babylonian names. In essence, Nebuchadnezzar was trying to change their identity. In the Babylonian (anything goes) culture, Daniel resisted the King's instructions, specifically when those instructions went against the Godly lifestyle Daniel lived.

Message 1

Culture's Greatest Impact (Confused Identities)

- What you believe is what you live out

Message 2

Culture's Greatest Test (Who or What You Worship)

- Worship is your response to what matters most

Message 3

Culture's Greatest Question (Who is in Charge of Me)

- Live your life caring about what God thinks

Culture's Greatest Culprit

- UNFOCUSED and BUSY lives

A weakness of all human beings is trying to do too many things at once. That scatters effort and destroys

direction. It makes for haste, and haste makes waste.

So, we do things all the wrong ways possible before we come to the right one. Then we think it is the best way because it works, and it was the only way left that we could see. Every now and then I wake up in the morning headed toward that finality, with a dozen things I want to do. I know I can't do them all at once.

(When asked what he did about it, Ford replied)

I go outside and run around the house. While I'm running off the excess energy that wants to do too much, my mind clears, and I see what can be done and should be done first. —*Henry Ford*

- It's easy to detach from life when you are CONSUMED

Question: If you had 30 days to live, how would that impact your lifestyle, your relationships, and your daily choices?

Daniel's World Was Changing

Daniel's steadfast faith changed Nebuchadnezzar from the inside out, so much the king turned his life over to God. Fast forward – it's a new day in Babylon. Nebuchadnezzar's son Belshazzar is now king. He was more like Nebuchadnezzar before Nebuchadnezzar met Daniel, a worldly man, focused more on success than being Godly. He had many idols (the sin of idolatry is worshiping anything or anyone instead of God).

Belshazzar ordered his servants to bring the gold cups that were stolen from Jerusalem's Temple so they could drink from them. Daniel 5:4 tells us they drank and praised idols made of gold, silver, bronze, iron, wood, and stone.

Daniel 5:5-7 (NLT)

5 Suddenly, they saw the fingers of a human hand writing on the plaster wall of the king's palace, near the lampstand. The king himself saw the hand as it wrote,

6 and his face turned pale with fright. His knees knocked together in fear and his legs gave way beneath him.

7 The king shouted for the enchanters, astrologers, and fortune-tellers to be brought before him. He said to these wise men of Babylon,

“Whoever can read this writing and tell me what it means will be dressed in purple robes of royal honor and will have a gold chain placed around his neck. He will become the third highest ruler in the kingdom!”

(This passage is where the secular idiom/saying “the writing was on the wall” comes from)

The hand appeared and wrote four words on the wall:

- MENE (repeated for emphasis) MENE
- TEKEL
- PARSIN

The king asked the wise men to tell him what it meant, but they couldn't. Belshazzar's mother stepped in and told the king:

Daniel 5:11-12 (NLT)

11 There is a man in your kingdom who has within him the spirit of the holy gods. During Nebuchadnezzar's reign, this man was found to have insight, understanding, and wisdom like that of the gods. Your predecessor, the king—your predecessor King Nebuchadnezzar—made him chief over all the magicians, enchanters, astrologers, and fortune-tellers of Babylon.

12 This man Daniel, whom the king named Belteshazzar, has exceptional ability and is filled with divine knowledge and understanding. He can interpret dreams, explain riddles, and solve difficult problems. Call for Daniel, and he will tell you what the writing means.”

In Daniel 5:16 the king offered Daniel a purple robe, gold necklace, and promote him to the third highest ruler in the kingdom if he could tell him the meaning of the four words.

Daniel 5:17 (NLT)

Daniel answered the king, “Keep your gifts or give them to someone else, but I will tell you what the writing means.

Daniel shares the story of how King Nebuchadnezzar had a dream revealing his selfishness and pride, and he lost his kingdom, spending seven years as a mad/crazy man (where he ate grass like a cow, lived among the donkeys, was isolated from humanity and alone). Daniel

told Belshazzar – you know all this, yet you have repeated his mistakes, worshipping idols succumbing to pride. Daniel 5:23, “...you have not honored the God who gives you breath of life and controls your destiny.”

Daniel Reveals the Meaning of the Words

- Mene = numbered (God has numbered the days of your reign and has brought it to an end)
- Tekel = weighed (You have been weighed on the balances and have not measured up)
- Parsin = divided (Your kingdom has been divided and given to the Medes and the Persians)

One writer said:

- The two main culprits in an unfocused and busy life are DECEPTION and DISTRACTION

- Belshazzar’s greatest sin was a WASTED LIFE

Daniel 5:30 (NLT)

That very night Belshazzar, the Babylonian king, was killed.

If we lived with the truth that we have a finite amount of time, a limited number of days, then we would make better decisions. Anytime you think you have more of something than you need, you tend to waste it. It’s just the logic of human nature. If you have plenty of food in your pantry, cupboard, and fridge, it’s hard to imagine being hungry. If there’s lots of money in your bank account, then you feel you’ll always have enough. But when you’re down to your last box of crackers or last dollar, suddenly these things become precious. You no longer take them for granted. When we recognize our limitations, we tend to make the most of our lives.

—Chris Hodges

How this Impacts You

Your days are numbered. Here are some things you can do (in an anything goes culture) to focus and slow down, to not let your

unfocused and busy life pull you away from God:

- Live each day with a sense of PURPOSE and URGENCY
Today might actually be your last day on earth.
- Put first things FIRST
Get your priorities in order and live them out.
God Family Church Work Recreation Everything Else
- Regularly take an INVENTORY
Look at what you have and what you need.
Psalm 39:4-5 (NLT)
4 “LORD, remind me how brief my time on earth will be. Remind me that my days are numbered— how fleeting my life is.
5 You have made my life no longer than the width of my hand. My entire lifetime is just a moment to you; at best, each of us is but a breath.”
- Make tough DECISIONS
Figure out what in life you could and should do without (elimination).
- Focus on things that will LAST
Your significance isn't in stuff or status, it's in who He is and why He created you.

(If the word that describes your life is hectic, give up hectic for holy)

- Everyone needs SABBATH REST
Not sleep but a real change of pace/change of direction that rests our bodies, replenishes our souls, and refocuses our spirits.

Live a Godly Life in an Anything Goes Culture

Remember -

- Your days are numbered
- Your life will be weighed
- Your heart will be distracted and divided

If King Belshazzar's greatest sin was a wasted life, what about yours?

Don't waste your life living for idols.

You can choose -

- A different lifestyle
- Healthier relationships
- Better choices

You are terminal - what do you need to change today?