

5th Wednesday Lent 2003

Reading I

[Daniel 3:14-20, 91-92, 95](#)

King Nebuchadnezzar said:
"Is it true, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego,
that you will not serve my god,
or worship the golden statue that I set up?
Be ready now to fall down and worship the statue I had made,
whenever you hear the sound of the trumpet,
flute, lyre, harp, psaltery, bagpipe,
and all the other musical instruments;
otherwise, you shall be instantly cast into the white-hot furnace;
and who is the God who can deliver you out of my hands?"
Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego answered King Nebuchadnezzar,
"There is no need for us to defend ourselves before you
in this matter.
If our God, whom we serve,
can save us from the white-hot furnace
and from your hands, O king, may he save us!
But even if he will not, know, O king,
that we will not serve your god
or worship the golden statue that you set up."

King Nebuchadnezzar's face became livid with utter rage
against Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego.
He ordered the furnace to be heated seven times more than usual
and had some of the strongest men in his army
bind Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego
and cast them into the white-hot furnace.

Nebuchadnezzar rose in haste and asked his nobles,
"Did we not cast three men bound into the fire?"
"Assuredly, O king," they answered.
"But," he replied, "I see four men unfettered and unhurt,
walking in the fire, and the fourth looks like a son of God."
Nebuchadnezzar exclaimed,
"Blessed be the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego,
who sent his angel to deliver the servants who trusted in him;
they disobeyed the royal command and yielded their bodies
rather than serve or worship any god
except their own God."

Gospel

[John 8:31-42](#)

Jesus said to those Jews who believed in him,
"If you remain in my word, you will truly be my disciples,
and you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free."
They answered him, "We are descendants of Abraham
and have never been enslaved to anyone.
How can you say, 'You will become free?'"
Jesus answered them, "Amen, amen, I say to you,
everyone who commits sin is a slave of sin.
A slave does not remain in a household forever,
but a son always remains.
So if the Son frees you, then you will truly be free.
I know that you are descendants of Abraham.
But you are trying to kill me,
because my word has no room among you.
I tell you what I have seen in the Father's presence;
then do what you have heard from the Father."

They answered and said to him, "Our father is Abraham."
Jesus said to them, "If you were Abraham's children,
you would be doing the works of Abraham.
But now you are trying to kill me,
a man who has told you the truth that I heard from God;
Abraham did not do this.
You are doing the works of your father!"
So they said to him, "We were not born of fornication.
We have one Father, God."
Jesus said to them, "If God were your Father, you would love
me,
for I came from God and am here;
I did not come on my own, but he sent me."

The freedom that comes from faith.
Shadrach, Meshach & Abednego are
free from fear. They don't
presuppose on what God will do.
They only know they are called to be
faithful. The rest is up to God.

We all experience the fear of the
unknown. We may even sacrifice
our ethics for the seemingly secure
only to find more insecurity. But
when we are steadfast in our faith
,we can count on one that looks like
a son of God to be there with us in
the difficulty.

This freedom in faith is what Jesus is
offering the Jews who believed in
him. But they found their security in
being descendants of Abraham.
They felt their blood relationship was
their salvation, their freedom. Their
security was in their status. What
room was in their hearts for Christ's
freeing message?

It's all pretty sad and ironic. It was
because of Abraham's faith that his
people were chosen to be God's
people. These "believing" Jews put
more stock in their status as
descendants than in responding with
faith to Christ's word.

Is the God of Abraham your father?
Your father in faith? If so, you would
love the one who was sent by Him.

What do you cling to for security that
prevents you from experiencing the
freedom that comes with faith in
Christ?