

Sermon intro: We are currently working our way through the book of Daniel as our sermon series. This morning I'm sharing more a reflection than an exegetical sermon. Sometimes less is more. When I was wondering and talking to God about what to share today, I was drawn to God/Jesus being depicted as the stone in the dream that Babylonian King Nebuchadnezzar has and that Daniel helps interpret with God's help. For some context and to recap, the dream involves a statue and the different materials it's made of represents different empires, some of their characteristics and their rise and fall. In the midst of the empires and imperial powers and might, God is revealing that there is a greater kingdom (the Kingdom of God) and a greater forever king – Jesus. The king and kingdom appears as a rock but is revealed to be a mountain!

I'm going to read from Daniel 2:31-35 & 44-45. This is the word of God.

BIBLE: Daniel 2:31-35 & 44-45

³¹ 'Your Majesty looked, and there before you stood a large statue – an enormous, dazzling statue, awesome in appearance. ³² The head of the statue was made of pure gold, its chest and arms of silver, its belly and thighs of bronze, ³³ its legs of iron, its feet partly of iron and partly of baked clay. ³⁴ While you were watching, a rock was cut out, but not by human hands. It struck the statue on its feet of iron and clay and smashed them. ³⁵ Then the iron, the clay, the bronze, the silver and the gold were all broken to pieces and became like chaff on a threshing-floor in the summer. The wind swept them away without leaving a trace. But the rock that struck the statue became a huge mountain and filled the whole earth....

⁴⁴ 'In the time of those kings, the God of heaven will set up a kingdom that will never be destroyed, nor will it be left to another people. It will crush all those kingdoms and bring them to an end, but it will itself endure for ever. ⁴⁵ This is the meaning of the vision of the rock cut out of a mountain, but not by human hands – a rock that broke the iron, the bronze, the clay, the silver and the gold to pieces.

It's possible in this reading and hearing to think 'Help! God's like an out to get me or out to get us because he is like a crushing stone'. That is a misreading of the text, a misinterpretation of the dream and misunderstanding of the character and nature and heart of God. As we are told in John 3:16-17 **¹⁶ For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. ¹⁷ For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him.**

What is being communicated in and through this passage, the dream and the rock analogy is actually permanence, durability, steadfastness, and immutable goodness and faithfulness. This is worth pondering.

Here's a story that I think helps. It's an urban legend that's been retold in different ways over the years. It's full of wisdom. This is a commonly circulated version which the US Navy have publicly denied happened. This is how the tale goes...

This is the transcript of a radio conversation of a US naval ship with Canadian authorities off the coast of Newfoundland in October, 1995. Radio conversation released by the Chief of Naval Operations 10-10-95.

Radio Operator: Please divert your course 15 degrees to the North to avoid a collision.

Voice: Recommend you divert YOUR course 15 degrees to the South to avoid a collision.

Captain: This is the Captain of a US Navy ship. I say again, divert YOUR course.

Voice: No. I say again, you divert YOUR course.

Captian: This is the aircraft carrier USS *Lincoln*, the second largest ship in the United States' Atlantic fleet. We are accompanied by three destroyers, three cruisers and numerous support vessels. I demand that YOU change your course 15 degrees north, that's one five degrees north, or countermeasures will be undertaken to ensure the safety of this ship.

Voice: This is a lighthouse. Your call.

Which is going to come off worse? It's the mighty aircraft carrier! Because? Because the Lighthouse is on rock/solid ground. All ships even the mightiest need to yield to the rock.

Is the lighthouse out to 'get' and crush the captain and the ship? No.

The primary purpose of a lighthouse is not to crush but to...save.

But proud naval captains beware!

In a similar way, proud captains, generals, Nebuchadnezzar, Pharaoh, Caesar, empires and emperors who set themselves on a collision course with God, beware!

The thing with a lighthouse is that it's able to save and last and endure because of its rocky, weighty permanence, not in spite of it.

Same with God. That is what God/Jesus being depicted as the rock (that is actually a mountain) is communicating.

That the permanence, weightiness, glory, durability, holiness, goodness and steadfast and sureness of God is immutable and unassailable is most challenging to proud captains, generals, Nebuchadnezzar, Pharaoh, Caesar, empires and emperors and those of us with those tendencies.

That the permanence, weightiness, glory, durability, holiness, goodness and steadfast and sureness of God is immutable and unassailable is a wonderful thing to all who trust in Him. It's wonderful because that means God/Jesus' forgiveness and forever friendship and promise never to leave us or forsake us is binding, ultimate, enduring, and absolute even in the fog and storm when we can't see a way forward. His faithfulness is unchanging, his saving work on the cross is secure, his resurrection and resurrection power is an ultimate and eternal reality precisely because he is the Rock. Isaiah 26:4 **for the LORD GOD is an everlasting Rock**

That is what we affirm when we sing often with our young folk...

*In the silence You won't let go
In the questions Your truth will hold
Your great love will Lead me through
You are the peace in my troubled sea
You are the peace in my troubled sea*

*My Lighthouse, My Lighthouse
Shining in the darkness, I will follow You
My Lighthouse, My Lighthouse
I will trust the promise, You will carry me safe to shore*

That's what the Psalmist is getting at when he says...

Psalm 18:2 **The Lord is my rock, my fortress and my deliverer; my God is my rock, in whom I take refuge, my shield and the horn of my salvation, my stronghold.**

That's what Peter (who was renamed the rock by Jesus) is getting at then he quotes from the Prophet Isaiah (8:14, 28:16). In 1 Peter 2:4-8 Peter is pointing away from himself to the capital 'R' Rock Jesus.

⁴ As you come to him, the living Stone – rejected by humans but chosen by God and precious to him – ⁵ you also, like living stones, are being built into a spiritual house^[a] to be a holy priesthood, offering spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. ⁶ For in Scripture it says:

‘See, I lay a stone in Zion, a chosen and precious cornerstone, and the one who trusts in him will never be put to shame.’^[b]

Jesus is the Rock.

He holds fast...in the pain, confusion, overwhelm, bewilderment, anger.

Holy Spirit, help us to know that afresh.

Lord, we ask not just for head truth but heart truth and heart comfort and your

peace

and your presence.

Phil is going to play the melody of Faithful One. We’re just going to sit for a while and listen. After a while we will stand and sing the song together.

SONG 6: Faithful One MP 825

