

First Presbyterian Church of Santa Rosa
Sunday, August 30, 2020
Scripture Reading: Daniel 5:1-31 (Common English Bible)

King Belshazzar threw a huge party for a thousand of his princes, and he drank a lot of wine in front of them. ² While he was under the wine's influence, Belshazzar commanded that the gold and silver equipment that his father Nebuchadnezzar had taken from Jerusalem's temple be brought to the party so that the king, his princes, his consorts, and his secondary wives could drink wine out of them. ³ So the gold^a equipment that had been carried out of the temple, God's house in Jerusalem, was brought in; and the king, his princes, his consorts, and his secondary wives drank out of it. ⁴ They drank a lot of wine; and they praised the gods of gold, silver, bronze, iron, wood, and stone.

⁵ Right then the fingers of a human hand appeared and wrote on the plaster of the king's palace wall in the light of the lamp. The king saw the hand that wrote. ⁶ The king's mood changed immediately, and he was deeply disturbed. He felt weak, and his knees were shaking. ⁷ The king yelled, calling for the enchanters, the Chaldeans, and the diviners.

The king told these sages of Babylon: "Anyone who can read this writing and tell me its meaning will wear royal robes, will have a gold chain around his neck, and will rule the kingdom as third in command."

⁸ Then all the king's sages arrived, but they couldn't read the writing or interpret it for the king. ⁹ At that point King Belshazzar was really frightened. All the color drained from his face, and his princes were also very worried.

¹⁰ Upon hearing the commotion coming from the king and his princes, the queen entered the banqueting hall and declared, "Long live the king! Don't be so disturbed. Don't be so frightened. ¹¹ There is a man in your kingdom who has the breath^b of holy gods in him! When your father was alive, this man was shown to possess illumination, insight, and wisdom like the very wisdom of the gods.^c Your father King Nebuchadnezzar appointed this man as chief over the dream interpreters, enchanters, Chaldeans, and diviners. Yes, your father did this ¹² because this man—Daniel, the one the king named Belteshazzar—possesses an extraordinary spirit, knowledge, and insight into the meaning of dreams. He can explain ambiguities and resolve mysteries. Now in light of all that, summon Daniel! He will explain the meaning of this thing."

¹³ So Daniel was brought before the king. The king said to him, "So you are Daniel, the Daniel from the exiles that my father the king brought from Judah? ¹⁴ I have heard that the breath of the gods is in you and that you possess illumination, insight, and

extraordinary wisdom. ¹⁵ Now, the sages and the dream interpreters were brought before me to read this writing and interpret it for me, but they couldn't explain its meaning. ¹⁶ But I've heard that you can explain meanings and solve mysteries. So if you can read this writing and interpret it for me, you will wear royal robes, have a gold chain around your neck, and will rule the kingdom as third in command."

¹⁷ Daniel answered the king: "Keep your gifts. Give the rewards to someone else. But I will still read the writing to the king and interpret it for him. ¹⁸ Listen, Your Majesty: The Most High God gave kingship, power, glory, and majesty to your father Nebuchadnezzar. ¹⁹ Because of the power God gave Nebuchadnezzar, all peoples, nations, and languages were terrified of him. He did whatever he wanted, whenever he wanted: killing or sparing, exalting or humbling. ²⁰ But when he became arrogant, acting in stubborn pride, he was pulled off his royal throne and the glory was taken from him. ²¹ He was driven away from other humans, and his mind became like an animal's. He lived with wild donkeys, he ate grass like cattle, and dew from heaven washed his body until he realized that the Most High God dominates human kingship and sets over it anyone he wants.

²² "But you who are his son, Belshazzar, you haven't submitted, even though you've known all this. ²³ Instead, you've set yourself up against the Lord of heaven! The equipment of God's house was brought to you; and you, your princes, your consorts, and your secondary wives drank wine out of it, all the while praising the gods of silver, gold, bronze, iron, wood, and stone—gods who can't see, hear, or know anything. But you didn't glorify the true God who holds your very breath in his hand and who owns every road you take.

²⁴ "That's why this hand was sent from God and why this message was written down. ²⁵ This is what was written down:

MENE, MENE, TEKEL, and PARSIN

²⁶ "This is the meaning of the word MENE: God has numbered[□] the days of your rule. It's over! ²⁷ TEKEL means that you've been weighed[□] on the scales, and you don't measure up. ²⁸ PERES[□] means your kingship is divided[□] and given to the Medes and the Persians."[□]

²⁹ Then Belshazzar commanded that Daniel be dressed in a purple robe, have a gold chain around his neck, and be officially appointed as third in command in the kingdom.

³⁰ That very same night, Belshazzar the Chaldean king was killed. ³¹ Darius the Mede received the kingdom at the age of 62.

Hear what the Spirit is saying to the church. Thanks be to God. Amen.