

WEEKLY DEVOTION – Tuesday, September 13, 2022
Pastor Bruce Kischnick, Grace Lutheran Church, New Albany, IN

“Forget Not the Name of Thy God”

READING: Daniel 1:3-7, 2:44 – Then the king ordered Ashpenaz, chief of his court officials, to bring in some of the Israelites from the royal family and the nobility – young men without any physical defect, handsome, showing aptitude for every kind of learning, well informed, quick to understand, and qualified to serve in the king’s palace. He was to teach them the language and literature of the Babylonians. The king assigned them a daily amount of food and wine from the king’s table. They were to be trained for three years, and after that they were to enter the king’s service. Among these were some from Judah: Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah. The chief official gave them new names: to Daniel, the name Belteshazzar; to Hananiah, Shadrach; to Mishael, Meshach; and to Azariah, Abednego....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 forever.

One of the most irritating acts of Congress in the last 20 years is H.I.P.A. – the “Hospital Identity Protection Act” (or something like that). I personally despise it. It’s supposed to protect people from unwarranted or unwanted visitors while they are in the hospital. It’s supposed to keep solicitors like lawyers, baby-daddies, and assassins from finding your room number and ruining your peace and quiet. What it really does is cause pastors a big pain in the rump!

For example, Vickie Selent (of blessed memory) was hospitalized at Clark Memorial. I went to visit her, and not knowing her room number, I inquired at the front desk. When I asked for the room number of Vickie Selent, the volunteer stared into her computer screen and then said, “I’m sorry, but we don’t have a Vickie Selent in the hospital. Is it possible she has a different first name?” Then she looked upon me with a saintly smile and waited. I did not know whether Vickie had a different name, and the woman would give me no clue about it. Obviously she was rather new at her task and had probably been sternly warned that to give any information out regarding a person’s name was a Federal offense subject to fines and jail time. I had to get out my phone, call to Karen at the office, and she then informed me that Vickie’s given name was actually “Viola”! I had no idea. When I told the lady I was looking for Viola Selent, she smiled a victorious smile and told me her room number. I was bummed!

Two months later, Vickie’s husband Bud (of blessed memory) was hospitalized - different hospital, same predicament. I approached the information desk and asked for the room number of Bud Selent. The lady stared into her screen, then announced she had no Bud Selent in the hospital. Did he perhaps have a different name? At once I remembered that Bud was his nickname but could not for the life of me remember what his given name was. Again I got out my phone, called Karen, and she reminded me that his given name was “Horst”. And again as soon as I asked for the room number of “Horst”, a victorious smile was flashed, and the room number given. What a joke! They could see I wasn’t there to solicit, assassinate, or harass either of those folks. They could see my collar and the Bible in my hand but would not give me a clue as to the name I needed. Thankfully, many of the volunteers who have been at it for a while will say something like, “Is it possible his given name is ‘Horst’?” Burns me every time.

I’ve always been amused by our reading for today. The Jews have been carried off into exile. The Babylonian king decides to make use of the most able among them – young, strong, smart. He assigns them to the Chief Steward for training. The first thing the man does is give them all new names. This may have been because the Steward could not pronounce the Hebrew names. May also have been because he wanted them to identify not with their past but with their future service to the king. They were going to

learn a new language, culture, and heritage. So he gave them new Babylonian names hoping to assimilate them completely.

However, to the credit of Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah, they did not forget their God. On the contrary, the first thing they do is turn down the food from the king's pantry in order to remain kosher. They continue to pray to and worship *YHWH* even when it means death to do so. They did not forget the name of their God, and by doing so they brought glory and honor to the God of the Jews in the pagan court and in the history of Israel. While they were assigned new names, they did not forget who they were nor did they forget *whose* they were.

We do well to honor those men. In the face of changing times, a pagan culture, penalties and danger for maintaining their religion, they did not forget the name of their God, nor did they shrink from honoring his name by word and deed. We will be tempted to hide our faith and let the name of Jesus become just a curse word and a punch line to bad jokes. Our children and grandchildren even more. May we and they have the courage and the conviction to do as Daniel and his friends did. "Remember the name of the Lord, your God!"

PRAYER:

ANNOUNCEMENT(S):

- 1) I'll be out-of-town this coming weekend. My niece, Michelle is getting married. Mom and Dad had 10 grandchildren. I have performed the marriages for nine of them. Michelle is the youngest and last of them. It will be good to see the family. Be nice to Pastor Woods in my absence!