Daniel 6:10-12, 16-23
Reformation 2017; November 5 & 6, 2017

All he had to do was to say *"no."* Nobody would have known the difference. No one could've looked into his heart. After all, everyone would have realized that he was just saying the word *"no"* to save himself. What would've been the harm? Certainly, God would have understood why he would have to lie this time. There was still work to be done. After all, it would've been only 30 days. They were just words. Inside of his heart, he still believed God. All he had to do was to say *"no, I'm not going to pray out in the open for a month*."

Yet, Daniel was willing to risk it all. He was ready to die on account of his faith. He was not going to change a thing. Why would an 80 year old man be willing to have his limb ripped off by hungry lions? Why was he willing to die a horrible death in a lion's den? He knew the risk. He knew what could happen. Yet, he did it anyway. Our text tells us: **"Now when Daniel learned that the decree had been published, he went home to his upstairs room where the windows opened toward Jerusalem. Three times a day he got down on his knees and prayed, giving thanks to his God, just as he had done before."** He knew that his God would not have abandoned him. He was going to change nothing.

Why did others hate Daniel so much? Would it surprise you that politics would play a part? For most of his life, Daniel was a civil servant. He had grown up in Jerusalem. But when the Babylonians had conquered Jerusalem, Daniel was one of the people of a group of the bright young men who were deported to Babylon. King Nebuchadnezzar recognized Daniel's talents. So, Daniel was groomed to be a civil servant in the kingdom of Babylon. Somehow Daniel found a way to live faithfully to his God while serving a foreign government. Although he was surrounded by the corruption of the Babylonian court, he remained faithful to his God.

When the Medes and Persians conquered the Babylonians, the new King recognized Daniel's talents, and kept him as one of the highest government officials. We can only guess how much the native people in these two governments had grown to hate Daniel. Yet, Daniel was a man of integrity. He was honest. He was loyal. He was advancing up much faster than anyone else. They were jealous of him. So, they began to look to find some "dirt" about Daniel. They couldn't find any, so they made some. They **"all agreed that the king should issue an edict and enforce the decree that anyone who prays to any god or human being during the next thirty days, except to you, Your Majesty, shall be thrown into the lions' den. Now, Your Majesty, issue the decree and put it in writing so that it cannot be altered—in accordance with the law of the Medes and Persians, which cannot be repealed." So King Darius put the decree in writing."**

So, Daniel was faced with 3 choices. 1. Pray to Darius; 2. Close the windows and pray to God in private; or 3. Open the windows and change nothing. So, which one did Daniel choose – number three. Nothing had changed for Daniel. Daniel realized that God's love and faithfulness didn't change. So, why should he? Saying "no" to God was not an option. He was willing to die for his God if needed.

Fast forward to five hundred years before today -- why would a simple monk in Germany be willing to risk it all for God? For the same reasons of Daniel. Around the year 1500, things had gotten really bad in the Christian Church. The Gospel had been lost. God had been changed into this God that could only be feared. A young monk named Martin Luther began to search the Scriptures to find some peace in God's Word. There he found it. It had been there all the time: **"all are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus."** (Rom. 3:24) Those words were a game changer. Suddenly, Martin Luther realized that the peace he was so desperately looking for was not found in himself but in the grace, the love, of God. When he saw that truth in God's Word, how could he say *"no"* to God? Martin Luther placed his trust in God. He was willing to die for his God if needed.

How about you? What are willing to die for? Would you open the windows and pray? Or would you hide inside a room? Those are tough questions. The answer to those questions is really what the Reformation is all about. We are not here today to worship a man whose name was Martin Luther. We are not here to worship a man named Daniel. We are here to worship a God who promises us that he will always rescue us. Daniel was willing to risk having his 80 some year old body torn apart by starving lions. He trusted that his God would rescue him. If God wanted him to live, the mouths of the lions would be closed. If God wanted him to be torn apart, he would be rescued from this world and join God in heaven. If God would rescue Luther from his enemies, he would be able to continue to proclaim the Gospel message. If

not, he would be taken home to heaven. What about you? Are you willing to die for your God and all the promises that he gives you? Or are you sometimes like me, who find it much easier to keep your mouth closed sometimes and not share that message of Jesus? Or, do you doubt that God can really take care of you? What's really worth dying for?

You know Jesus had to consider that question as well. What was worth coming to this earth and suffer and die a horrible death for people who often say "no" to God? The answer – YOU. He was willing to die for YOU. You see, when you think in those terms, then you see the love of God. God was willing to risk it all to remove the barrier of sin between us and God. This past summer, when we were once again in Glacier National Park, we went on a 10 mile hike one day. Along the trail, there were very fresh signs that there had bears on that path that day. So, you kept your eyes open for bear. You would certainly not want to get between a mama bear and her cubs. You would lose, if you did.

The Bible reminds us that nothing can get in the way of our God and the child of God. Satan would be torn to pieces on the cross on Calvary. Satan would lose, and Jesus would win. As Daniel was being thrown into the Lion's Den, King Darius said to Daniel: **"May your God, whom you serve continually, rescue you!"** You know the result. Daniel's response the next day: **"God sent his angel, and he shut the mouths of the lions."** 500 years ago, God used a man to once again bring his Gospel back to the Church. People once again could see that Jesus was the answer to rescue them from the guilt of sin. God has rescued you. We know that even though the Devil is like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour, we have the God of Grace who will close the mouths of the Lion as he closed the mouths of the lions for Daniel.

That's why, my friends, the words of Luther found in your service folder are so comforting: ***"Faith is a living, daring confidence in God's grace, so sure and certain that a man could stake his life on it a thousand times."*** That the faith we have in the God of all Grace. That's the difference that God makes in our live. That's why we are here celebrating the Reformation. Amen.