

## **12-20-20 Fourth Sunday in Advent**

Sermon- Eternal Light

Scripture- Daniel 12:1-3, Luke 1:46b-55, CTW Ps 23

Hymns- TBD with Dave Shover

Theme- Today we remember that we are also to look forward the second coming of the Messiah, when we will be raised in glory to live in His presence and shine like stars forever. Have you thought about that lately?

### **I. Introduction: The Two Minute Drill**

#### **A. A Test of your football savvy. How would you coach yourself?**

A close NFL football game is exciting to watch, especially right around something called The two-minute warning. The two-minute warning goes back to the NFL's earliest days when the referee's wristwatch was the official game clock.

When two minutes remained in the game, he would stop the clock and let both teams know exactly how much time remained.

Starting in the 1960s, though, the NFL made the stadium's clock the official game clock. But the league didn't want to do away with the two-minute warning because it gave TV and radio networks more opportunities to sell commercials.

Smart coaches came up with something new...called it the "Two Minute Drill", where every player had a sense of urgency, they all had assignments and on good days, the plan would be perfectly executed and result in a score and a win!

On other days, things didn't work so well!

**B. The words of Daniel 12:1-3 have a lot in common with the NFL's two-minute warning.** Daniel says that world history is almost over. There will be a time of distress.

What does it all mean? The clock is ticking down. The time is short. History is coming to an end!

Christ's first advent was about a cradle that led to a cross and a crown of thorns.

His Second Advent will also be about wearing a crown—a kingly, golden crown. Christ is coming as King of kings and Lord of lords!

## **II. The problem, however, is that too often we don't think about Christ's Second Coming in terms of a two-minute warning.**

**A. Remember Daniel?** Kidnapped with many of the finest young men from the tribe of Judah, and forced to march all the way to Babylon, so they could train to become servants to King Nebuchadnezzar.

With God's help, Daniel's life is a picture of how we can all triumph in faith if we believe in the plan which God has for all of His people.

Daniel would tell us to always be ready...to be "tuned into the will and plan of Almighty God.

**B. Instead, we believe, "There is no need to be all that urgent."** We trust the voices that say, "Christ won't return any time soon, if at all, so what's the big deal? Live and let live!"

Daniel, however, says that we're living in the last days. Christ's return is near.

### **Believers need a plan. We need a two-minute drill! What does that look like? Daniel lays it out.**

**Daniel 12:1** says "Your people will be delivered, everyone who is found written in the book". Yes, history is coming to an end. Yes, Christ will return to judge both the living and the dead. Yes, all will appear before God's judgment seat. But this doesn't mean we need to panic.

### **III. It's not time to freak out. We can rest in grace. By grace, through faith, our names are written in the book.**

**A. What book? Daniel refers to the book of life.** God records our names in his book when we are baptized and trust Christ as our Savior.

The book of Revelation calls this "the Lamb's book of life" **Revelation 21:27**. **Psalm 69:27-28** says that the wicked will have their names stricken from it. **Luke 10:20** says that names will be recorded in heaven. Paul in **Philippians 4:3** mentions that fellow workers of his have their names written in the Book of Life.

The Lamb, of the "Lamb's Book," of course, is Jesus. Jesus the Lamb, born in Bethlehem, shed his blood for us. He suffered and died and rose from the dead for us. Jesus, the Lamb, writes our names in his book with his blood.

**We rest in that amazing grace.**

**It's like being in a diving contest, doing a belly flop, and the judge gives you a ten!**

God gives us a ten, in spite of our constant belly flops. Our names are in the **Lamb's book of life!**

When Christ appears, we get a ten! Our sin is washed away by the blood of the Lamb.

**B. Daniel wants us to share this faith with others. Why should we do that?**

His plan continues. "Many of those who sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt" **Daniel 12:2**.

When history ends, people will be in one of two groups—"some to everlasting life and some to shame and everlasting contempt." People living in the dark desperately need the light!

That's why Daniel says, "And those who are wise shall shine like the brightness of the sky above; and those who turn many to righteousness, like the stars forever and ever" **Daniel 12:3.**

**IV. Look at all the light language! "They will shine like the brightness of the sky ... like the stars forever and ever."**

Picture a night sky that is very dark. Then, against the pitch-black sky, you see the moon and the stars. That's us!

**A. We all know people lost in the dark—especially this time of year.**

December often brings holiday stress, Christmas blues and larger than normal debt. The month normally presents a dizzying array of demands—shopping, baking, cleaning, traveling and entertaining. This year added to that, is the constant news and worry of the COVID crisis.

For many, the holidays are a painful reminder of what once was. This is especially true for those who have experienced a significant loss such as the death of a spouse, a break-up or a divorce.

What does Daniel say we are empowered to do for those who are in the dark and suffering so much? Daniel invites us to "bring many to the light of righteousness" **Daniel 12:3.**

What does that look like? Let's go back to our two-minute warning. During the last two-minutes of an NFL game, teams often employ a no-huddle offense. The time is short, so you can't waste it on unimportant stuff like a huddle!

**B. That's what Daniel envisions. Make the most of every opportunity. That means one thing—"bring many to the light of righteousness."**

Tell people that their belly flops may be painful, they may be ugly, they may be messy, but they are not the end!

Righteousness is God's declaration, "Not guilty!" By faith in Jesus, people get a ten, a perfect ten!

The best NFL quarterbacks—like Andrew Luck and Tom Brady—when faced with a two-minute drill, always exude a quiet confidence. Why is that? They have a plan.

**V. We have a plan, too. "Declare the praises of him who has called us out of darkness and into his marvelous light!" 1 Peter 2:9.**

Sorry, sports fans, this is where the analogy with **Daniel 12** and the NFL two-minute drill ends. In a close game in the NFL, teams don't know if they are going to win or lose.

**A. That's not us. That's not us one single bit! We know the outcome. There is no doubt about it!**

There was a duck hunter who was in the wide-open land of southwest Georgia. On the horizon he noticed a cloud of smoke and realized the terrible truth. A brush fire was coming his way. He lit a fire, burned some grass and then stood in the burned-over place. The fire came near but swept over him.

When Christ returns, the judgment of God will be like that fire. It will be powerful and cleansing. But if we stand in the burned-over place, we will be saved.

**B. And where, you ask, is the burned-over place? The burned-over place is at the foot of the cross.** There the wrath of God was poured out on Jesus. There we stand while we wait for Christ—at the foot of the cross, with our names written in the Lamb's book of life.

The time is short—very short! The end is coming, soon! Everything, and I mean everything, changes. Just ask any NFL player.

Better yet, just ask Daniel, who gives us God's amazing plan for last days! **"At that time your people shall be delivered,**

**everyone whose name shall be found written in the book shall be delivered!”**

And those who are wise shall shine like the brightness of the sky above; and those who turn many to righteousness, like the stars forever and ever!”

**So, what is your “Two Minute Drill?” Think about it!**

Amen? Let Us Pray...