

“Taking a Stand” Daniel 6

The story so far – **Lego Bible PowerPoint**

So with that, some more images to share with you - who recognises this photo?



A Tiananmen Square protester in 1989.

For those unaware, in 1989 there university students held democracy in Tiananmen Square in Beijing, China.

I remember seeing the footage when the tanks attempted to go one way around him, and so he would move in front of it. And then when it went the other way, he would do the same.

Do you know his name?

Actually, no one does to this day.

Okay the next one:



Where's she sitting? At the front of the bus where she refused to give up her seat for a white man.

Her name was Rosa Parks, an African- American woman who live in Montgomery, Alabama in the 1950's.

On December 1st, 1955, Rosa Parks did something she was not supposed to do.

She sat down at the front of the bus on one of the seats reserved for whites.

In a community known for its racism this was a dangerous, daring and provocative act.

After she had sat down at the front of the bus for a while, the police came aboard and said, "You know, if you continue to sit there, we're going to have to throw you in jail!"

Rosa Parks replied, "You may do that."

Legend has it that student came to Rosa and asked, "Why did you sit down at the front on the bus that day?"

And she said, "I sat down that day because I was tired."

She did not mean that her feet were tired. She meant that her soul was tired. She had had enough of playing by racist rules."

So here's my first question, ***what's the connection this morning between our reading and these people we've just talked about?***

Tell the person next to you.

Well, what did they all do?

All of them drew a line in the sand and *took a stand*.
On the street, on a bus and in the religious and political arena.

Previously Daniels friends had to take a stand in the face of a furnace.
Regardless of the outcome, there was line in the sand that they would not cross.

Here it's Daniel faced with decree that violates his core values – his faithfulness to God.

A clear command – actually what we would consider today to be binding legislation – that all prayers should be offered to King Darius alone for the next 30 days.

And as we read, it couldn't be repealed.

It had to be followed to the letter or face the lion's den.

So what does Daniel do?

He prays.

He takes a stand while his knees.

So my next question:

“Have you ever had to take a stand?

How did that feel?

Was it difficult, and if so, what was difficult about it?”

If you feel comfortable, tell the person next to you.

One of things that does come through is that there is a cost involved when people take a stand.

I mean Daniel knew the cost.

The cost was keeping the lions well feed.

And you there still a cost today.

In the communist Soviet Union Christians were repeatedly imprisoned for their faith in Christ. One story is told of an old woman whose crime was to host the bishop of the Orthodox Church for a night in Moscow.

She was thrown into prison but slept little. Every night her interrogators grilled her for the whereabouts of the bishop.

She replied, “I know, but I won't tell you.”

They shook their fists in the old woman's face, and she replied, “There is nothing you can do to me even if you cut me into pieces. After all, you are afraid of your bosses, and you are afraid of each other... but I am not afraid of anything. I would gladly be judged by God right this minute.”

Some years ago, every year for a couple of years, there was a certain 'parade' happened on Queen St at lunchtime. It's main feature was topless women on the back of motorcycles. Basically it was a porn parade. Thousands turned out to ogle and cheer this weird, sexual advertising.

However this crowd also booed, berated and verbally abused a small group of people at the front the procession.

Why? With signs and banners, the Body Beautiful Coalition were silently protesting the way pornography demeans and dehumanizes people.

The night before a friend of mine was to take a new pastoral position he had vivid dream.

In that dream he was speaking to the church and small fires began to break out all around the walls of the building. He thought to himself, "Yes! Fires of revival!"

These weren't fires of renewal but the fires of persecution. As the fires broke out he heard voice urging him to continue speaking the truth. Sure enough for the next nine months he found himself battling all sorts of issues and criticisms that eventually led to his resignation. All the while though he committed himself to speaking the truth.

When we hear stories like I wonder if we think, you know, people like that, they're made of sterner stuff to the rest of us.

We look at the story of Daniel and we can well, that was something else. But here's the thing: you know, every Biblical character has had, at some stage, to take a stand.

In other words, we are in good company.

And to follow Jesus means at some point your convictions will be put to the test, and you too will need to take a stand.

I just wonder if sometimes the stands we need to take today are in the more ordinary places of life.

And that can happen to anyone.

There was a newly ordained pastor who was called pastor church.

At this church pressure was placed on this young pastor by one person in particular to wear certain clothing, to dress a certain way, because that's what "everyone" wanted.

It wasn't him but this young pastor caved. He gave in.

But as the following week went on he thought, "Nope, this is stupid. I'm not being myself. This is actually wrong."

So I didn't dress that way again.

What it cost for a time was the ill will of another.

You may not remember but I read about a car salesman by the name of Don.

The typical idea for a car salesman is to sell each car for the highest price you can, and so sales people are rewarded for identifying and persuading the highest paying customers.

But Don had a different vision: the value of a good vehicle to each and every customer. But he discovered a problem: women and minorities were paying more for their cars than the more negotiation-savvy males. So Don thought to himself, "This isn't right. This is not good. I need to do something."

What he didn't do was take the streets or make scene at the chamber of commerce or business roundtable.

What Don decided was the best way to approach this was by setting a flat rate on all cars – no negotiating, no bargaining – to effect equal opportunity pricing for all.

So for me taking stand wasn't about being loud or taking to the streets, it was found in my own backyard.

Coming a non-Christian home the first stand I took was announcing my decision to peers and family that I had become a follower of Jesus. That meant for those who didn't understand, I had become "one of them".

I remember overhearing one of my friends say, "What's happened to Reece???"

That was followed by the call to take another stand... in the waters of baptism. A public declaration of what Jesus had for me and in me.

All along the way there were these other moments:
the first time I prayed out loud in a group (it was terrifying!);

the first time I talked with someone who was a self-defined non-Christian about my faith;
the first time when I believed I had a word from the Spirit for the church

Finding courage to stand

It's one thing though to know you need to make stand but where do you find the courage to do it?
If you like me, it's not easy.

I think Daniel is insightful. In verse 10 we read:

“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.*”

And Daniel didn't need to find his courage on the fly.
He didn't think, “Oh no! How am I going to do this???”
He already had in his life these points of connection, of communion, *with God*.
He already had in place, practices and places where connected to his God and in the places and practices God in turn gave the strength to stand.

The very first time I was asked to preach at Sunday evening service I said “Yes” ... and immediately regretted it.
In the week leading up to it, felt sick to the my stomach every day.
And even as I began to speak I was physically shaking.
I had to do everything I could in prayer and through the prayers of others to be able to take the platform some 30+ years ago.
But taking a stand in that moment changed my life forever.

So I wonder for us all this morning, is there a practice or a place or both, where you commune and connect with God that needs to be renewed?
Perhaps it was something you once did but not so much anymore.
Or is it the time for something new.

The table is one of those places Jesus has given to us to meet with him and receive his strength.