

## Daniel 12:1-3

We live in a society that is obsessed with **celebrities**. People love to find out what's happening in the lives of the **stars**. There are TV shows like TMZ, which are devoted **entirely** to celebrity news, and there are countless newspapers, magazines, blogs, and websites which **chronicle** the lives of the stars. For many people in our world today what's happening in **Hollywood** is more important than what's happening in **Washington DC**. Millions of people are entertained by watching "**Dancing with the Stars**," and celebrity **reality shows** are **everywhere**. Why are people so **attracted** to what's going on with these **stars**? I suppose **one** reason could be that they would like to **be stars themselves**. They imagine how **amazing** it would be to be so **popular** - to be able to buy a multi-million dollar **mansion**, along with anything **else** you might want. They think it would be **wonderful** to have millions of **fans**, and they would even put up with being **stalked** by the **paparazzi**. Many people in our world today would like to be **stars**. This morning, I'm going to let you know how **you** can be a star, because God's Word tells us that we **can** be stars. Of course, what the **Bible** is talking about is something very **different** from the kind of stars we see in **Hollywood**. In fact, it's something much **better**. We can be **Stars In God's Kingdom**. Let's turn to our text this morning to find out **how** we can be stars in God's kingdom, and what the **life** of a star is **like**.

We'll actually look at the third verse of our text first to find out **how** we can be **Stars In God's Kingdom**. The Lord said through the Prophet Daniel, "*Those who have **insight** will shine like the brightness of the sky.*" If we want to be **Stars In God's Kingdom**, we need to have **insight**. What does that **mean**? It means that we need to be **wise**. We know what the **world** says about wisdom. The world calls us wise if we have a lot of **intellect**, and we're able to put that intellect to good **use**. The **world** calls us wise when we make the kind of **decisions** which will enable us to get **ahead** in this life. But that's only a **part** of **true** wisdom. True wisdom in **God's** eyes doesn't begin with the **brain** - it begins with the **heart**. As the psalmist writes, "*The fear of the **LORD** is the **beginning** of wisdom, and the knowledge of the **Holy One** is **understanding**.*" To be truly **wise** means to fear and trust in the **LORD** and in His **Word**, and we **find** true wisdom in the Word of **God**, because that's where we find **Jesus**. We can't be truly **wise** unless we have **faith** in **Jesus**.

Daniel showed he **had** that kind of **wisdom** and **insight** in his life. It's certainly **true** that at the time of our text Daniel was a very bright and intelligent young man. In fact, he had been blessed with so **much** earthly wisdom and insight,

that he was able to earn himself a high-ranking position in the **Babylonian** government. But **that didn't** make him a star in **God's** kingdom. Daniel's **true wisdom** and path to **stardom** was the wisdom he received by reading and studying the **Scriptures** every day. Do you remember how Daniel got into **trouble** with the king of the Medes and Persians? It was because he was **praying** to the one true God. The wisdom and insight which he had as a **believer** in the one true God didn't earn him **earthly** fame in this instance. Instead, it earned him a place in a den of **lions**. But Daniel was ok with that, because Daniel wasn't **looking** for **earthly** fame. He put his trust in the **LORD**, and was content to be a **Star In God's Kingdom**.

Our God is **still** in the business of making **stars** day after day. He does this when He works **faith** in the hearts of His children through His Word and Sacraments. That's where we find **real** wisdom, and that's **how** we become **stars**. All too often, we try to become stars by winning the approval of **others**, or by doing whatever we can to **get ahead** in **this** life. It's so **easy** for us to lose sight of the fact that we already **are** stars - **Stars In God's Kingdom**, because through God's Word and Sacraments we have something that is far **greater** than **this** world's praise. We have a **Savior** who **loves** us, and who **died** for us. The Bible has been the **tool** which God has used to make stars for **thousands** of years, and He did it for **us** as well. We realize that we have **everything** we need in our Savior Jesus Christ, and for that reason, like **Daniel**, we can be **content**. We don't need to strive to be stars in **this** world, because we are already **Stars In God's Kingdom**.

But let's take that a step **farther**. In Hollywood, there are **stars**, and there are **superstars**. There are the **stars** who make a **good** living on TV or in the movies, and there are the **superstars** who won't even think about **doing** a movie or TV series for less than **\$20 million**. God's kingdom **also** has superstars, but they aren't judged on the basis of who's the most **popular** at the moment, or who's the best **looking**, or who can bring the biggest **crowds** into the movie theaters. Daniel describes **God's** superstars in **this** way, "*Those who lead many to righteousness will shine like stars for ever and ever.*" Leading many to **righteousness** is what **God** prizes most in His kingdom. How are we able to **do** that? We can lead others to righteousness when we bring them the light of the **Gospel**, so they too can become **Stars In God's Kingdom**.

When Daniel lived as one of God's stars, and wasn't afraid to **stand up** for what he believed in, **others** took notice. Do you remember what the king wrote to all the people after he saw that Daniel's God had **spared** his life in the lions' den?

This pagan king wrote, *“I give this command throughout my royal dominion: People should continually tremble and be afraid before the **God of Daniel**, because he is the **living** God, who endures **forever**. His kingdom will **not** be **destroyed**, and his **dominion** is **eternal**.”* Daniel was one of God’s **superstars**. It’s very **doubtful** that we will ever be put in the same **position** as Daniel was, but we can certainly **live our lives** like Daniel did - in a **humble** and **God-pleasing** manner - sharing with **others** the wisdom and insight with which we have been **blessed** through God’s Word.

God’s Word has made us **Stars In God’s Kingdom**, but what does that actually **mean** for our lives? What is the life of one of God’s stars **like**? When we think of the life of a **Hollywood** star, we think of a life of **luxury**. But the life of a **Star In God’s Kingdom** is quite **different**. While we are here on this earth, we can expect **pain** and **persecution** as a result of being God’s stars. The final chapters of the Book of Daniel speak about life in the **end times**. Daniel explains that **evil forces** will rise up against God’s people, and they will **attack** God’s Word. Those prophecies are being **fulfilled** all around us, and they become more and more **obvious** every day. There are **many** enemies of the one true **God** and His **people**, and those numbers are **growing** by leaps and bounds. The persecution we face is becoming more **severe** and more **frequent**, and God’s Word tells us that things aren’t going to get any **better** here on the **earth** for us. In fact, the Bible speaks of the days right before the end of the world as being **horrible** days for God’s people. There is a reference to that period of time in the **first** verse of our text where Daniel wrote. *“There will be a time of **distress** that has not **happened** from the first time that there was a nation until that time.”* And the Apostle Paul **elaborated** on those words when he wrote to Timothy, *“In the last days there will be **terrible** times. For people will be lovers of **themselves**, lovers of **money**, boastful, arrogant, blasphemous, **disobedient** to their parents, **ungrateful**, **unholy**, **unloving**, not able to **reconcile** with others, slanderous, without **self-control**, savage, haters of what is **good**, treacherous, reckless, puffed up with **conceit**, lovers of **pleasure** rather than lovers of God, holding to an outward **form** of godliness but denying its **power** ... Indeed, everyone who wants to live a **godly** life in Christ Jesus **will be persecuted**, while **evil** people and **impostors** will go from **bad** to **worse**, **deceiving** and **being** deceived.”*

When we look at the world in **those** terms, the life of a **Star In God’s Kingdom** doesn’t seem to be all that **attractive**. But we have to remember the **rest** of what Daniel says here. Yes, there will be **difficult** times for us - times of harsh **opposition** - but we also have **help** on our side. The very first words of our text **tell**

us about the help which is ours through the great Archangel **Michael**. Daniel wrote, “*At that time, **Michael**, the great prince who stands over your people, will arise ... At that time your people will be **delivered**, everyone who is found written in the book.*” We see that prophecy coming true **every day**. God **daily** delivers us from evil as He **strengthens, comforts** and **guides** us with His Word. But even more than **that**, we know that God will deliver us from **all evil** on the great Day of Judgment. Again, we turn to the words of **Daniel’s** prophecy, “*Many who are sleeping in the dusty ground will **awake**, some to everlasting **life**, and some to **shame**, to everlasting **contempt**.*” On Judgment Day the Lord Jesus Himself will make it **clear** to everyone who the **stars** are. They are the ones who awake to everlasting **life** - the ones who put their **trust** in the **Lord** while they were here on the earth. On that day, you and I will experience the unending **joy** of life as of one of God’s **stars**, as we begin our life in **heaven**, basking in the light of our Savior’s glory for all eternity.

I guess it could be fun to **daydream** about what it would be like to be a Hollywood star - having all the **fame** and **fortune**, and the **luxuries** that go along with having **celebrity** status. But as **Christians**, we don’t **have** to daydream in order to know what it feels like to be a **star**. We are already **Stars In God’s Kingdom** through our Savior Jesus Christ, and that’s far **better** than any **earthly** celebrity status could offer. Let’s not forget what God has **done** for us. Jesus laid down His perfect **life**, so we could **shine** with Him forever in heaven. So, let’s **live** like the stars that we **are**, constantly seeking to know Jesus **better** through His Word, and looking for opportunities to **share** that Word with others. Amen.