

**Sunday, November 14, 2021 – Second to Last Sunday of the Church Year**  
**“Out of the Dust”**

Daniel 12: 1-3

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Adapted from CPR 19.4

Grace, mercy and peace to you from God our Father and from our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, Amen.

That Daniel text reminds me a lot of the first chapters of the Bible. Reference to the light in the heavens, the stars in the sky, the dirt. Daniel reminds us of the very beginning of the story of creation to tell us about what is yet to come.

“In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth” (Gen 1:1). Genesis 2 tells us that “the LORD God formed the man of dust from the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living creature” (2:7), a perfect creature. God breathes life into him and bestows his image upon him. It was a beautiful act of love that united God and man together in a perfect relationship. It was very good.

It was too good to last. Man and woman disobey God’s command not to eat of the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. Adam and Eve are convinced by Satan that God is holding something back from them. There are other blessings, more information that God has reserved for himself, and man is being cut out of something good. “Did God actually say . . . ?” (3:1). “You will not surely die . . .” (3:4). Eve was convinced, and Adam along with her, that there was something desirable that God was not sharing—so they took it—so they ate. And their eyes were opened wide—in terror.

Now they knew, now they understood, but what they learned was not the knowledge they sought. They learned about death, and they would know the curse. They learned that the image of God has been forfeited and the breath of life is fleeting. They will suffer death; they will return to the dust from which they came. “You are dust, and to dust you shall return” (3:19). The tragedy rivals any tragedy that is yet to come in their young world. Nothing could be worse, nothing could be more devastating,

nothing could be more final, for they have lost the image of God and destroyed their relationship with him—they will die. “You are dust, and to dust you shall return.”

But God is gracious, and God is merciful, and God is love, and because of who he is, he promises. God promises to raise up from the dust once again. God promises to restore life and restore the image. God promises that a champion, a Messiah, will be delivered to mankind through the woman’s seed. God promises that this Messiah will do battle with the evil one and Satan will be condemned to the dust of defeat. God promises—and the great battle begins.

Welcome to the war—the pain and suffering of this battle take their toll on us. Every living being since the days of Adam and Eve has toiled with the reality of sin and the devastation it brings. Every day we feel the knife of mortality as it cuts through our body with sickness and disease. Every day we experience the gnawing of sin as it tears at our hearts and souls. Every day we feel the darkness as it chokes us off from our God. Satan, the world, and our sinful flesh separate us from God and intend that this division becomes permanent.

As Daniel tells us, this is a time of trouble like no other. This is the greatest distress, the most devastating reality, and even though man is responsible for this environment, there is nothing we can do to withstand the attacks. In fact, Scripture tells us that if God had not cut this time short, no one would survive. This is our life; this is the reality to which we have been brought by sin. Look around: war, hunger, genocide, homicide, infanticide, hatred, anger, broken relationships, behavior that shows no sign of a relationship once shared with God. A time of trouble such as has never been seen before—but there was a promise!

Into the midst of this battle, into the midst of our oppressive need, God sends his Son. God sends his only-begotten Son into our flesh that he might do battle on our behalf. Christ has come to deliver us from sin, death, and Satan. He comes into our world, to walk in the dust of our destruction, to do that which we cannot do. Christ fights for us—not with us—for us, in our place. Christ fights for us,

taking the battle to the cross of Calvary. There he shed his blood as a holy sacrifice for our sin. There he pours out his life. There he dies.

Christ is taken from the cross and placed into the tomb. He is interred into the dust of this earth in death—a death that is our doing. Christ is buried in death, but not for long! After three days, he wins the victory by rising from the dead. He is the firstfruits of those who rise from the dead, for truly, he is the one who overcomes the curse. Out of the dust he brings life.

And the grace-filled reality for us is this: because he has risen from the dead so shall we! Christ's victory is our victory for he has fulfilled God's promise and delivered us from sin and death and has written our names in the Book of Life. Daniel tells us that indeed our names are recorded, we who are wise by faith, we who have been clothed in Christ's righteousness.

This is the promise fulfilled as told in the Book of Daniel. Out of the dust will God raise the dead. Those who sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake on the Last Day—God's promise of a bodily resurrection. Believers, those who have been written into the Book of Life, shall awake to everlasting life—to shine like stars forever with Christ. Would that everyone believe in that promise! It's why we celebrate today, joining together in God's mission with new members of this congregation as we share that most important news of Jesus with the world.

A return to Eden will be accomplished. On the Last Day, God finishes his work of re-creating this fallen world. Out of the dust of death he brings forth life, and we, his new creation, live in this life from everlasting to everlasting. For on the last day, He who created us out of the dust will recreate us, raising us from the dust. We live forever, united with God as he intended from the beginning.

Thomas Jefferson once produced an edition of the Bible from which he had edited out all reference to miracles and other "unbelievable" occurrences. He ends his book with "There laid they Jesus, and rolled a great stone to the door of the sepulcher, and departed." That's it. That's it? No, thank

God! The tomb was empty, and he who has risen from the dust of death will raise us up to everlasting life with him to shine like stars. In Jesus' name. Amen.