Spirituality
Pencil Preaching





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“You will know the truth, and the truth will set you free” (John 8:32).

Dan 3:14-20 ff; John 8:31-42

Only famous Bible stories get their own camp songs, and the trial of Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego in the fiery furnace by Nebuchadnezzar is one of them. The names are repeated no less than seven times in this popular tale. Lucky campers who learn to pronounce them grow up to be Mass lectors who can breeze through this reading with ease.

The Book of Daniel is filled with stories that celebrate heroes who stood up to evil kings and elders during the Babylonian exile. They rejected so-called absolute power and the false realities it tries to enforce. Early Christians faced similar pressures to go along to get along in the Roman Empire, to accept cultural dominance and even cosmic claims about divine rulers and gods who needed worship to hold the political order together.

Jesus spoke truth to power, exposing the complicity between the temple establishment, the puppet kingdom of Herod and the Roman occupation. He was executed as much for his challenge to Rome as for his theological claims of God’s sovereignty. He is remembered and worshiped for speaking the truth to a sham reality that crumbled to dust in history, one of a succession of regimes that have tried to dominate the world by force right down to the present.

There is only one reality, God’s will as Creator and ultimate Judge of the world. All ideologies, systems and sciences face the test of reality and its universal principles

of truth, goodness, beauty and unity. These are built into the world and embedded in the human mind and heart, discovered and rediscovered in art, music, philosophy and religion as the measure of all other values.

Jesus tells his disciples that the truth will set them free. No force on earth can ignore this principle or sustain its lies indefinitely, and every generation eventually honors its martyrs to truth as heroes. Jesus' life and death has made him the model for truth, goodness, beauty and unity. He is the Way, the Truth and the Life. To know him is to be free. To follow him, even at the cost of your life, is to know God, the Giver of life and the Source of all love.

This is the joy of the Gospel.

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