

## Community Group Sermon Notes March 1, 2026

Senior Pastor, Kevin Flannery

Series: Exiles in Babylon: Living as Strangers in a Fallen World

Sermon Title: Worship That Costs Something

Big Idea: True worship refuses idols and trusts God whether rescue comes or not.

Spring Term: Week 9 of 20



**Ice breaker:** Without sharing anything inappropriate or unsafe, name a setting where it feels hard to stand out as a Christian (workplace, friend group, classroom, extended family, online spaces). What makes it hard? What feels like it could be “lost” if you were more open or obedient?

[Transition: Daniel 3 shows us that Babylon demands worship. God calls for exclusive allegiance and proves His sovereign, life-giving presence with His people even in the flames.]

### Read and reflect on Daniel 3:1-30:

*King Nebuchadnezzar made an image of gold, sixty cubits high and six cubits wide, and set it up on the plain of Dura in the province of Babylon. <sup>2</sup> He then summoned the satraps, prefects, governors, advisers, treasurers, judges, magistrates and all the other provincial officials to come to the dedication of the image he had set up. <sup>3</sup> So the satraps, prefects, governors, advisers, treasurers, judges, magistrates and all the other provincial officials assembled for the dedication of the image that King Nebuchadnezzar had set up, and they stood before it. <sup>4</sup> Then the herald loudly proclaimed, “Nations and peoples of every language, this is what you are commanded to do: <sup>5</sup> As soon as you hear the sound of the horn, flute, zither, lyre, harp, pipe and all kinds of music, you must fall down and worship the image of gold that King Nebuchadnezzar has set up. <sup>6</sup> Whoever does not fall down and worship will immediately be thrown into a blazing furnace.” <sup>7</sup> Therefore, as soon as they heard the sound of the horn, flute, zither, lyre, harp and all kinds of music, all the nations and peoples of every language fell down and worshiped the image of gold that King Nebuchadnezzar had set up. <sup>8</sup> At this time some astrologers came forward and denounced the Jews. <sup>9</sup> They said to King Nebuchadnezzar, “May the king live forever! <sup>10</sup> Your Majesty has issued a decree that everyone who hears the sound of the horn, flute, zither, lyre, harp, pipe and all kinds of music must fall down and worship the image of gold, <sup>11</sup> and that whoever does not fall down and worship will be thrown into a blazing furnace. <sup>12</sup> But there are some Jews whom you have set over the affairs of the province of Babylon—Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego—who pay no attention to you, Your Majesty. They neither serve your gods nor worship the image of gold you have set up.” <sup>13</sup> Furious with rage, Nebuchadnezzar summoned Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego. So these men were brought before the king, <sup>14</sup> and Nebuchadnezzar said to them, “Is it true, Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, that you do not serve my gods or worship the image of gold I have set up? <sup>15</sup> Now when you hear the sound of the horn, flute, zither, lyre, harp, pipe and all kinds of music, if you are ready to fall down and worship the image I made, very good. But if you do not worship it, you will be thrown immediately into a blazing furnace. Then what god will be able to rescue you from my hand?” <sup>16</sup> Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego replied to him, “King Nebuchadnezzar, we do not need to defend ourselves before you in this matter. <sup>17</sup> If we are thrown into the blazing furnace, the God we serve is able to deliver us from it, and he will deliver us from Your Majesty’s hand. <sup>18</sup> But even if he does not, we want you to know, Your Majesty, that we will not serve your gods or worship the image of gold you have set up.” <sup>19</sup> Then Nebuchadnezzar was furious with Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, and his attitude toward them changed. He ordered the furnace heated seven times hotter than usual <sup>20</sup> and commanded some of the strongest soldiers in his army to tie up Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego and throw them into the blazing furnace. <sup>21</sup> So these men, wearing their robes, trousers, turbans and other clothes, were bound and thrown into the blazing furnace. <sup>22</sup> The king’s command was so urgent and the furnace so hot that the flames of the fire killed the soldiers who took up Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, <sup>23</sup> and these three men, firmly tied, fell into the blazing furnace. <sup>24</sup> Then King Nebuchadnezzar leaped to his feet in amazement and asked his advisers, “Weren’t there three men that we tied up and threw into the fire?” They replied, “Certainly, Your Majesty.” <sup>25</sup> He said, “Look! I see four men walking around in the fire, unbound and unharmed, and the fourth looks like a son of the gods.” <sup>26</sup> Nebuchadnezzar then approached the opening of the blazing furnace and shouted, “Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, servants of the Most High God, come out! Come here!” So Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego came out of the fire, <sup>27</sup> and the satraps, prefects, governors and royal advisers crowded around them. They saw that the fire had not harmed their bodies, nor was a hair of their heads singed; their robes were not scorched, and there was no smell of fire on them. <sup>28</sup> Then Nebuchadnezzar said, “Praise be to the God of Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, who has sent his angel and rescued his servants! They trusted in him and defied the king’s command and were willing to give up their lives rather than serve or worship any god except their own God. <sup>29</sup> Therefore I decree that the people of any nation or language who say anything against the God of Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego be cut into pieces and their houses be turned into piles of rubble, for no other god can save in this way.” <sup>30</sup> Then the king promoted Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego in the province of Babylon.*

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### Sermon and Scripture Application Discussion:

#### Babylon Always Tries to Make False Worship Feel Normal (*Daniel 3:1–7*)

1. The Pressure to Bow. Read Daniel 3:4–7; Exodus 20:3–6. What makes the king’s command feel inevitable or “normal”? What are some modern idols that feel respectable or necessary (control, approval, success, comfort)? Where do you see subtle pressure to treat something other than God as ultimate?
2. Worship as Ultimate Weight. Read Daniel 3:1, 5–6. The issue isn’t just the statue—it’s assigning ultimate worth. How can good things (career, relationships, reputation) slowly take on ultimate weight in our lives? What warning signs reveal that something is becoming an idol?

#### Faithfulness Trusts God’s Power Without Demanding God’s Plan (*Daniel 3:8–18*)

3. “But Even If He Does Not...” Read Daniel 3:16–18; Hebrews 11:32–40. What does their statement teach us about the difference between faith and presumption? Why is “even if He does not” such an important posture for mature discipleship? Where might God be inviting you to trust Him without guarantees?

#### God Is Faithful in the Fire (*Daniel 3:19–30*)

4. Presence in the Fire. Read Daniel 3:24–27; Isaiah 43:2. What stands out more in this story—deliverance or presence? Why? How does the promise that God is *with* us reshape how we think about suffering?
5. A Greater Furnace. Read Daniel 3:28; Matthew 1:23; Romans 8:35–39. How does this story point forward to Christ—Immanuel, God with us? How does the gospel give courage when obedience becomes costly?

#### Digging Deeper — (*Work through one together, over the week, or assign portions to different members.*)

##### Biblical Theology of Idolatry

- Read Exodus 20:1–6; Psalm 115; Romans 1:18–25. Identify: What is idolatry? Why is it so serious? Discuss: How does idolatry distort both worship and identity?

##### Exile as a Theme

- Read Jeremiah 29:4–14; 1 Peter 2:9–12; Philippians 3:20. Trace what it means to live as “exiles” or “strangers.” Ask: What tensions should Christians expect in a fallen world?

##### The “Even If” Faith Thread

- Study Job 13:15; Habakkuk 3:17–19; Hebrews 11. Compare how faithful believers respond when deliverance doesn’t come immediately—or at all. Reflect: How does this guard against prosperity-gospel thinking?

##### God’s Presence in Suffering

- Examine Isaiah 43:1–3; Psalm 23; Matthew 27; Acts 7:54–60. Observe how God’s presence is emphasized even in death. Discuss: How does Christ’s suffering deepen Daniel 3’s promise?

**Closing Prayer:** Father, we confess how easily we bow to lesser things and ask You to expose any idol that is competing for our ultimate loyalty. Give us the courage to say, “even if You do not,” trusting that You are powerful, wise, and always present with Your people. Fix our eyes on Jesus, who entered the fire for us and reigns forever as the only One worthy of our worship. Amen.

**Faith in Action:** March 5, Easter Choir Begins, 7 PM, Sanctuary