

COOKING THE BOOKS

(Daniel 7:9-10, 13-14)

- Intro: Daniel had a vision.
- Actually one of many.
 - #Ancient One took the bench.
 - *AKA the throne.
 - +Throne of fire.
 - #Court was in session.
 - #Books were opened.
 - God is keeping book on the world.
 - #It's people.
 - #It's empires.

When God opens the books.

- Should we be afraid?
- Should we be relieved?

I. There Is Always A Temptation To Cook The Books.

A. That Seems To Be Human Nature.

1. Among some.
2. In our capitalist culture.
 - a. Enron.
 - b. AIG.
 - c. Shearson Lehman.
 - d. Bernie Madoff.
 - Cooking the books.
 - Making financial reports.
 - #Look better than they are.
 - #Say what they don't really say.

B. Don't We Do That?

1. Cooking the books to make ourselves look better.
 - a. In God's eyes.
 - b. In other people's eyes.
 - c. In our own eyes.
 - Thinking or saying:
 - #"My sin is not as bad as your sin."
 - #"Everybody's doing it."
 - #"I meant well."

-Or:

- # "I've never killed anybody, like some folks."
- # "I haven't been sleeping around, like some people."
- # "I'm in church most every Sunday."
- # "You've got to give me a little credit."

-We're cooking the books.

To make ourselves look better.

2. Cooking the books to make others look bad (or worse).

a. Last Sunday's Tulsa World.

-Story about Kenneth Eugene Barrett.

Who's on death row.

* Here in Oklahoma.

* For killing David "Rocky" Eales.

+ Oklahoma Highway Patrol Trooper.

+ On September 24, 1999.

* When Eales and other troopers.

+ Went to search Barrett's cabin.

= For methamphetamine.

In the shootout.

* Not only was the State Trooper killed.

* But Barrett was shot several times.

Barrett has filed suit against his jailors.

* For allegedly:

+ Denying him medical care.

= Including the removal of a bullet.

- Which his medical records indicated:

Needed to be removed.

- While in custody.

+ Saying:

= "You're a cop killer."

= "You've got nothing coming from us."

- Having been a jail chaplain for 28 years.

I know:

* There is more than one side to a story.

+ Including what we read in a newspaper.

* Books get cooked against some offenders.

+ Especially those who have done harm.

= To law enforcement officers.

b. Donald had the books cooked against him.

- Donald was a captain in the United States Army.

During Desert Storm 1.

When he sustained a serious head injury.

* It wasn't in combat.

- *It was during a training exercise.
 - +He was thrown from a moving vehicle.
- #If you know anything about head injuries.
 - *They can make people more prone:
 - +To episodes of violence.
 - +To dramatic mood swings.
 - *That's the way it was with Donald.
 - +He could be:
 - =Belligerent as all get out one moment.
 - =Cry like a baby the next.
 - +Donald was arguably the most difficult person.
 - =I ever had to deal with in my 28 years in jail.
 - +If he was difficult for me.
 - =You can imagine how much grief.
 - He caused the correctional staff.
 - #Who tended to respond to his belligerence.
 - *With physical force.
 - Donald was not a small man.
 - #I would have difficulty.
 - *Wrapping my arms:
 - +All the way around Donald.
- Donald had the books cooked against him.
 - #While a patient at the VA Hospital.
 - *Donald was accused of assaulting a staff person.
 - +Charge that a judge ultimately threw out.
 - +Convenient way to get rid of a difficult patient.
 - =In my opinion.
 - #While at the St. Louis County Jail.
 - *He started out in the psych unit.
 - *He ended up in super max.
 - +Contemplating suicide.
 - =In response to what he considered to be:
 - Mistreatment by the correctional staff.
- c. Donald has also been known to cook the books.
 - He's been at a neurological rehab facility.
 - #In Texas.
 - #For the last 9 years.
 - *We've stayed in touch.
 - As he recalls his days in the St. Louis County Jail.
 - #He credits me with saving:
 - *His life.
 - +Because I helped him find away around suicide.
 - *His soul.
 - +Because my witness brought Donald to faith.

- #But in Donald's mind.
 - *I was at his cell every day.
 - +I know that's impossible.
 - +My memory.
 - =Which is far from flawless.
 - =Especially of events from 9 years ago.
 - Would suggest I saw Donald.
 - #Once a week.
 - #Maybe a couple of times at the most.
 - *Donald's been cooking the books in my favor.
- Donald also cooks the books when it comes to evangelism.
 - #Donald believes that God keeps a book on each one of us.
 - *How many people we have ministered to.
 - *How many people have come to faith.
 - +Because of our witness.
- #For Donald.
 - *Last tally was 109.
 - *He keeps a list.
 - +Names.
 - +Dates.
 - +Places.
 - *He's sent me a copy of his list.
- #Donald has a pyramid-scheme theology of evangelism.
 - *Not only does Donald get credit for those 109.
 - +In God's book.
 - *But because I shared my faith with Donald.
 - +I get credit for those 109 as well.
 - *Donald has been cooking the books in my favor.

II. Only One We Really Need Cooking The Books For Us Is Jesus.

A. Jesus Had The Book Thrown At Him.

1. On this Christ the King Sunday.

- a. Our Gospel Lesson is from Jesus' trial scene.
 - John 18:33-37.

- b. Jesus isn't treated much like earthly royalty.

-With:

#Dominion.

#Glory.

#Kingship.

*Daniel 7:14.

-He gets the book thrown at him.

#By Pilate.

- Jesus gets his name written on a death warrant.
 - #If you've ever read one of those.
 - *You know it doesn't leave much to the imagination.
- When I was a seminary student.
 - #I spent a quarter.
 - *Working in the chaplain's office.
 - +In the North Carolina State Penitentiary.
 - #North Carolina had more people on death row.
 - *Than the rest of the country put together.
 - +At that time.
 - #After the U.S. Supreme Court.
 - *Declared the death penalty unconstitutional.
 - +In Furman v. Georgia.
 - =In 1972.
 - +On the grounds that its implementation was:
 - =Arbitrary.
 - =Capricious.
 - #North Carolina.
 - *First state to rewrite its death penalty laws.
 - +To try to make them less:
 - =Arbitrary.
 - =Capricious.
 - #One weekend.
 - *I was the duty chaplain.
 - *I just happened to be in the intake center.
 - +On a Friday night.
 - +When a prisoner was processed for death row.
 - *One of the correctional officers let me read the death warrant:
 - +That accompanied the prisoner.
 - +John Doe shall be remanded:
 - =To the custody of the county sheriff.
 - =Who shall remand him:
 - To the custody of the NC Department of Corrections
 - =Where he shall be held in confinement:
 - Until such and such a date.
 - =When he shall be forced to inhale lethal gas:
 - Until (legal and medical definition of death).
 - Pilate issues a death warrant for Jesus.
 - #Jesus doesn't get treated much like earthly royalty.
 - c. Jesus doesn't look much like earthly royalty.
 - Crowned with thorns.
 - #John 19:5.
 - Enthroned on a cross.
 - #John 19:17-22.

2. But Jesus' kingdom is not from this world.
 - a. John 18: 36.
 - b. His sovereignty does not depend upon:
 - Pilate.
 - Us.
 - #For that matter.
 - c. His authority comes from:
 - Ancient One.
 - #Who has no birthday.
 - #Who sits upon the fiery throne.
 - #Who keeps book on the world.
 - *Its people.
 - *Its empires.
 - #Who raises Jesus from the dead.
 - *So that:
 - +Jesus becomes:
 - =Firstborn from the dead.
 - =Ruler of the kings of the earth.
 - Revelation 1: 5.
 - + "The lamb who was slain has begun his reign."
 - =Words from one of our Hymns of Praise.
 - In the liturgy of Evangelical Lutheran Worship.
 - Lamb who was slain.
 - #Cooks the books in our favor.
 - When the Ancient One opens the books.
 - #What is seen is not:
 - *Us.
 - +Our book.
 - *Our deeds.
 - +Our misdeeds.
 - *Our list of Christian disciples.
 - +Who have come to faith because of our witness.
 - #But Jesus' book.
 - *Book of Life.

B. Jesus Cooks The Books So That Our Names Are Written In The Book Of Life.

1. Two of our readings for today.
 - a. Daniel 7: 9-10, 13-14.
 - b. Revelation 1: 4b-8.
 - Apocalyptic literature.
2. Apocalyptic literature.
 - a. Written using:
 - Visions. -Symbols.
 - Images. -Code language.

- b. Written to people.
 - Who are being persecuted for their faith.
- c. Written.
 - Not as threat.
 - #At least not to the faithful Christians.
 - But as a word of:
 - #Comfort.
 - #Hope.
 - *That the beasts of:
 - +Empire.
 - +Power.
 - =Which seem to rule the world.
 - Have met their match in the one who is:
 - #King of kings.
 - #Lord of lords.
 - =Will not have the final word.
 - As a word of:
 - #Comfort.
 - #Hope.
 - *For us.
 - *That the beasts of:
 - +Cancer.
 - +Guillain-Barre.
 - +Alzheimer's.
 - +Macular degeneration.
 - =Have met their match.
 - =Will not have the last word.
 - *That the beasts of:
 - +Economic recession.
 - +Unemployment.
 - +Poverty.
 - +Hunger.
 - +Injustice.
 - =Have met their match.
 - =Will not have the last word.

Concl: When the Ancient One.

- Takes the bench.
- Declares court to be in session.
- Opens the books.
 - #Fear not, little flock.
 - *Books have been cooked in our favor.
 - +By Christ the King.

