

Silence the Lions

I. Intro

a. The Man in the Arena

- b. It is not the critic who counts; not the man who points out how the strong man stumbles, or where the doer of deeds could have done them better.
- c. The credit belongs to the man who is actually in the arena,
- d. whose face is marred by dust and sweat and blood;
- e. who strives valiantly; who errs, who comes short again and again, because there is no effort without error and shortcoming;
- f. but who does actually strive to do the deeds;
- g. who knows great enthusiasms, the great devotions; who spends himself in a worthy cause;
- h. who at the best knows in the end the triumph of high achievement,
- i. and who at the worst, if he fails, at least fails while daring greatly.
- j. Lord, it is my prayer that I and all in this place may leave here knowing we dared greatly while in Your magnificent presence.

II. The Den

- a. He is surrounded by his dilemma; escape is an unforeseen possibility.

- b. He is alone.
- c. He is without question frightened and in despair.
- d. It is dark; the only way in or out has been sealed on the outside and light can only strive to claw its way within the chamber.
- e. It is suffocating within these walls; the air is heavy and absent of circulation.
- f. The ground is hard and unforgiving; the walls echoing every hint of sound.
- g. Every one of his senses is on high alert.
- h. He can smell death and beast around him.
- i. His eyes clinging to flickers of light glancing off the remains of previous tenants.
- j. He can taste fear; it dries his tongue, adhering it to the roof of his mouth and makes the simple act of swallowing a burden.
- k. His quaking hands and frame absorb the tension cascading from the walls and dancing along the floor.
- l. And despite all of these hardships, none of them compares to the danger pacing around him.
- m. He can hear them, every movement giving him cause to panic – painfully, through sheer will, he remains still.
- n. Their groans sound like the approach of a tidal wave; their paw steps like the footsteps of giants.
- o. He doesn't deserve to be here, but this place is his desperate reality none the less.

- i. Mere hours ago, he was praying, as he had done the countless days before.
 - ii. The sunrise, the busy streets, the hums of a city beginning its day.
 - iii. And in a moment, his world was crashed by guards, accusations, chains and now --- this place.
 - iv. No, he isn't in a prison. It's much worse than a room with bars and bad food.
 - v. He's in a pit, with no way out, no call for help and he is the food.
- p. Of all the stories in Scripture, this one is hard to embrace, to fathom.
 - i. A man of prayer, of faithfulness, of kindness and character, betrayed and arrested wrongfully – all to appease the ego of a king and the malice of his peers.
 - ii. Ultimately, convicted and sentenced to a term with a family of lions in the worst conditions.
 - iii. We don't know all that Daniel had to endure during this season of turmoil and doubt, trapped within the walls of a lions' den.
 - iv. The Hebrew writer would one day include his miraculous encounter upon parchment in the 11th chapter of his book, but that day is centuries away.

- v. The miracle, the deliverance did not seem possible at the moment.
- vi. No, at the moment, teeth, claws, and the brutal beasts seem to have the upper hand.
 - 1. And before we jump to the end of the story.
 - 2. Before we cling to the clarity of hindsight Scripture provides us, there are some in this room, may I dare say most if not all, that can empathize with Daniel's plight.
 - 3. Have you ever endured a day of significant danger?
 - a. Where your faith is tattered, your body aching from the struggles of life, your heart crushed by the actions and words of others.
 - b. Read the story of the birth of Christ. There are angelic hosts, wise men from afar, kingly gifts, worshipping shepherds, bellowing livestock, a miraculous birth and just 12 verses later, the Christ child is on his way to Egypt to escape the madness of Herod.
 - c. Deity becomes dust, the immortal is encapsulated by mortal flesh in one moment and before the page turns, the Son of God Himself is in danger.

d. Life turns on us all. “In this world you will have trouble,” writes John (16:33) but Christ reminds us of two things available to us despite the chaos of the world around us:

e. 1 – we can have peace if we are in Him

f. 2 – He’s overcome this world.

4. Skip ahead to the end of the tale, the night is endured, the king awakened by a new day.

5. When the pit is unsealed, a question bounces off the walls of the den: “Has your God delivered you?” “They have not hurt me; He shut the mouths of the lions.”

6. And we rejoice and dance at the deliverance – and we should!

a. We celebrate how God honors His own
– And we should!

q. But let’s review Daniel’s response for a moment: He shut the mouths of the lions?

i. Why that terminology, that explanation?

ii. Why does Daniel describe his miracle like this? To find out more, you must be a nerd and luckily for you, I’m a nerd.

iii. I scratch my head at Daniel’s response because I know enough about lions to understand that

fully grown lions didn't need to open their mouths at all to kill Daniel.

1. A fully grown male lion can weight well over 500lbs, get up to 8.5' long and eat up to 25% of their weight in meat per day.
2. A male lion could have sat on Daniel and killed him.
3. Their retractable claws can grow beyond several inches in length and they have 4 paws equipped with them. One lion could have killed Daniel in dozens of ways without ever opening its mouth – a den of them only multiplies that possibility.
4. So why does our Creator, knowing the power and life-threatening ability He placed within this king of beasts, why does He notate that He shut their mouths? What's so important about the mouth of the lion in this story? And I believe the answer boils down to one word:
 - a. Noise
5. We live in a world of constant, unrelenting noise.
6. In a moment, we can connect with people in all four corners of the globe.
 - a. Access is swift and unlimited.
 - b. Need an answer – Google it.

- c. Need directions – ask Waze.
 - d. AI can now type for us,
 - e. drones deliver our merchandise,
 - f. cars park themselves.
 - g. Social media grants the opportunity to share, like, friend, unfriend, in an instant.
 - h. Tragedy, success, joy, despair, all of life's emotions can be expressed through our thumbs and into the world around us immediately.
 - i. And it's all noise.
- r. And then there's the noise within.
 - i. The noise no one hears but we.
 - ii. Our failures, -
 - iii. our regrets, -
 - iv. our shame, -
 - v. our pain, -
 - vi. our triumphs and –
 - vii. our tragedies, -
 - viii. all crying aloud within our hearts and heads.
 - ix. AirPods can't shut out the voices of our past ringing within our soul's ears.
 - x. Beats can't silence the commotion within from bad decisions, regrettable statements and unforeseen addictions.

1. No matter the volume of the distraction, the noise remains within.
2. We empathize with Job's pain in Job 3
 - a. I cannot eat for sighing;
 - b. my groans pour out like water.
 - c. What I always feared has happened to me.
 - d. What I dreaded has come true.
 - e. I have no peace, no quietness.
 - f. I have no rest; only trouble comes."
 - g. Sound familiar?
3. Like Daniels' lions – our noise isn't going anywhere.

III. The Lions Mouth

- a. So, what the lions' mouth so important is that it serves the King of the Jungle in so many ways.
 - i. It is not only the manner in which it feeds itself and provides hydration, it is also an internal sound system.
 - ii. A lion's roar can reach up to 118 decibels and be heard up to 5 miles away.
 1. And that's in open air, natural conditions. –
 2. Place that roar in a confined space and it renders one temporarily deaf and bleeding from both ears. –

3. Because of the trauma caused to the inner ear, one's equilibrium is now compromised, and the body is left paralyzed. –
4. Worst of all, the paralysis compromises not only the limbs, but the vocal chords. Leaving the prey mute. –
5. Unable to hear, to move, or to speak – a roar makes Daniel an easy chore for the king of beasts.
6. And that's just the roar from one lion –
7. Daniel is in a den with multiple. With no way out.
8. Oh, and I forgot to mention, lions prefer to roar in chorus with other lions. They love to make a racket together.
9. Within the roof of it's mouth, beyond the glistening teeth and powerful jaws, are the sensory glands for the lions.
 - a. This is how they determine weak and wounded prey. It isn't through their nose; its through their mouth.
 - b. It can detect weakness and an open wound through its mouth.
 - c. This is how they know which prey to pick – they pick the wounded, the embattled, the bloodied, the isolated prey.

- i. Has anyone ever felt trapped by life, enduring the unrelenting noise and facing a menacing foe?
 - ii. Is there a way to silence the Lions?
- iii. I wonder, does the Bible give us any indication of how our adversary may conduct his efforts? “Be sober, be vigilant, because your adversary the devil walketh about as a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour.” (1 Peter 5:8)
- iv. Daniel’s testimony is the OT display of Peter’s epistle. This uncaring and deceptive fiend knows how to make some noise. –
 - 1. He’s the accuser of the brethren. –
 - 2. He’s the father of lies. –
 - 3. He’s the great deceiver. –
 - 4. He’s the manipulator of men and the serpent of sin.
 - 5. And when he starts to make noise, his goal is to make us feel isolated from everyone.
 - 6. Surrounded by people but desperately alone.
- v. Some of us, it took all of our energy just getting here today. We drove to church in silence because the noise within is deafening.

- vi. We haven't clapped or raised our hands, maybe we haven't even prayed – just being here has sapped us of our strength.
- vii. Hear me: that's ok.
- viii. I've been there and it's ok.
- ix. The noise within is so loud that it silences our ability to speak, to pray, to worship.
- x. Thus, we sit in God's house, unmoved, silent, and unable to hear God's promises all because of the unending, unrelenting noise within us.
- xi. Is there a way to silence the lions?
- xii. Before you fall to the warning of I Peter 5:8, you better read verses 6 & 7: "**humble yourselves, therefore, under God's mighty hand, that He may lift you up in due time. Cast all your anxiety on Him because He cares for you.**"
- xiii. It's a pattern woven throughout Scripture – there will be trouble, there will be offence, there be pain, there will be dens of lions, furnaces of fire, bullies from Babylon, walls of Jericho and crosses we must bear.
- xiv. But there is always a solution –
- xv. The alpha lion that loves to lead is shame.
 - 1. Sin and guilt are about behavior. I said the wrong thing. I had the wrong intention. I made a wrong choice.

2. Shame is self-centered - when I believe I am bad. I am a failure. I am a mistake.
3. Brene Brown defines shame in this manner:
 - a. a painful feeling of being flawed and unworthy of love and connection.
 - b. The countless individuals in this room that love God, love their families and friends, they love souls, but within themselves they feel disconnected from God and loved ones because of the ceaseless roaring of shame.
4. When I try and fail, shame begins to roar that I am a failure.
5. Shame rears its head deafens my soul with false truths that I'm worthless, unforgivable or unreachable.
6. When shame is driving the noise within us, depression, fear, addiction and anger are in the backseat wreaking havoc and perfectionism is riding shotgun.
 - a. And let's not kid ourselves, there are far too many of us silently addicted to our phones, social media, food and streaming platforms that we can no longer just point the finger at age old substances.

b. We all have a den of lions roaring within us.

7. Is there a way to silence the lions?

a. Yes, and it's the same path every time.

b. Brene Brown

i. Brene Brown is a world renowned author and speaker. She's a shame researcher – believe it or not.

1. There are only two things that in her years of study that lead to overcoming shame: empathy and vulnerability.

2. And if there's one thing humans don't like being, its vulnerable.

3. We're ok with 14 step solutions, diagrams for success and pathways for purpose.

a. We despise admitting our humanity, our frailty, our losses, our pain.

b. But yielding and acknowledging them releases the ropes of truth and begins to bind the lions' mouths shut.

IV. Despising our Shame . . .

a. And we have an example of this confrontation.

b. looking unto Jesus the author and perfecter of [our] faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising shame, and hath sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.

c. Hebrews 12:2 ASV

- i. The cross not only carried our sin but represented our shame.
- ii. How embarrassing for a perfect man to be stripped, beaten, bruised, bloodied and tortured in public.
- iii. That's what he endured but it's not who He is.
 - 1. Calvary is the perfect example of how our circumstance and our character may not match.
 - 2. My issue isn't my identity.
 - 3. My dilemma doesn't define me.
- iv. It says He despised it, some translations use the word "Scorned" and others "Rebuked".
- v. All three of these are viewed as confrontational adjectives; descriptions of hostility and anger.
- vi. Example:
 - 1. Have the conversation with Wayne
 - 2. Wayne, if I told you right now
 - a. I'm a failure.
 - b. My marriage failed and it failed in front of everyone.
 - c. I failed my children.
 - d. I failed God and myself.
 - e. I'm unlovable.
 - f. What's your response?
 - g. Why?

d. This Book has within its pages the ropes needed to silence every lion within us.

i. I'm alone – God can't help me.

1. Isaiah 41:10 - So do not fear, for I am with you; do not be dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you and help you; I will uphold you with my righteous right hand.
2. 35 “Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword?
36 As it is written:
“For Your sake we are killed all day long;
We are accounted as sheep for the slaughter.”
37 Yet in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us. 38 For I am persuaded that neither death nor life, nor angels nor principalities nor powers, nor things present nor things to come, 39 nor height nor depth, nor any other created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.” Romans 8:35-39

ii. I am too afraid

1. “Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. Not as the world gives do I give to you.

Let not your hearts be troubled, neither let them be afraid.” John 14:27

iii. I am too weak

1. “O man greatly loved, fear not, peace be with you; be strong and of good courage.” And as he spoke to me, I was strengthened and said, “Let my lord speak, for you have strengthened me.” Daniel 10:19

iv. I have to do this on my own

1. “Be strong and courageous. Do not fear or be in dread of them, for it is the LORD your God who goes with you. He will not leave you or forsake you.” Deuteronomy 31:6

v. I’m unreachable

1. Read Psalms 139

vi. I’m unlovable and cursed

1. Fear not, for I have redeemed you; I have called you by name, you are mine. When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and through the rivers, they shall not overwhelm you; when you walk through fire you shall not be burned, and the flame shall not consume you. (Isaiah 43:1b-2, ESV)
2. ...I have loved you with an everlasting love; I have drawn you with unfailing kindness. I will build you up again... (Jeremiah 31:3-4, NIV)

3. "The Lord bless you
and keep you;
25 the Lord make his face shine on you
and be gracious to you;
26 the Lord turn his face toward you
and give you peace.'" Numbers 6:24-26

V. Altar Call

- a. The two strongest words to use to silence the lions within us are these: "Me too"
- b. It is my privilege to introduce you to a holy, perfect God named Jesus.
- c. In all of His righteousness, its His hands scarred by nails He didn't deserve that heal me most.
- d. His feet marred by the marks of nails I had earned bring peace to my soul.
- e. He knows our pain. Our hurt. Our shame. Our perfectionism. Our fear. Our failure.
- f. And He's here to silence our lions.
 - i. Pray for them Jeremy.

- a. It's not always easy. It isn't always pleasant. - It's hard to walk into the lions den and become vulnerable.
- b. It's humbling to stand in this place and admit that life has turned us upside down and I don't have any solutions for it. –
- c. "God, I can't do this on my own."
- d. "Jesus, I need help right now"
- e. "Lord, I don't understand this test and I need you to calm me."
- f. It's hard to make a prayer room out of our lions den.
- g. I can't tell you exactly what Daniel did in that dirty, death filled den but there's one thing for sure: he was vulnerable.
- h. Some way, somehow, Daniel turned that den into a sanctuary.
- i. I'm quite confident it wasn't pretty or distinguished; otherwise, it would have been recorded.
 - i. It was raw.
 - ii. It was real.
 - iii. It was sincere.
 - iv. And, most of all, it was heard by heaven.

v. Before you question my position, before we get the scenery and promises of Psalms 23, there's the reality of Psalms 22.

1. "Why have you forsaken me.
2. Why are you so far from saving me?
3. I cry out, but You do not answer – I find no rest.
4. Yet, You are enthroned as the Holy One My family before me put their trust in You – do not be far from me.
5. You are my strength; come quickly.
6. Deliver me from the sword and rescue me from the mouths of lions."
7. You mean to tell me that God's Word declares Daniel's solution within the stanzas of Psalms?
8. "I will declare Your name to my people; in the assembly I will praise You.
9. You who fear the Lord, praise Him!

10. For He has not despised
or scorned the suffering of
the afflicted one; He has not
hidden His face from him but
has listened to his cry for
help.”