

March 12, 2021

Lectionary Passages:

Psalm 107:1-3, 17-22

Daniel 12:5-13

Ephesians 1:7-14



Selected Verses:

Some were sick through their sinful ways,
and because of their iniquities endured affliction;
they loathed any kind of food,
and they drew near to the gates of death. – Psalm 107: 17-18

He said, “Go your way, Daniel, for the words are to remain secret and sealed until the time of the end. Many shall be purified, cleansed, and refined, but the wicked shall continue to act wickedly.” – Daniel 12: 9-10

With all wisdom and insight he has made known to us the mystery of his will, according to his good pleasure that he set forth in Christ, as a plan for the fullness of time, to gather up all things in him, things in heaven and things on earth. – Ephesians 1” 8-10

Devotional:

The use of sealing wax on letters started during the Middle Ages. A letter was often sealed with a signet ring to verify the sender’s identity. It also certified that the letter had not been read. Before the Middle Ages, clay was used for as the sealing agent. The ruler’s seal on a document or decree authenticated it. When a ruler died, his signet ring was destroyed making it impossible to create forgeries. The classical Latin word for “the matrix of a seal” comes from *signatus*, where we get the word signature. Where people in the Biblical times uses clay seals and the Middle Ages used wax, we use our signature to prove authentication.

A few months ago, I was talking with someone from the county elections office. In Umatilla County every ballot is scanned to compare the signature to the one on file. While our signature may change over the years, computer software can identify similarities. If the signature is not accepted, the election workers try to verify the signature. If it is far enough off, they might pull the signatures of others in the household. There have been ballots that someone else within the household signed for a family member. These ballots are invalidated. Our signatures are unique and validate the authenticity.

The messenger came from God to Daniel telling him that God had sealed His promises to Daniel. The messengers had told Daniel that he would have pain and anguish. There will always be pain and anguish. There will always be wicked people, painful experiences, and death itself. Part of the message of Lent is focusing on the pain and anguish of Jesus’ death. All too often, we want to get to the good news of the resurrection to focus on the pain and suffering.

The messenger to Daniel stated that there would be pain and suffering, but God has already sealed the fate for humanity. “Those who are asleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt.” God has made his plan, and sealed with his signet ring. It is authentic and cannot be changed. For Daniel, it would remain a secret.

Yet, In Jesus, God’s plan became known. God has revealed the mystery of salvation to us in Jesus Christ. Our righteousness and invitation to eternal life comes in accepting Jesus as our Lord and Savior. While this was unknown to Daniel and all that had come before Jesus, the mystery has been revealed to us in Jesus. During Lent, we look forward not just to Easter Sunday, also known as Resurrection Sunday, but to the day of fulfilment. We long for the day when those who are asleep in the dust of the earth and those who are still living will be given new life and invited into the kingdom of God.

God’s seal is no longer hiding the contents of the message from us. It is authenticating that it is God’s word found complete in Jesus Christ. In Jesus we set our hope and live a life of praise and glory. In Him, we have heard the truth and received the message of salvation. May we share God’s authentic message with others. In Christ, we are signed and sealed for all eternity.

Prayer:

Almighty God, we are thankful that you have revealed your mysteries through your Son, Jesus. May we have faith that you have given us the gift of salvation. During times of difficulty and struggles, help us to keep our focus on you. We pray for our friends, neighbors and family members who have not experienced your grace. May you be at work in them opening the mystery of your grace to them. Lord, continue to purify, cleanse and refine us from our sins to life anew. In Jesus name we pray. Amen.