Pinebrooke Community Church 9 March 2025 “Promises Made; Promises Kept” Daniel 9:1-19

 It is easy to make a promise, however, it is hard to keep them. So, it is with us as human beings. Our literary mentor makes the observation, “You can trust a lot of people most of the time, but can you ever trust anyone all the time?” (p. 170). Trust has to be earned; it cannot be granted. We can grant love, but trust has to be earned over time. The point in our conversation today is that there is only one Person in the universe that is 100% trustworthy – God alone. He is the One who has proven our trust. Think about it! Has He ever reneged on anything He has promised, maybe something you have asked for but I dare say nothing that He has promised. The setting in which Daniel is praying is in bringing the Word of God conveyed by Jeremiah the prophet that is carried in Daniel’s mind and heart. The message was that the exile would last for 70 years. While the reign of the Babylonians was over, the reign of Darius the Mede had just now begun. In a way, this was Daniel’s season of Lent; repentance, fasting, and prayer. As is true in every Lent, Daniel faces himself and in his case his nation in truth. Prayer began with confession or taking ownership of his own part in his nation’s sin as well as the sins of his nation. Daniel’s “we” reflects his sense of identity as a Jew. I wonder, where is our own sense of “we?”

*Daniel 9: 1-14*

 What is the sin? Is it not three-fold: we have not listened to your spokespersons – the prophets. We have not obeyed your Word! We have rebelled through active resistance or passive indifference, that is, going our own way. Further, our sin and its consequences are on us. Even though the consequences are hard, we as a people have not been repentant. Daniel is around 82 as this chapter unfolds. Daniel is conscious of Jeremiah’s letter written to his fellow Jews in their exile. (29:10-13). ***“This is what the Lord says: “When seventy years are completed for Babylon, I will come to you and fulfill my gracious promise to bring you back to this place. For I know the plans I have for you,” declares the Lord, “plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future. Then you will call upon me and come and pray to me, and I will listen to you. You will seek me and find me when you seek me with all your heart. I will be found by you,” declares the Lord, “and will bring you back from captivity. I will gather you from all the nations and places where I have banished you,” declares the Lord, “and will bring you back to the place from which I carried you into exile.”*** This is a prophetic promise directly from God Almighty. Seventy years and then home. Daniel is stating his faith here through his prayer to God. God promises His people. He will do what He says He will do – count on it. Their disobedience led to their captivity and dispersion. Actions have consequences. The promises are sustainable. ***“If you fully obey the Lord your God and carefully follow all his commands I give you today, the Lord your God will set you high above all the nations on earth. All these blessing will come upon you and accompany you if you obey the Lord your God.”*** (Deut. 28:1-2). The Lord lists those blessings in vv. 3-14, however, He then lists the curses if they do not obey Him in vv. 15-68. It is not a mystery, but crystal clear. It ought to have been no surprise to the people. The consequences of wrong choices couldn’t have been clearer! Daniel reminds God of His promises. “Daniel was confident of God’s character, trusting in His mercy while understanding His purposes, and holding tightly to His words.” (p. 182). We learn about God’s ways that Daniel knew. To begin with Daniel knew that disobedience for Israel would lead to captivity. Daniel knew that the destruction of Jerusalem and the exile were just. No argument with that, just submission to the righteous hand of God. Daniel felt the full brunt of his sins and those of his nation. Our exposure to Daniel has always been to his stellar faith, but he could see himself in truth just as he knew the holiness of God. Both his personal imperfections and that of his nation weighed heavily upon himself. “Only someone who truly knows God can feel as devastated as Daniel did at offending God.” (p. 177). In our natural individualism we only seem to have a sense of “us” when it comes to the security of our nation when threatened by another warring country. But Daniel understood his “we” in light of his nation in its relationship to God. To say the least we have seriously strayed from the spiritual sensitivities of our founding fathers and mothers. Is there a repentance role for us in light of our nation’s direction? As we pray for our country, ought we not pray as a citizen of our country? When I pray for revival, ought I not include myself in that prayer? God’s promise as it was revealed in Jeremiah’s prophecy was that the exile would last 70 years. Is it because it would take 70 years to create a whole new generation like the 40 years in the desert on the way from Egypt to the promised land which was a punishment for the lack of faith on Israel’s part? Our literary mentor introduces a very intriguing explanation. It had been a part of God’s law for Israel that not only were the Israelis to practice Sabbath in their human lives, but God had also instructed them that their land should experience a Sabbath. The land was to lay dormant every seventh year (Leviticus 25 & 26). If it didn’t, they would be exiled for the length of time that they had failed to obey God’s command concerning the Sabbath of the land. Therefore, the lack of agricultural Sabbaths determined the length of the exile. I guess God means what He says! The third of God’s promises as it includes the exile is that God would punish the nation that He used to initiate the exile. The exile was to discipline Israel, but the sin of Babylon would be punished. We appeal once again to Jeremiah 25:12-14. ***“Then it will come to pass, when seventy years are completed, that I will punish the king of Babylon and that nation, the land of the Chaldeans, for their iniquity,” says the Lord; “and I will make it a perpetual desolation. So, I will bring on that land all My words which I have pronounced against it, all that is written in this book, which Jeremiah has prophesied concerning all the nations. (For many nations and great kings shall be served by them also; and I will repay them according to their deeds and according to the works of their own hands).”*** God uses the sinful actions of mankind to accomplish His will, but they are still sinful actions. “Sin would be punished, Israel would be chastened, and God would remain holy.” (p. 182). As Daniel prays, he reminds God of His promises because he was “confident of God’s character, trusting in His mercy, understanding His purposes, and holding tightly to His words.” “It is true worship when we challenge God to act according to his character.” (p. 183). Knowing who God is and knowing who we are makes all the difference in our praying. Praying is a very personal thing in both mind and heart. It is a sacred thing to be invited into Daniel’s prayer. Daniel’s point is this. God makes promises and always keeps His promises. Therefore, we need to hold onto this, He is absolutely dependable! And good people are not perfect only God is perfectly trustable. The second lesson we learn from Daniel is that ownership of our sin is absolutely necessary. Anything else is hypocritical and self-denying. Daniel could face the truth about himself because he knew who God is and he knew both God’s righteousness and His love. Facing ourselves in truth is how we bring glory to God. I seek to keep the Seven Deadly Sins in front of me so as not to be ignorant of what I need to face in myself. I had to face the fact that on Friday, gluttony rose its ugly head when I stopped for dessert when I was already full. Gluttony is wanting more than you need. The third lesson Daniel has for us is that “we” is more than “I.” He had Israel in his heart and could see his nation’s sin. When we cannot deal with the “we” it usually indicates our battle with pride. Am I a citizen of my country or not? Every “I” contributes to the “we” of life. To deny the “we” is cheap grace. It may also mean that we have yet to experience God’s personal love for us individually, so it may also mean that we are foolishly trying to control our image. It reminds me of my last speeding ticket…. Finally, Daniel knew God through both the scriptures (Jeremiah’s letter) and experience. How well do we know Him? These Lenten days we still have are our opportunity to join this 80-year-old in his prayer for the work of God in our own live as well as our American world .