

FRIDAY 15<sup>TH</sup> DECEMBER

## Read: Revelation 13

*'and all the inhabitants of the earth will worship it, everyone whose name has not been written from the foundation of the world in the book of life of the Lamb that was slaughtered.'* **Revelation 13:8**

We cannot get through life without making choices although sometimes we try to hedge our bets. Usually, even on a sunny day, I take a coat or cardigan with me just in case it gets colder or wetter. However, other situations demand that we choose with no possibility of sitting on the fence. When booking a night away, eventually I have to decide where to stay and confirm the booking.

Today's passage moves from the picture of the heavenly conflict between God and Satan (the dragon) to the conflict between Satan and humanity in the world. In addition to the dragon, we are first introduced to the beast that comes from the sea with ten horns and seven heads (vv.1-10) who makes war on the saints. The second beast, from the earth, has two horns, exercises all the authority of the first beast, and causes people to worship the first beast (vv.11-15). Although written at a time when the Roman emperor persecuted Christians, it does not take too much imagination to see how various governments and authorities persecute Christians in the same way today. References to the "Mark of the Beast" (vv.16-18) have made their way into films and music even if people may not know where it comes from. Commentaries suggest that 666 may refer to Emperor Nero, who persecuted the early church. His mark was on coins and on legal documents and permeated every area of life and effectively, without having his mark, no one could buy or sell.

However, those who have chosen to follow Christ are already sealed by Him and carry His mark. No one can serve two masters (Luke 16:3). This passage asks us to consider who we follow – do we follow Jesus, or do we let ourselves be deceived by the beast in whatever form that beast appears to us – power, wealth and possessions, popularity? We cannot sit on the fence – we either belong to Christ and are sealed by Him and follow Him or we belong to the world and allow ourselves to be deceived by the world. We must choose.

**Let us pray:** *Father God, I thank You that You have called me to follow You. Help me to choose You and Your ways today and every day. Amen.*

**Stephanie Rankin, Stewardship Resourcing Officer.**