

The Sun is rising on Judgement Day

Text: Malachi 4:1-3 for 11/11/2018 by Pastor Bolwerk

We are now one week into being off of Daylight-Saving Time. Coming off of Daylight-Saving Time means we are supposed to have one extra hour of sunlight in the morning. So, have you noticed it being lighter one hour earlier in the morning? It certainly doesn't seem like it has been lighter in the morning, and that is probably because it has been cloudy almost every morning this past week. There were a couple of mornings this past week where it was so dark and dreary you may have started to wonder if the sun was going to come up at all.

At the time of the prophet Malachi life in the land of Israel seemed dark and dreary. Sure, things were better than they were 100 years earlier when Israel was captive in Babylon. Many of the Israelites had returned from captivity. Jerusalem and the God's temple had been rebuilt and life was outwardly looking better for Israel. But inwardly there was a darkness that hung over the people. Which is why God sent his prophet Malachi to address that darkness and warn the people that the sun would soon be coming up on a day of judgment. God's words from Malachi speak to us as well. God is letting us know that ...

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- I. To burn the wicked
- II. To heal the humble

Malachi was the last of God's Old Testament prophets. He lived around the year 400 B.C. And like most of the prophets before him Malachi was sent to proclaim a message of warning. The people whom God allowed return to Judah from captivity had fallen into many of their old, bad habits. The people had become lazy in their worship. The priests were dishonoring God's name in how they carried out their duties. Divorce was rampant, and the people were robbing God by not giving their offerings to the temple.

So God sends Malachi to warn the people that their actions are angering God and turning him against them. Earlier in the book of Malachi, God said to his people, **"If I am a father, where is the honor due me? If I am a master, where is the respect due me?"** (Malachi 1:6). **"Oh, that one of you would shut the temple doors, so that you would not light useless fires on my altar! I am not pleased with you," says the LORD Almighty, "and I will accept no offering from your hands.** (Malachi 1:10).

So how did the people respond to God's warning? They said, **"It is futile to serve God. What did we gain by carrying out his requirements"** (Malachi 3:14)? The people said that God was not worth serving. They did not feel like they were gaining anything by carry out his commands. They were only worshipping God to try and get something out of him instead of honoring him as their Creator and Savior.

This is the point at which God sends Malachi to speak the words from our text. **"Surely the day is coming; it will burn like a furnace. All the arrogant and every evildoer will be stubble, and that day that is coming will set them on fire," says the LORD Almighty. "Not a root or a branch will be left to them."** God is warning the people that the sun is rising on a Day of Judgement. On that day the arrogant and every evildoer will be completely destroyed. On those in Judah who had rejected God, the scorching sun of God's judgment would come and burn them into nothing but ashes.

The people of Judah felt they could manipulate God into giving them what they wanted by doing the bare minimum when it came to following and worshiping God. But their hearts were far from God and it showed in both their religious life and their public life. They lied, they hurt people, and they cheated people. Then they tried to cheat God out of what he deserved as their Lord and Master. They robbed God of honor and respect. They held back on their worship and

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their offerings to God. They did all this to get more for themselves: more wealth, more sex, and more time away from God to do what they wanted. In the end they gained nothing but God's wrath and eternal punishment.

It's easy to shake our heads at the Israelites over their terrible actions and warped religious life. But how do our lives compare? Are we bringing heart-felt, first-fruit offerings to our Lord on a regular basis, or when it comes to our money does God simply get the leftovers? We may not be divorcing our spouses, but how often do we allow lustful thoughts to linger in our minds? Like the Israelites living in Judah how easy it is to be lazy in our worship life. How often do we find ourselves using our families, our work, our vacations, or any excuse to not have to gather to honor and worship God and he commands us to? Do we honor God while we are sitting in church, but then dishonor his name with the way we talk and act outside these four walls? In all honesty we are no better than the Israelites in Malachi's day. We deserve to be counted amongst the wicked. We deserve their punishment. We deserved to face the burning heat of that sun of Judgment Day. We deserve Hell.

Malachi's words convicts us of the sins we so casually and thoughtlessly commit. Malachi's words cause us to see what we deserve and where we would be without God. Remember, Malachi's words are God's words. God does not use his words to drive us away. He uses his words to turn us around. God uses his words of law to humble us. God's law helps us see our sinful failings and our tremendous need for someone to save us from our sins. When God speaks, he does not do so to leave us in the dark, that's why Malachi assures us that the Sun is rising on Judgment Day, not only to burn the wicked, but to heal the humble.

Malachi proclaimed God's law in all its fury to break hard hearts of the people and turn them back to their Lord. After showing people their sins Malachi doesn't keep preaching the law, but instead he allows the gospel shine out as he shows people their Savior. He assures the people that the Sun is rising on Judgment Day, and that message of God brings real hope. God says to his people, **"But for you who revere my name, the sun of righteousness will rise with healing in its wings"** (v. 2). The sun of righteousness is the Son of God. Through his prophet Malachi, God is pointing his people forward to the coming Savior. God's one and only Son will arise to bring warmth and joy to this world, and God want people to put their trust in that Savior.

Jesus took on human flesh and blood as he was born to bring warmth to the cold lives of the people in this world. He brought warmth as he lived the perfect childhood always obeying God's laws. He warmed a cold world as he rose to be a Teacher, as he worked to be our Savior. Christ warmed the world as he marched towards the cross and endured the heat of sin. He suffered the burning heat of God's wrath, so we would not. He endured the pains of Hell as he was forsaken by God on that cross. He endured suffering for our spiritual laziness, greed, and lust. He gave up his life on Calvary to pay for all the times we have dishonored God. Then from the icy cold of the grave, he rose from the dead to warm us once more, showing us his glory and filling our hearts with his forgiveness and love. He warms our cold hearts as he enters them through faith and makes the gifts of forgiveness and salvation ours. The Sun of Righteousness shines into our lives and make us alive with his gospel joy.

Jesus warms us because, as Malachi had said, he brings healing. Christ has healed our broken souls with his life-giving gospel. Our Lord has given us healing for our most debilitating disease of sin. But Jesus' healing doesn't stop there. He also brings his healing into our broken lives. This world we live in is sinful, and because of that sin there is pain and

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suffering in our lives. Our Lord helps us through that suffering. As true God, Jesus is aware of our suffering. And Jesus is also completely human. He lived in this sinful world, so he understands our suffering and know how best to help us deal with that suffering. So whenever we pray for Jesus take away our pain and heal our bodies, we know he hears and will answer us. Since he knows what is best for us, we trust he will give us his best even if it does not happen when we would like it to happen. There may be troubles he allows to linger. We might have health issues that last longer than we would like them to. There may even be some difficulty that we struggle with our entire lives. Yet in the end, our Lord will bring us healing. When the Sun rises on Judgment Day, Christ will give us his ultimate healing as he reunites our bodies and souls in heavenly perfection. No more sin, pain, or suffering.

That knowledge of what Jesus has waiting for us fills us with the energy and drive to serve our Lord. Malachi tells us how people respond to God's wonderful gift of healing. He says, **"And you will go out and leap like calves released from the stall"** (v. 2). Our hearts certainly leap for joy that the Sun of Righteousness has shone on us. The light of God's healing gospel fills us with forgiveness, faith, and hope. We can walk out those doors with a spring in our steps eager to serve our Lord Jesus, eager to honor him with our lives, and eager to speak his name to people who also need his healing. We can live our lives to God's glory recognizing that we are daily renewed, refreshed, and warmed by God's Son of Righteousness.

It may be a bit depressing knowing that our wait for the sun to rise each morning is getting longer every day. Dark mornings are not the most fun. Yet they do help us better appreciate the beauty of a sunrise. It may not be the most fun living in a world darkened by sin, yet it makes the light of God's saving Word all the more beautiful. We have a message of healing and of life. It's a message that God gives us through his grace, and it is a message he wants us to share with the people in our lives. Through faith, we can see the beauty of the rising Sun of Righteousness. The day that Sun rises will be a wonderful day, since God's Son will be coming to take us to be with him in glory forever. Amen.