

December 9, 2018
Sermon for 2nd Sunday in Advent
St Peter Lutheran Church
Bowie, TX
Larry Knobloch, Pastor
Malachi 3:1-7b

J.J.- Jesu Juva—Help me, Jesus

Malachi 3:1–7 (ESV)

¹ “Behold, I send my messenger, and he will prepare the way before me. And the Lord whom you seek will suddenly come to his temple; and the messenger of the covenant in whom you delight, behold, he is coming, says the Lord of hosts. ² But who can endure the day of his coming, and who can stand when he appears? For he is like a refiner’s fire and like fullers’ soap. ³ He will sit as a refiner and purifier of silver, and he will purify the sons of Levi and refine them like gold and silver, and they will bring offerings in righteousness to the Lord. ⁴ Then the offering of Judah and Jerusalem will be pleasing to the Lord as in the days of old and as in former years. ⁵ “Then I will draw near to you for judgment. I will be a swift witness against the sorcerers, against the adulterers, against those who swear falsely, against those who oppress the hired worker in his wages, the widow and the fatherless, against those who thrust aside the sojourner, and do not fear me, says the Lord of hosts. ⁶ “For I the Lord do not change; therefore you, O children of Jacob, are not consumed. ⁷ From the days of your fathers you have turned aside from my statutes and have not kept them. Return to me, and I will return to you, says the Lord of hosts. ...’

Grace, Mercy, and peace be to you from God our Father and from our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ!

Amen.

The police officer rang the doorbell. It was 3 a.m. He had tried to call the family, but all he could get was their answering machine. He knew that his appearance at this hour would frighten them, but he needed to talk to them.

They answered the door, and before he could explain his presence, he could see the look of horror in their eyes. They were simply not prepared for the awful possibilities that his early morning presence suggested.

He tried to explain as quickly as he could. "Your daughter," he began. "Oh no!" the mother cried out. The officer tried again. "Your daughter has been in a serious car accident." "Dear God, no!" the father moaned. The officer jumped in again as quickly as he could. "But she's all right. We offered to take her home, but she's pretty shaky and wanted you to come and get her." In the presence of this police officer who was the designated messenger that night, the parents had experienced the ultimate horror of death and the overwhelming joy of receiving their daughter back from the dead.

The relationship between the parents and their daughter changed that night. They cherished one another more deeply. They said 'I love you' more often. And although from time to time they may have absentmindedly taken one another for granted, it certainly happened less frequently.

One might say that they lived very differently from that night on.

Through His prophet Malachi, God promised to send a messenger who would bear a twofold message. John the Baptist was that messenger who proclaimed a message of Law and Gospel and so was the fulfillment of God's promise.

The preaching of John and his Baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins prepared people for the coming of the Savior.

Today, through the message of Law and Gospel, we are also brought from death to life, and we are a people prepared for the second coming of our Savior.

Today we are called to examine ourselves and, by God's grace and mercy, to live as a forgiven people who are prepared for His second coming.

However, we are not prepared if we do not confess our sin and our sinfulness. We can talk the good talk all day, but the Lord knows the state of our hearts. He knows when we hang on to our pet sins. And this sinfulness separates us from God.

As with our first parents (Genesis 3) who ate of the forbidden fruit. Adam blames Eve, Eve blamed the serpent...neither one willing to confess, at least when first confronted with their sin. And we, who call ourselves Christians still do the same today.

As with the Jews to whom Malachi was writing, just after our assigned reading this morning: ¹⁰ *Have we not all one Father? Has not one God created us? Why then are we faithless to one another, profaning the covenant of our fathers?* ¹¹ *Judah has been faithless, and abomination has been committed in Israel and in Jerusalem. For Judah has profaned the sanctuary of the Lord, which he loves, and has married the daughter of a foreign god. (Continued below.)*

¹² *May the Lord cut off from the tents of Jacob any descendant of the man who does this, who brings an offering to the Lord of hosts! Malachi 2:10–12 (ESV)*

We find ourselves in the same sins of the tribe of Judah! And even as with the people in the days of John the Baptist as we heard in the Gospel reading this morning. We try to hang on to our heritage as good little Lutherans, some third or fourth generation. But John the Baptist called them on the carpet, saying: ⁷ ..., *“You brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the wrath to come? ⁸ Bear fruits in keeping with repentance. And do not begin to say to yourselves, ‘We have Abraham as our father.’ For I tell you, God is able from these stones to raise up children for Abraham.”* (Lk 3:7–8).

Of course, in our day and age, it’s not popular to speak of sinfulness. Many people today get their understanding of the nature of people from Oprah and Dr. Phil, who maintain that we are not conceived in sin and that there’s some basic good in all people. Others say there’s no such thing as sin, just bad choices.

Still others maintain that to talk about confessing sin is harmful to self-esteem. However, not to confess sin has eternal consequences. It may make us look good to the world, but in doing so we make God out to be a liar. In 1 John 1:10 we read:

“If we say we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us.”

When we separate ourselves from God, it’s not temporary, but eternal! There is nothing new under the sun.

Halfhearted confessions or denial of sin were rampant in Malachi’s day.

But when one denies sin and sinfulness, how is it possible to endure the “*refiners fire*” on the day of His coming? God promised to send a messenger who would prepare people for the coming of the Savior by calling them to repentance.

Preparation for the second coming of the Savior begins with repentance. It had to! God’s messenger calls us to confess our sin (v 1a).

This is the starting point—as with King David (2 Sam 12:13; Psalm 51). Until there is confession, there can’t be repentance because there is no acknowledgement of wrongdoing.

This means recognizing our inability as sinful people to stand before the holy God. And where there is confession, there is forgiveness.

Joyful, wonderful, comforting forgiveness! Forgiveness is the very reason God sent His messenger to prepare the way for His Son first...so that we could endure (v 1).

God has most certainly promised forgiveness (v 3; Ps 32:5; 1 Jn 1:9). And God

Not only to His promise of a messenger, John the Baptist (v 1a). But to his promise to come Himself (v 1b).

This was the point of it all. The Lord Himself, Jesus, God Incarnate, in the flesh, came to refine and purify us by His cross (v 3). We are as precious to God as gold and silver. Jesus faced the refiner’s fire because we couldn’t. He took the pain so that we wouldn’t have to bear it.

I’ve been asked, “How do I know I’m prepared to meet my Lord?” When a Christian dies suddenly in a car accident or from a heart attack.

People ask, “Was he ready? Was he prepared to meet God face-to-face? What if he was telling a lie when the car crashed? What if he was thinking ill of a fellow worker at the moment of death?” The wonderful truth is this:

We are indeed prepared as we receive through faith the forgiveness of sins won for us at the cross and offered to us freely in the Means of Grace.

Forgiveness is yours already! Won on the cross!

God is faithful in all of His promises; He accepted Christ’s sacrifice on your behalf. Christ will return on Judgment Day, but as Children of God in Christ Jesus, it is not a day that we need to fear. (v 7).

Since Christ has atoned for all your sins, you will not be consumed (v 6b). Instead, we will live with Him and serve Him forever as His people purified (v 3).

What He has begun in us, He will bring to completion (Phil 1:6). We are tied us to the death and resurrection of His Son in Holy Baptism (Rom 6).

All sin has been paid for, past, present, and future—even the one I may be committing at the time of death. Why? How?

God’s grace is sufficient in all circumstances (2 Cor 12:9). As a people prepared, our response is to “*bring offerings in righteousness to the Lord*” (v 3). Not because we ‘owe’ God a debt that we could ever repay, but out of joy and thanksgiving! And because we want the Gospel to continue to be proclaimed. In Bowie, Montage County Texas and even to the ends of the earth!

God has redeemed us. Our relationship has changed to a close, loving relationship.

As a people who have been prepared, we are called to put aside sin and every evil and to offer up our lives as living sacrifices to God and our neighbor. “Then,” God says in verse 4 of our text—that is, when our sacrifices are motivated by faith that we are indeed prepared by Christ’s death and resurrection—“*then the offering of Judah and Jerusalem will be pleasing to the Lord.*”

The writer to the Hebrews describes it so well:

“Now may the God of peace who brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, the great shepherd of the sheep, by the blood of the eternal covenant, equip you with everything good that you may do his will, working in us that which is pleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory forever and ever” (Heb 13:20–21).

Amen.

The peace of God which passes all understanding keep our hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.

Amen.

S.D.G.—Soli Deo Gloria