

# THE DAY IS COMING

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Old Testament Lesson; Malachi 4:1-6

Epistle Lesson; Romans 15:4-13

Gospel Lesson; Luke 21:25-36

Sermon Text; Malachi 4:1-6

Remember that we are in the Advent Season. The word 'advent' means 'coming'. During the Advent Season, we look at the different ways in which Jesus comes. Last Sunday, on the first Sunday of Advent, Pastor Bartels had us look at the Palm Sunday account, in which Jesus came into Jerusalem, in a very humble way, on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a donkey. And, how Jesus wants to come into your hearts, now in very humble means, through His Word, through baptism, and through the Lord's Supper.

Well, today the theme of Advent changes just a little bit. Today we look at Jesus' second coming. We look at the day in which Jesus will come, again, to judge the living and the dead, as we confess in our creed. Today, as we see Advent in that way, Jesus' second coming, let us look at our text from Malachi, chapter 4, looking at verses 1 – 6, which talks about Judgment Day.

“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,” say the LORD Almighty. “Not a root or a branch will be left to them. But for you who revere my name, the sun of righteousness will rise with healing in its wings. And you will go out and leap like calves released from the stall. Then you

will trample down the wicked; they will be ashes under the soles of your feet on the day when I do these things,” says the LORD Almighty.

“Remember the law of my servant Moses, the decrees and laws I gave him at Horeb for all Israel.

“See, I will send you the prophet Elijah before that great and dreadful day of the LORD comes. He will turn the hearts of the fathers to their children, and the hearts of the children to their fathers; or else I will come and strike the land with a curse.”

And now, oh Lord, may the words of my mouth, and the meditation of my lips be acceptable to You, oh Lord, our strength and redeemer. Amen.

The words that I just read to you are the very last words that were written in the Old Testament. Malachi is the last book of the Old Testament. Chapter four is the last chapter. Verse six is the last verse. As we look at these words that were written, (then there were four hundred years of silence before Jesus was born), notice what it was that Malachi was saying. He was not talking about Jesus' first coming. He was talking about Jesus' second coming, even before He came the first time!

I just want to share with you some of the things that were happening in Malachi's day that come out in those chapters and verses before the one that we are looking at this morning. Malachi tells us that the priests were offering blemished sacrifices. God had ordered them to offer perfect sacrifices. Malachi says that the priests were offering sacrifices that were blind, that were crippled and were diseased. God wanted sacrifices that were given to Him that were perfect, the way that He asked them to. And so, Malachi admonished the priests and told them that those sacrifices that were diseased, sick, blind, and crippled were not acceptable to the LORD.

How that reminds me of ourselves, today, with some of the offerings that we give to the LORD. How often is it, that when that paycheck comes in the mail, or is put in our hand, that instead of giving God the first fruits, we give God the leftovers. Sometimes we say, *“There is nothing leftover to give to God.”* Or, with the talents and abilities that God has given to us, instead of using those talents and abilities to God's glory and for His honor, we chose not to use those skills and abilities that He has given to us. We chose to offer to God 'blemished' sacrifices.

What type of sacrifice is it that God gave to you? Well, God did not give us a blemished sacrifice. No, God gave us the perfect sacrifice.

**He gave**

**His one and only Son.**

During this Advent Season, we are reminded that Jesus came. He was born in Bethlehem so that He could live a perfect life in our place and go to the cross to pay for all of our sin. We look forward to the day when He will return to give us that precious gift of eternal life in Heaven.

Another thing that Malachi was speaking about in his day was that the believing Israelites were marrying unbelieving people from the nations around them. What was happening was those Israelites were losing their faith in the God of Israel, losing their faith in the promise of the Messiah, and following false gods.

It reminds me of how we, in our day, violate God's laws for marriage that He has given to us, in various ways. Just as the people in Malachi's day needed God's admonition and forgiveness, so also we in our day too, need God's admonition and forgiveness.

One last thing that Malachi was talking to the people in his day is something that still happens among us today. The people were saying, *“Certainly, evildoers prosper.”* The people looked at the unbelievers living around them and said, *“Look at how they are prospering, while we are suffering.”* And yet, dear fellow

redeemed, doesn't scripture talk about the suffering that we, as believers, must go through? God's Word says that we must go through many hardships to enter the Kingdom of Heaven. Scripture says that suffering produces perseverance, perseverance character, and character hope, and hope does not disappoint us. Some days, we may be tempted to say the same thing. *“Look at the unbelievers around us prosper.”* And yet, remember, it is only temporary. After all, what good is it for a man if he were to gain the whole world, and yet forfeit his own soul? Consider the account in scripture of the rich man and Lazarus. The rich man was prospering in this life, while Lazarus was suffering. They both died. Lazarus, because of his faith, went to Heaven. The rich man, because of his unbelief, went to Hell, where he was in agony. Again, the suffering that we may go through as believers is only temporary. We are looking forward to the gift that God has given to us of eternal life, in Heaven.

We can take comfort in these words today. Here is what he said about you, about believers. *“They will be mine...in the day when I make up my treasured possession. I will spare them, just as in compassion a man spares his son who serves him. You will again see the distinction between the righteous and the wicked, between those who serve God and those who do not.”* Malachi 3:17-18 Which gets us to our text for today. Dear fellow redeemed, the day is coming. Malachi talks about this day as being *“that great and dreadful day”*. How can a day be great and dreadful at the same time? Well, it depends upon the recipients of that day. Notice what Malachi says about unbelievers, when Judgment Day comes. He says that day *“will burn like a furnace”*. I can't help but think of the three men in the fiery furnace, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego - believers in the true God of Israel, who were thrown into a fire, because of their faith. King Nebuchadnezzar had ordered that the furnace be made seven times hotter than normal. The strong soldiers

who threw those three men into the fiery furnace died. But, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego lived!

How hot the 'furnace' of Hell will be to unbelievers.

Or, consider the picture language of stubble in a field. Right now, farmers are continuing to scurry and get their crops into the barns, before this significant snowfall happens this week. As you drive the interstate, look at that stubble that is in the field. It is what is leftover. It is useless. If you were to throw a match to it, quickly the whole thing would burn up and it would be ashes trampled under your feet.

But, consider how beautiful Judgment Day will be for believers.

Dear fellow redeemed, consider again the picture language that Malachi uses today. He says, “the sun of righteousness will rise with healing in its wings.” When a baby has jaundice, what is one of the remedies? It is putting that baby in the sun. Or, consider a study by a physician, in St. Petersburg, Russia, a number of years ago. In his study, he concluded that patients recovering in the hospital recovered four times better and faster, if they were in a room with plenty of sunshine, than those who were recovering in a room that had no sunlight.

Today, Malachi is not just talking about the sun, s u n, he is also talking about the Son, S o n. Jesus, God's Son, has come to this world with healing in His wings, as He came to save you, to save us from our sin, from death, and from the power of the devil.

For believers, Judgment Day will also be great. Consider the picture language of Malachi, as he says what it will be like. “You will go out and leap like calves released from the stall” after having been cooped up. Now, I know our lower grade teachers can attest to this, but once I brought my kids here, to the Holy Cross gymnasium, along with my nieces and nephews in the dead of winter. We went down into the gym. I turned on the lights and sat down in the bleachers. And, I am not kidding, probably five or ten minutes went

by, as those kids were running around the gymnasium like calves that had been released from the stall. It was not until five or ten minutes went by that they came to me and asked for a ball to play with. They were so excited about the open space, about being able to run around.

That is exactly how it is going to be like for you, on Judgment Day, when that great day comes, as we are released from sin, as we are released from death and from the power of the devil!

The prophet Malachi proclaims that before that great and dreadful day comes, Elijah will appear. Remember when Malachi wrote this. He wrote it before Jesus came, the first time. And what Malachi says here, already came true, as John the Baptist came. Elijah had been dead for five hundred years. John the Baptist would be coming four hundred years after he wrote these words. But, consider the message of Elijah and consider the message of John the Baptist. Elijah spoke out against the false gods of Baal and Asherah. He spoke for the true God of Israel. John the Baptist proclaimed, "Repent, for the Kingdom of Heaven is near." He pointed to Jesus, as he said, "Behold the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world."

The message of Elijah and the message of John the Baptist continues to be proclaimed, today.

- A message of law. Repent of our sin.

- A message of Gospel, as we point to Jesus. Not just a baby born in Bethlehem. Not just a Savior who died on the cross to forgive you of all of your sin.

- But, also a Savior who is going to come back, and separate unbelievers and believers.

Malachi was the last of the prophets in the Old Testament. After he spoke, there would be four hundred years of silence, before the Gospel writers wrote about Jesus coming.

Dear fellow redeemed in Christ, the day is coming. Will that day be

a great or dreadful day for you? God grant that it is a great day, in which the Son of righteousness comes to you, with healing in His wings.

Amen