

# Sermon for The Second Sunday in Advent

**Date:** December 9, 2018

**Location:** St. John's Lutheran Church, Austin, MN

**Old Testament:** Malachi 3:1-7

**Epistle Reading:** Philippians 1:2-11

**Gospel Reading:** Luke 3:1-14

**Sermon Text:** Malachi 3:1-7

**Sermon Title:** Christian Humility



**Introit:** Psalm 81:8,10-11,13;l Antiphon: Luke 3:4

## Hymns:

LSB 332 – Savior of the Nations Come (v.3-4)

LSB 344 – On Jordan's Bank the Baptist Cry

LSB 338 – Come, Thou Long-Expected Jesus

LSB 349 – Hark the Glad Sound

## Distribution:

LSB 345 – Hark! A Thrilling Voice is Sounding

## Liturgy:

Divine Service III, p. 184



Pastor James Groleau  
St. John's Lutheran Church  
1200 13th Avenue NW  
Austin, MN 55912  
Office: (507) 433-2642  
Shepherd@JamesPlace.net  
StJohnsAustinLCMS.org  
FaceBook.com/StJohnsAustin  
Twitter.com@StJohnsAustinMN  
FaceBook.com/Shepherd.James.Groleau



## Text: Malachi 3:1-7

“I’m going to send my messenger, and he will clear the way ahead of me. Then the Lord you are looking for will suddenly come to his temple. The messenger of the promise will come. He is the one you want,” says the Lord of Armies.

But who will be able to endure the day he comes? Who will be able to survive on the day he appears? He is like a purifying fire and like a cleansing soap. He will act like a refiner and a purifier of silver. He will purify Levi’s sons and refine them like gold and silver. Then they will bring acceptable offerings to the Lord. The offerings from Judah and Jerusalem will be pleasing to the Lord as in the past, as in years long ago.

“I will come to judge you. I will be quick to testify against sorcerers, adulterers, lying witnesses, and those who cheat workers out of their wages and oppress widows and orphans. I will also testify against those who deprive foreigners of their rights. None of them fear me,” says the Lord of Armies.

“I, the Lord, never change. That is why you descendants of Jacob haven’t been destroyed yet. Since the time of your ancestors you have turned away from my laws and have not followed them. Return to me, and I will return to you,” says the Lord of Armies.

**NOTE: Copyright** information.

Bible Translation: GOD’S WORD®, © 1995 God’s Word to the Nations. Some readings have been adapted to better reflect the original Greek or Hebrew.

Credit for Images:

Pronunciation for difficult words are contained in { }

© 2018 James Groleau.

Permission is granted to use these sermons for any non-profit purpose. I only ask that credit, as to their origination, be noted appropriately.

Grace to you and peace in the name of our Messiah, Jesus Christ the Lord. Amen.

Today we light the second candle on the Advent Wreath. This candle is called, by some traditions, the “Humility Candle.” That is a fitting name for the topic of this message. Today we continue looking at Old Testament prophecy and how it was fulfilled in the New Testament, as well as how it matters in our own lives. The readings for today presents the topic of humility. Being humble before our God. There is a common theme through out the Bible. God does not appreciate the proud and haughty. For those who think more highly of themselves then they do of others there is little patience from God. God is always patient with the humble. With those who serve Him and respect Him He has always displayed eternal patience and forgiveness.

Today in Malachi we read of a prophecy that is not about Jesus. This prophecy is about the most humble man in the Bible. A humble servant of God who was born miraculously to a Father who questioned the Word of God, and a mother who was too old to have children.

The Angel Gabriel was sent to this man's father, whose name was Zachariah. Gabriel told Zachariah, “You will have a son.”<sup>1</sup> Zachariah questioned Gabriel's words and for his disbelief he was punished by being cursed by God, being unable to speak for about a year. During that time his wife Elizabeth became pregnant. That child was the child Gabriel had told them they would have and according to the instructions Gabriel brought from God they named the child John.<sup>2</sup> The Holy Spirit was with John even before he was born. When Mary came to visit Zachariah and Elizabeth John leaped in Elizabeth upon knowing that Jesus who was six months younger was near.<sup>3</sup>

That little boy was raised by good, honorable, believing parents. They taught him the Scriptures and when he came of age he began his ministry. Just as the prophecies about him said. In Malachi 3 we read:

<sup>1</sup> “I am going to send my messenger, and he will clear the way ahead of me. Then the Lord you are looking for will suddenly come to his temple. The messenger of the promise will come. He is the one you want,” says the Lord of Armies.

When Malachi writes he is writing God's words. Who is the messenger that Malachi is writing about? Who will prepare the way for God? We now know it is John the Baptist. The first prophet in the New Testament. It was he who said, “Prepare the way for the Lord.”<sup>4</sup> This is the fascinating wonder of the Bible. Here Malachi, who lived over 400 years before John the Baptist and Jesus, writes down a prediction of things yet to come. He, through God's Divine revelation, is able to tell of not only John the baptist who will prepare the way, but notice also whose way John is preparing. It is for God Himself. Here as throughout all of Scripture Jesus is called God. Here Malachi is revealing that one, who we now know is John, will prepare the way for another who is to be born, God. He is the Messiah called Immanuel which means, “God is With Us.”

<sup>1</sup> Luke 1:13

<sup>2</sup> John means “God is Gracious”

<sup>3</sup> Luke 1:40

<sup>4</sup> Luke 3:4-6

Let's take a look at what John said and did. How did he prepare the way for Jesus work to save us? Listen to John's humble words in Luke 3:

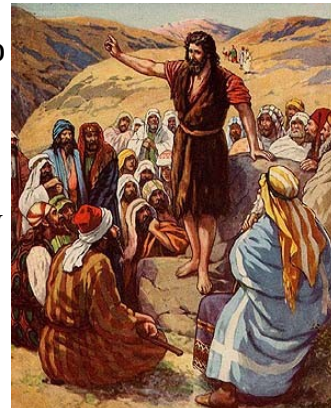


“You poisonous snakes! Who showed you how to flee from God’s coming anger? Do those things that prove that you have turned to God and have changed the way you think and act. Don’t say, ‘Abraham is our ancestor.’ I guarantee that God can raise up descendants for Abraham from these stones. The ax is now ready to cut the roots of the trees. Any tree that doesn’t produce good fruit will be cut down and thrown into a fire.”

Does that sound humble? Maybe not to our ears but remember that John lived a very special type of life. He was raised as a Nazarene. For him that meant his entire life was dedicated to serving God's Holy work. Everything he was, and everything he did, was dedicated to a single purpose. Getting the people ready for the beginning of Jesus’ ministry.

The Temple and the Temple Authority were corrupt. The people were being led away from God by the “Church” at that time. Many of them knew it and they were desperately looking for guidance, for leadership. They came to hear John. John taught them that they were corrupt and sinful. He called them vipers. He broke their spirit so they would understand they owed God a debt they could never repay. A debt that no quantity of sacrifices and offerings could cover. He warned that every one of them was destined to suffer in Hell forever.

Then he taught them one more thing. It is called an apology. In the church we call that “repentance.” Listen to his words. “Repent, for the kingdom of God is at hand.”<sup>5</sup> That is when these stubborn and mis-taught people begged John for an answer. “What then shall we do?”<sup>6</sup> they said. John taught them they needed to be repent, they needed to apologize to God.



Then one day a man walked by. John knew this man. As He walked by John shouted to the crowd, “Behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!”<sup>7</sup>

From that point John knew his ministry must diminish while Jesus’ ministry grew.<sup>8</sup> From that point on he preached all that much harder and longer. So much so that he even got the attention of king Herod. That eventually got him killed. It was Jesus who said of him, “There is no greater man born of woman.”<sup>9</sup> With those words Jesus called John the most humble man to ever live. Was it not Jesus who taught, “The last shall be first?”<sup>10</sup>

So what does true Christian humility look like? How do we live truly Christian lives? Do we have to live like John the Baptist? Should we sell everything we have, trek out into the woods, and start preaching up a storm? Should we allow ourselves to be stepped on, and tread

5 Matthew 3:1-3

6 Luke 3:14

7 John 1:29-30

8 John 3:30

9 Matthew 11:11

10 Matthew 20:16

on? Does this mean we are required to be door mats that people wipe their feet upon? Does this mean we should have no pride in anything we say or do? If that is what God has truly called you to do, sure, but maybe you have not been called to that sort of task.

The answer to these questions is most probably for all of us, “No.” We do not have to do any of those things to live a humble Christian life. John had to because John was called to a very special task. You were also called to a very special task but not the same one as John the Baptist. Some of you are called to raise your children and teach them about Jesus. Some of you are called to work in a place where your hard and trustworthy work bares a Christian witness to those who see your work.

The point is a humble Christian is not one who goes out praying loudly on the street corners so everyone can see how holy they are. A humble Christian doesn't go around preaching about how holy and pious they are. A humble Christian doesn't go around condemning everyone for being less of a Christian than they are.

A humble Christian is one who does the work placed before them well, and in a trustworthy manner. A humble Christian is one who delves into, and studies, God's Word so that when they are asked a question about their faith they will know the answer. A humble Christian is welcoming and gracious to friends and strangers alike. A humble Christian is one who respectfully and faithfully comes to worship the Lord.

In other words a humble Christian is one who lives the way the Bible teaches us to live. By being good, stable, productive members of society. Always willing and able to speak about your faith, not with fancy words and Scripture verses memorized; not by quoting book, chapter and verse; not by preaching and condemning, but rather just, in your own words, telling what you have learned.

You see, that is the ultimate goal of every humble Christian. To point not to themselves but rather to point to Jesus. We do that in our words, with our actions, and by the way we reach out to strangers.

A humble Christian can take pride, and should take pride, in being a humble Christian. A humble Christian can take pride in their congregation when those people obey God and serve the community. So long as the pride is in how well those things are accomplished not how well we talk about accomplishing them.

John the Baptist was proud of his work. He was not fearful or timid. He was bold to perform every task God placed before him. It was Paul who wrote, “God did not give you a spirit of fear, but rather a spirit of power.”<sup>11</sup> Power to proclaim Christ as Lord in action and words. Always in Jesus’ name. That is what the Christmas season is about. Proclaiming and celebrating the One who is to come. Jesus Christ the Lord.

Amen.