

Sermon for The 1st Sunday in Advent

Date: December 1, 2019

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

Hymns:

LSB 333 – Once He Came in Blessing

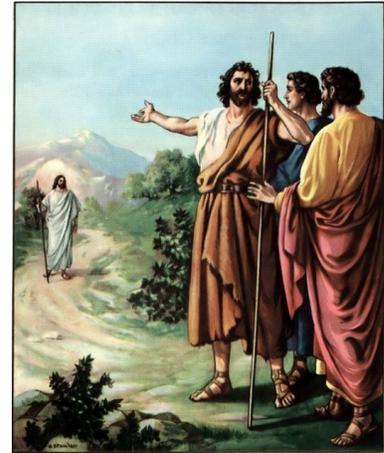
LSB 357 – O Come, O Come, Emmanuel
Rejoice, Rejoice, O Zion's Daughter
In This Advent

O Holy, Holy, Holy Lord

LSB 332 – Savior of the Nations Come

LSB 348 – The King Shall Come When Morning Dawns

LSB 350 – Come, Thou Precious Ransom, Come



Distribution:

LSB 334 – O Lord, How Shall I Meet You

LSB 331 – The Advent of Our King
Lord, Let Your Servant Go in Peace

Liturgy:

Divine Service: Creative Worship



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Text: Malachi 3:1-7

“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.

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 priests and teachers 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 have not yet been destroyed. 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.

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

Today we are 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 shows us something of humility, of being humble before God.

There is a common theme throughout the Bible. God doesn't like the proud. For those who think more highly of themselves than they do of others there is little patience from God. God is consistently patient with the humble. With those who serve Him and respect Him He has always displayed eternal patience and forgiveness, but for those who like to brag about how their lives please God more, how important they are, or how faithful they are, for them God's temper is short.

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 soon to be father, named Zachariah. Gabriel told him, "You will have a son."¹ Zachariah questioned Gabriel's words and for his disbelief he was punished. He was unable to speak for about a year.

During that time his wife, Elizabeth, became pregnant. That child, in accordance with the instructions Gabriel brought from God, was named John.² The Holy Spirit was within John even before he was born. When Mary came to visit Zachariah and Elizabeth John leaped in Elizabeth's womb upon knowing that Jesus, who was six months younger, was near.³

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

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.

Who is the messenger? Who will prepare the way for God? We now know him as John the Baptist. The last prophet to proclaim the coming of the Messiah. It was

1 Luke 1:13

2 John means "God is Gracious"

3 Luke 1:40

he who said, “Prepare the way for the Lord.”⁴ This is the fascinating wonder of the Bible. Here Malachi, who lived nearly 500 years before John the Baptist, 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 will prepare the way for another who is to be born, God. God, who we now know is Jesus the Holy Christ of God. He is the Messiah called Immanuel which means, “God is With Us.”

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 does not 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 Authority was 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. They came to hear John. John taught them 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.⁵ He warned every one of them they 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.”⁶ That is when these stubborn and mis-taught people begged John for an answer.

4 Luke 3:4-6

5 Psalm 51:16-17

6 Matthew 3:1-3

“What then shall we do?” they said.

John taught them they needed to be baptized. Now John’s baptism was not the same baptism that you received. John’s baptism was only an apology for sin. It helped the people understand that their sins were washed away, but with that baptism the people were made to understand that God wanted a sacrifice of the heart, more than sacrifices of bulls and rams.⁸ That is what John continued to teach. People went out to see him in droves. Great crowds trekked out into the desert to see and hear him speak. Then they all walked down into that little muddy creek called the Jordan river and they were baptized.

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!”⁹ From that point John knew his ministry must diminish, while Jesus’ ministry grew.¹⁰ 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.”¹¹ With those words Jesus called John the most humble man to ever live.

So what does true Christian humility look like? 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 when they are asked a question about their faith they will have an answer. A humble Christian is welcoming and gracious to friends and strangers alike. A humble Christian is one who faithfully comes to worship the Lord regularly, and then puts into practice what they have learned. In other words a humble Christian is one who lives the way the Bible teaches us to live. Always willing and able to speak about your faith, not with fancy words and tomes of memorized Scripture verses; not by quoting book, chapter and verse; not by preaching and condemning; not by rules and regulations, but rather, 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 Jesus. We do that in our words, with our actions, and by the way we reach out to strangers and visitors.

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

7 Luke 3:14

8 Isaiah 1:11

9 John 1:29-30

10 John 3:30

11 Matthew 11:11

did not give you a spirit of fear, but rather a spirit of power.¹²” Power to proclaim Christ as Lord in action and words. Always in Jesus’ name. That is what the Advent season is about. Getting ready, proclaiming, and celebrating the One who is to come. Jesus Christ the Lord.

Amen.