

St. Luke Ev. Lutheran Church
Advent 2 Series C. December 9, 2012
Sermon by Pastor Anthony E. Schultz
Malachi 3:1-4



3.1 “I will send my messenger, who will prepare the way before me. Then suddenly the Lord you are seeking will come to his temple; the messenger of the covenant, whom you desire, will come,” says the LORD Almighty. ² But who can endure the day of his coming? Who can stand when he appears? For he will be like a refiner’s fire or a launderer’s soap. ³ He will sit as a refiner and purifier of silver; he will purify the Levites and refine them like gold and silver. Then the LORD will have men who will bring offerings in righteousness, ⁴ and the offerings of Judah and Jerusalem will be acceptable to the LORD, as in days gone by, as in former years.

People of God – rescued from the flaming lake of fire in hell by the innocent blood of the very Lamb of God:

I was eating my breakfast waffle with red raspberry jam with lots of little seeds – washed down with Highlander Grogg – watching the news. They interviewed a former Navy SEAL named Cade Courtley. Cade has written a book – The SEAL Survival Guide. **Think and act like a Navy SEAL, and you can survive anything. The world is a dangerous place. You can live scared – or be prepared.** Cade says you need to be thinking all the time – think about all the things that could go wrong! Someone could break into your home – an intruder with a sledge hammer – hammers your doorknob – and takes two giant steps forward. He’s in your house! What are you going to do? Do you know? Buy the book and Cade will teach you how to improvise weapons from everyday items. There’s a chapter on how to treat injuries – if you are the first person on the scene of a car accident with injuries. What do you do if suddenly a tornado comes through Dodge and Jefferson Counties – and your house is blowing all the way to Kansas? What do you do if the squirrel in your bird feeder suddenly attacks you! This book provides step by step instructions so you will be prepared, feel confident, step up and know exactly how to survive

any life-threatening situation! Sounds good – to be prepared so you will be a survivor and not a statistic. The only problem is – the worst dangers are not physical. The worst dangers are spiritual. The devil will continue to attack our faith – right up to the moment when Jesus returns on Judgment Day! This second Sunday in Advent God’s Word reminds us:

Suddenly The Lord Is Coming!

1. He will purify us

2. He will make us pure to serve Him.

The part of God’s Word we are concentrating on today is from the scroll of the prophet Malachi. The People’s Bible Commentary that contains Malachi was written by Pastor Eric Hartzell. Pastor Hartzell was a tutor when I was a student at Northwestern College. Pastor Hartzel is a missionary. He was a missionary in Africa. He was a missionary in Japan. He is a missionary in the Apache Mission by Eastfork, Arizona. Pastor Hartzel is a relative/son-in-law of our member Mr. Martin Lohmiller! Malachi proclaimed law and gospel about the same time as Nehemiah. The Temple had been rebuilt. From the first light – until the sun went down – God’s people brought sacrifices – lambs and sheep and goats and bulls and doves. People brought wheat and wine and olive oil. But they weren’t bringing the best. They were bringing sheep that were crippled or diseased! They were bringing the leftovers! Thank-offerings that weren’t very thank-ful! Sacrifices that were anything but a sacrifice. Animals that weren’t good for anything else – so they gave it to their Heavenly Father. And their Heavenly Father wasn’t pleased. **“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. My name will be great among the nations, from the rising to the setting of the sun. In every place incense and pure offering will be brought to my name, because my name will be great among the nations, “ says the LORD Almighty... “When you bring injured, crippled or diseased animals and offer them as sacrifices, should I accept them from your hands?” says the LORD. “Cursed is the cheat who has an acceptable male in his flock and vows to give it, but then sacrifices a blemished animal to the Lord. For I am a great king,” says the LORD Almighty, “And my name is to be feared among the nations.**
Malachi 1:10f

It has been said marriage and the family are under withering attack by the devil. This is nothing new. Over 500 years ago – Martin Luther said one of the signs of the times was the fact that people treated marriage and the family with such disrespect. Some 2,400 years ago – marriage and the family were under attack by the devil. Malachi wrote that the LORD hated what was happening to families – to spouses and their children. There are also powerful Gospel promises in Malachi. The LORD called his people to faithful stewardship – faithful management of all the LORD has trusted to us. To people required to bring 10% in thank-offerings the LORD said, **“Bring the whole tithe into the storehouse, that there may be food in my house. Test me in this,”** says the LORD Almighty, **“and see if I will not throw open the floodgates of heaven and pour out so much blessing that there will not be room enough to store it. I will prevent the pests from devouring your crops, and the vines in your fields will not drop their fruit before it is ripe,”** says the LORD Almighty. **“Then all the nations will call you blessed, for yours will be a delightful land,”** says the LORD Almighty. Malachi 3:10-12 You cannot out-give God! His hands are so big – his heart so generous! Just try him out! I think it’s fair to say already – that God has blessed us so much! Look at your refrigerator! Isn’t the door full of things you put on top of food? Who can eat a taco without taco sauce? Who had have steak without A-1? Who can have Chinese without soy sauce? Who can have ice cream without hot fudge or butter scotch or caramel? Who can have salad without salad dressing? Put more than one dressing on the same salad and people will say – you must be from Wisconsin! We have food in our refrigerator. You have to be careful you don’t push something to the back – that is time sensitive! In the side by side freezer we have pizzas and bagels and waffles and sprouts from Brussels and sweet corn and pieces of fish and French fries and more! We have clothes in our walk in closets and tools in our garage. We have a storage room in the basement with seasonal decorations and stuffed animals for children’s devotions and more! We have a small shed outside that has hoses and yard equipment. And soon under our Christmas tree there will be even more! God has blessed us in countless ways! Are we content? Are we thankful? Or do we grumble and complain and waste? These attitudes are nothing new! There are thousands of years old. The Christ-child was born to rescue us from a heart and attitude that is all caught up in the pursuit of things and stuff – especially at Christmas time!

3.1 "I will send my messenger, who will prepare the way before me. This is of course John the Baptist! John was different on the outside. He didn't ever shave or trim his beard or cut his hair. Can you imagine how long his beard would be? He would look like those ZZ Top guys. He would look like Samuel. He would look like Samson. The apostle Paul might have looked kind of like that – from time to time – taking the vow of a Nazarite – dedicated completely to his Heavenly Father. John the Baptist didn't drink wine or any strong drink like that. John the Baptist didn't go by anyone dead. **The wages of sin is death!** Death is because of sin! Death is the last enemy. And Jesus was born to destroy death and to bring life and immortality to light! John the Baptist was born to prepare hearts. You hear about the road construction John came to do by the power of the Holy Spirit in the hearts, attitudes and lives of God's people. John preached a message of repentance – which is entirely appropriate for Advent! Remember Isaiah chapter 40 – the start of the second part of Isaiah – the part that is by far mostly Gospel? **Comfort, comfort my people, says your God. Speak tenderly to Jerusalem, and proclaim to her that her hard service has been completed, that her sin has been paid for, that she has received from the LORD's hand double for all her sins. A voice of one calling: "In the wilderness prepare the way for the LORD; make straight in the desert a highway for our God. Every valley shall be raised up, every mount and hill made low; the rough ground shall become level, the rugged places a plain. And the glory of the LORD will be revealed, and all the people will see it together. For the mouth of the LORD has spoken. Isaiah 40:1-5**

Then suddenly the Lord you are seeking will come to his temple; the messenger of the covenant, whom you desire, will come," says the LORD Almighty. ² But who can endure the day of his coming? Who can stand when he appears? For he will be like a refiner's fire or a launderer's soap. There are all kinds of stains. It can happen very easily. I was on the road the other day – and went through the McDonald's drive through. It is one of my pet peeves – that you can buy a filet-o fish sandwich and the bottom of the bun is here – the fish over here – the little square of cheese over here – the ginormous squeeze of tartar sauce almost anywhere – and then the little bun on the top. You have to be very greasy stain on my Jerry Garcia necktie! How do you get the grease out? One of

the very worst – when we first built our house – someone was having a hot-dog – squirted lots of mustard on it. And then their paper plate buckled under the weight – and the mustard went on the carpet. You can have a trained professional come over – and they put juice on that stain again and again – cover it up and uncover it – and brush it and clean it – and still they work on it! It’s almost impossible to get that yellow out! Jesus took away the damnable stain of all our sins!

God’s Word says – the prophet Malachi wrote: **³ He will sit as a refiner and purifier of silver; he will purify the Levites and refine them like gold and silver. Then the LORD will have men who will bring offerings in righteousness, ⁴ and the offerings of Judah and Jerusalem will be acceptable to the LORD, as in days gone by, as in former years.**

Our Heavenly Father will send his Son to take away all our guilty stains. He will wash us spiritually clean. He will rescue us! You must have heard about the Korean man in New York who was pushed off the subway platform and then was hit by a train. His picture – just moments before the train hit him – was splashed on the front page of a tabloid newspaper! The question is – why didn’t somebody – anybody try and help him back onto the platform? The man who took the picture – had time to aim and focus his camera – and take a picture! He said there wasn’t time. How much time did he have? 22 seconds – he said – 22 seconds. What can you do in 22 seconds – if literally your life – or the life of someone you loved hung in the balance? What could you do in 22 seconds? I dare say – *something*. And if you couldn’t all by yourself – couldn’t you call to other people – and together do something? At least try? Cade Courtley – the former Navy SEAL who wrote the book about survival says you need to be thinking all the time – all the time – if suddenly someone was in terrible distress – in life or death danger what would you do? What would you need? How would you act? More important than saving anyone from any terrible physical danger – is to always remember Jesus saved us from eternal death and destruction. So whenever Jesus returns – He will make us ready to welcome Him. This Advent/Christmas time – watch and pray. Jesus is coming! Jesus is coming soon! Amen!

To God alone all Glory!

Pastor Anthony E. Schultz