

Twenty-Sixth Sunday After Pentecost

Malachi 4: 1-6

November 17, 2013

My Fellow Redeemed In Christ,

The Prophet Malachi Lived In Difficult Days. The People Of Israel Had Returned From Their Seventy Years Of Captivity In Babylon. But Things Were A Mess. They Were Still Relatively Small Number Of People Surrounded By More Powerful Nations. Rebuilding Jerusalem And The Temple Were Not Going According To Plan. Compared To The Glory Days Of King David And King Solomon Israel Was A Pathetic Shadow Of What It Once Was. And The People Started To Doubt God's Love And His Promises. Many Of The Priests As Well As The People Had Become Unfaithful To God And His Word, Worshiping In False Way And Living Sinful Lives....Especially The Younger People Which Saddened Their Parents. And Because Of All Of These Problems Some Of The People Sat In Judgment Of God Accusing Him Of Not Being Fair. And For The Faithful This Was All So Very Sad And Discouraging. But God Gave Them The Prophet Malachi To Encourage Them And Give Them Hope. And We Need To Hear This Message Of Malachi Today. We Too Can Become Discouraged By What We See And Experience In This Life Including The Church..... With All The Problems In The World It Seems At Times As If There Is No God....Or That He Doesn't Care, The Most Recent Example Is That Terrible Typhoon In The Philippines. And It Seems That So Often Evil People Prosper And Succeed While Those Who Try To Do What Is Right Get Trampled On. You Know What They Say....: **"Nice Guys Finish Last."** And To Make Matters Worse There Seems To Be So Many Problems Even In The Christian Church. It's Divided Into Hundreds And Of Different Denominations That Teach Different Things And Worship In Different Ways. It's Filled With Scandals Such As Greed, Corruption And Immorality Including Pedophile Priests. And Like In Malachi's Day Many Young People Drift Away From Their Faith And The Church. This Can All Be Very Discouraging To God's Faithful People. And So We Too Need To Hear The Message Of Malachi The Prophet. And What Is That Message? **"God Judges And Saves"**

I. Do You Know That God Has Already Punished All The Evil Things Of This World? It's True. That's What Happened When Jesus Died On That Cross Long Ago.

A. Through The Prophet Malachi God Comforted His People That His Long Promised Savior Was Indeed Coming. God Says, **"Behold, I Will Send You Elijah The Prophet Before The Great And Awesome Day Of The Lord Comes. And He Will Turn The Hearts Of Fathers To Their Children And The Hearts Of Children To Their Fathers....." (Vv. 5 & 6, Esv).** Malachi Was Speaking About John The Baptizer Who Prepared The Way For Jesus As Luke Says In His Gospel: **"And He Will Turn Many Of The Children Of Israel To The Lord Their God, And He Will Go Before Him In The Spirit And**

**Power Of Elijah, To Turn The Hearts Of The Fathers To The Children, And The Disobedient To The Wisdom Of The Just, To Make Ready For The Lord A People Prepared” (1: 16, 17, Esv).** Amazing Isn't It? These Words Are Almost An Exact Fulfillment Of What Malachi Says. John Prepared The Way For Jesus By Preaching God's Law Against Sin And Warning Of God's Judgment And Punishment If People Did Not Repent As Again We Read In Luke's Gospel: **"He Said Therefore To The Crowds That Came Out To Be Baptized By Him, “You Brood Of Vipers! Who Warned You To Flee From The Wrath To Come? 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. Even Now The Axe Is Laid To The Root Of The Trees. Every Tree Therefore That Does Not Bear Good Fruit Is Cut Down And Thrown Into The Fire” (1: 7-9, Esv).** Now This Is Not Complicated. Just As Only Sick People Go To The Doctor...Just Only Hungry People Will Eat ...And Just As Only Thirsty People Will Drink.....So Likewise Only People Who Know That They Are Sinners Will Believe In Jesus For Forgiveness And Life As Jesus Says **"For I Came Not To Call The Righteous, But Sinners" (Matt. 9: 13, Esv).** You Can't Have Anything To Do With Jesus Unless You Know That You Have Sinned Against God And That You Deserve Nothing From Him Except His Wrath And Eternal Punishment. That Was John's Message...But After John Jesus Came ....And He Had A Different Message Than John Had: He Proclaimed God's Love And Forgiveness. And Then On The Cross He Demonstrated That Love Dying For The Sins Of All Of Mankind....And With That Death Cancelled The Debt Of Sin That Mankind Owed To God. This Means That All Of The Evil That You See In The World And Even In The Church Has Already Been Punished By God In The Death Of His Son. Amazing Isn't It? But True.....And This Is Why God's Forgiveness Is Found Only In Jesus Christ.....

B. And Now God Uses The Christian Church To Bring This Same Message Of Law And Gospel To The World As Jesus Says In Luke's Gospel: **“Thus It Is Written, That The Christ Should Suffer And On The Third Day Rise From The Dead, And That Repentance And Forgiveness Of Sins Should Be Proclaimed In His Name To All Nations, Beginning From Jerusalem (24: 46, 47, Esv).** And This Is What We Do Each And Every Sunday.....At The Beginning Of The Service We Confess To God And One Another That We Are Sinners Who Have Offended God And Deserve Nothing From Him But His Present And Eternal Punishment. Do You Really Believe That? And What Else Did We Say To God And One Another? This--**For The Sake Of Your Son, Jesus Christ, Have Mercy On Us. Forgive Us, Renew Us, And Lead Us, So That We May Delight In Your Will And Walk In Your Ways To The Glory Of Your Holy Name. Amen.** And Today In This Service You Receive Exactly What You Want And Need: God's Forgiveness....Pastor Mankin Gave It To You After You Confessed You Sins.....God's Forgiveness Is Given To Every Time You Remember Your Baptism And Its Promises....I Am Giving You God's Forgiveness Right Now In This Sermon.....And For Those Who Later Will Come To The Lord's Table

God's Forgiveness Will Once Again Be Given To You With Very Body And Blood Of Jesus To Eat And To Drink.... All You Have To Do Is Receive It.....Believe It And It Is Yours. There Is No Reason For You To Leave This Service Today Without Knowing That God Loves You And Forgives You All Of Your Sins.

ii. In Malachi's Day The World Was Also Sinful And Violent Just Like Ours. It Often Seemed That As There Was No God. God's People Often Wondered Why God Didn't Do Something. And Just Like Today The Church Was A Mess Too....Filled With False Teachings And Corruptions. Most Of God's People Were Unfaithful. And So Those Who Were Faithful Need Some Encouragement. And God Gave It To Them Through Malachi Who Reminded Them That One Day God Would Judge And Punish All Evil And Save And Glorify All Those Who Trusted In Him....This Is The Judgment Day.

A. Yes, Even The Old Testament Talks About A Judgment Day When God Will Punish All Of Those Who Have Not Trusted In The Messiah: Jesus Christ: **"For Behold, The Day Is Coming, Burning Like An Oven, When All The Arrogant And All Evildoers Will Be Stubble. The Day That Is Coming Shall Set Them Ablaze....So That It Will Leave Them Neither Root Nor Branch" (V.1).** In The Bible Fire Is A Common Symbol For God's Judgment On Unrepentant Sinners. Fire Destroys; Fire Consumes. And The Fire Of His Judgment Is Unstoppable.....As Also The Prophet Nahum Says: **"Who Can Stand Before His Indignation? Who Can Endure The Heat Of His Anger? His Wrath Is Poured Out Like Fire" (1: 6, Esv).** In This World Justice Is Imperfect. It Seems That People Often Get Away With All Kinds Of Things Or That They Are Not Punished As They Should Be. But God's Judgment Is Perfect. He Sees Everything. Nothing Can Be Hidden From Him. And A Day Is Coming When This World Will End And Everyone Will Be Raised From The Dead To Be Judge By God As Paul Says In His Letter To The Romans: **"...The Whole World May Be Held Accountable To God" (3: 19, Esv).** And God's Judgment Will Be So Thorough, So Complete That Those Who Are Judged Malachi Says **"...Will Be Stubble.....Leaving Them Neither Root Nor Branch" (V. 1 Esv).** Without Jesus Christ People Will Be Damned To Hell For Eternity....Why? Well, Because God Is Perfectly Holy And Perfectly Just He Must Judge Sin And Sinners. But The Good News Of The Gospel Is That The Sin Of All Mankind Has Already Been Punished In The Death Of Jesus. But If They Will Not Trust In Jesus.....Then They Will Have To Be Punished For Their Sins.....They Will. For The Judgment Day Is All About Justice And The Punishment Of Wrong Doing.

B. On The Other Hand...Everyone Who Has Trusted In God's Mercy And Forgiveness In Jesus Christ Will Be Saved From God's Judgment As God Says Through Malachi: **"But...For You Who Fear My Name The Sun Of Righteousness Shall Rise With Healing In Its Wings. You Shall Go Out Leaping Like Calves From The Stall And You Shall Tread Down The Wicked, For They Will Be Ashes Under The Soles Of Your Feet, On The Day When I act, Says The Lord Of Hosts" (Vv. 2, 3 Esv).** What A Difference. Not One Word Of Condemnation. Not One Word About God's Wrath. Why Not? Because

These Are The People Who Have, As God Says **"Feared My Name"**. In Other Words These Are The People Who Repented Of Their Sins And Trusted In The Messiah, Jesus Christ, And Received God's Love, Mercy And Forgiveness. In Jesus Christ The Warm Sun Of God's Love And Righteousness Shines On People. In Other Words Jesus Shares His Perfect Righteousness With Us So That God's Considers Us To Be Righteous In His Sight As Paul Says In His Letter To The Philippians: **"...Not Having A Righteousness Of My Own That Comes From The Law, But That Which Comes Through Faith In Christ, The Righteousness From God That Depends On Faith" (3: 9, Esv).** This Is Why We Do Not Have To Fear The Judgment Day. All Of Our Sins Have Already Been Punished On The Cross Where Jesus Died For Us. In Him We Are Righteous Before God. This Is The **"Healing"** That Malachi Mentions. It Is The Spiritual Healing Of A Restored Relationship With God. And So For Those Who Trust In Jesus Christ We Will Have A Wonderful Joy On The Day Of The Resurrection A Joy Which Is Described By Malachi As **"...Leaping Like Calves From The Stall (V. 2, Esv).** Since Most Of You Are City Slickers You Might Not Have Ever Seen A Young Calf Leaping. But It Is A Joyous Sight! Indeed God Is Saying What Jesus Says In Luke's Gospel: **"Rejoice In That Day, And Leap For Joy, For Behold, Your Reward Is Great In Heaven" (6; 24, Esv).**

Conclusion: So Then What Is God Telling Us This Morning Through Malachi?.....It Is This: Whatever You See And Experience In This Life...Even In The Church...Don't Give Up, Don't Become Discouraged .., Don't Loose Your Focus, Don't Drift From Your Faith And His Church.... But Be Faithful In Your Attendance At The Divine Service, Read And Study God's Word...Daily Remember Your Baptismal Promises...Come To The Lord's Supper Often.....In Other Words, Live Under His Grace And Forgiveness, And...Continue To Live Your Life For Him Who Came That First Time To Give Himself For You On The Cross.....And When He Comes Again...Well.....When He Comes Again...You Will Be More Than Glad That You Remained Faithful... Yes, You Will Be More Than Glad .....Amen.