

## SECOND SUNDAY IN ADVENT - Populus Zion December 4, 2022

**Readings:** Malachi 4: 1-6, Romans 15: 4-13, Luke 21: 25-36

### ***The Lord Comes on the Last Day***

The day on which our Lord returns will be a “*great and awesome day*” (Mal. 4:5). For He will come in a cloud with great power and glory. To the wicked and the proud, it will be a Day of judgment that will “*set them ablaze*” (Mal. 4:1). The signs preceding this Day will bring them fear and fainting. But to those who believe, who fear the name of the Lord, this Day is one to look forward to and rejoice in: “. . . *straighten up and raise your heads, because your redemption is drawing near*” (Luke 21:28). Christ our Redeemer is coming; the Sun of Righteousness will bring healing in His wings. Let us, then, give attention to the words of the Lord, which do not pass away. Let us “*through endurance and through the encouragement of the Scriptures*” (Rom. 15:4) be strengthened in our hope by the Holy Spirit and watch diligently for Jesus’ coming. Then, by God’s grace, we shall escape all these things that will come to pass and stand before the Son of Man.

### **Sermon Transcript:**

Grace, mercy and peace be to you from our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Amen.

So our Old Testament lesson is the book of Malachi. Malachi is the last book in the Old Testament, the last counsel of God before the coming of Christ. He's not the last prophet of the Old Testament because that distinction goes to John the Baptist. Even though John the Baptist is completely written about in the New Testament, he really is an Old Testament prophet because He points to Jesus before Jesus comes around and he dies before Jesus dies on the cross. So he is technically in the Old Testament and he's talked about here in Malachi.

Malachi was written roughly 400 years before Jesus comes around and here we have some prophecy of the coming of the Messiah. But we have two visions or two images of the coming. And with prophecy in the Old Testament especially, we need to recognize that it's hard to tell from a distance what is really about the first coming of Christ and what is about the second coming of Christ. It's like, whenever you're driving, probably not in Florida because there's no mountains in Florida, but elsewhere where there's mountains, when you look at mountain ranges, if you see them far off, it's hard to tell distances. But as you get closer, you recognize that the first mountain range is a lot further away from the second mountain range than it seemed when you were far off. So it's the same thing with prophecy.

In the Old Testament, they see the coming of Christ. It's hard to tell whether it's the first coming, His advent here on earth or it's His second coming, Him coming with glory to bring us with Him. And so they get intermingled sometimes. And that's what's happening in Malachi. The first part of this is really focused and seems to be focused upon His second coming. He's going to come and all the evildoers will be stubble and they shall set them a blaze, the world will be destroyed by fire and recreated. He will not leave either root nor branch. But for us who fear God, He will bring healing. The fire that destroys the evil will heal us and restore us and make us to leap like calves from the stall. I don't know about you, but physically I'm not leaping like I used to. It's a little bit more thought involved in where I step and where I leap the older I get. I'm a lot more cautious. But here, it's talking about the joy of the salvation of God being so enthusiastic and so deep inside of

you that you leap for joy because you are restored. The aches and the pains and the old age that you're suffering right now is what we deal with because of sin. But when He comes as the healing Son to heal us, all of the ill effects of sin will be destroyed. Our diseases, our aches, our pains, our aging, our dying will be gone and we will be like newborn calves, joyful and exuberant in the love of God. And what an exciting and wonderful day that will be. And we even talked about the ashes. The wicked will be ashes in our feet, but we will rise out of the ashes to new life in Christ.

But then he goes on to talk about the first coming where he talks about He will send Elijah the prophet. Elijah was out in the wilderness and he proclaimed the coming of the king. This is in essence a prophecy of John the Baptist coming where he will prepare the hearts and minds to repent for the kingdom of God is at hand and brings about the inauguration of the ministry of Jesus.

Jesus even into His ministry talks about the end of all things and He talks about how all will be destroyed away. There'll be signs in this world, but we know that when we see these things, we can still have hope. If you look around this world, how do people deal with the chaos and the trials and the tribulations of this world? It seems like it's getting worse. Has there been evil in this world from Adam and Eve's eating of the fruit till now? Absolutely. Has there been wars and rumors of wars? Absolutely. Has there been persecution and famine? Yes, of course. But it seems like we as a people are losing hope in the Word of God, that evil is leading, that we're hearing more and more about what mankind wants to hear, that we are in control. And it's leading to a lot of depression and anxiety in this world.

The more we cast off God and His promises, the more we see depression, anxiety, suicide and confusion of brain and mind and purpose, which either leads to dissipation and drunkenness, wild and wanton living because let's eat and drink and be merry for tomorrow we die and it all doesn't matter. Or it leads to the weighing down with the cares of this world, depression and anxiety. But we on the other hand, are filled with the Word of God. We are filled with hope. And so when we look around, we do not see the horrors alone, but we see the signs that He is coming soon. And we look forward with anticipation to His coming. And so as we wait for His coming, we stand tall and we raise our head in hope and glory and anticipation. In other words, well, you don't look around the world and get depressed, "Oh man, I cannot believe what's going on." Well, we might do that for a moment, but then we need to turn to the Word of God, which says, "Know the times." Yes, there is struggle. Yes, there is evil, but God has called us and chosen us and we are His children and we are called to live in harmony with one another, to glorify God and to welcome one another as Christ welcomes you.

Think of how different that is in our world today. We are called to be a welcoming and joyful society of people that when they look at us, they wonder why are we so at peace with this world? And if you are not, at peace it's time to focus more upon what Christ is doing than what the world is doing. It's time to put your hope in Christ alone because He is our salvation, not just for the Jews but also for the Gentiles.

The beauty here that Paul writing to Romans is that not many of us can trace our lineage back to Jewish descent. We technically don't have the DNA of the people of God. And yet through our baptisms and through the grace of God, we have been grafted in to the line of David. We have been grafted in to the nation of Israel, so that all who call upon the name of the Lord, Jews, Gentiles, anybody, all who call upon the name of the Lord will be saved.

We know that we are part of that kingdom. We know that Christ is coming soon. Jesus said, "This generation will not pass away until all has taken place." He died to forgive our sins. He accomplished everything that was necessary in that generation. All that's left is for us to believe and He gives that to us as a gift. And we can stand firm in the joy of our salvation and in the confidence of His love and His mercy and His grace.

Do not let the cares of this world weigh you down. Do not let the cares of your own individual life weigh you down, but turn your eyes to Christ. Turn your eyes upward in the hope and the anticipation of His coming again. When you will be restored and all the cares of this world will be gone. Even the tears will be wiped from our eyes. The tears of our mourning and our sorrow and our fear are gone in Christ.

"Do not be afraid. I am with you always to the very end of the age." Christ has done it all. He has conquered all, He is Lord of all. And into His lordship, He has adopted you and brought you into the kingdom and you are all princes and princesses in the kingdom of God. You are inheritors of all of the blessings of Christ.

What's there to be afraid of? What is there to be worried about? God has you in the palm of His hand and nothing can take you or snatch you out of it. Trust in the Lord. Look in hope and joy and anticipation. And love everybody because God loves them as well and we want them to know the peace that we have.

May that grace and that mercy and that peace be and abide with you always now and forever more unto life everlasting. Amen.