

Second Sunday of End Times *Last Judgement* – November 8, 2015
Good Shepherd Ev. Lutheran Church

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(Malachi 4:1-2 NIV)

"Surely the day is coming; it will burn like a furnace. All the arrogant and every evildoer will be stubble, and that day that is coming will set them on fire," says the LORD Almighty. "Not a root or a branch will be left to them. 2) But for you who revere my name, the sun of righteousness will rise with healing in its wings.

Fellow Believers of our Lord Jesus Christ;

Last September 27 there was a rare total lunar eclipse of a super full moon. The next such event won't occur again until October 8, 2033. In keeping with that event there were some religious groups and preachers who announced that that event would mark the end of the world. Alleged predictions concerning the end of the world have been so frequent and so mistaken that no doubt, many simply disregard any idea of a day of reckoning and judgment including the prophecies of Scripture.

As Christians, we need to walk a fine line at times – don't we? We don't want to get alarmed and carried away every time another doomsday prediction surfaces. However, by the same token, we don't want to get so calloused to the idea that we reject what the Bible truly teaches concerning the Last Judgment.

Sadly even religious people often end up believing many things that are contrary to the Scriptures about the end times. Among the more common false beliefs is one made popular in movies like the science fiction thriller "2012" that there will be those who survive the end times. Perhaps you have heard someone speak of the rapture – in a simple way those who believe in the rapture think that when the Lord returns to this world again, he will take believers to himself and leave behind all those who do not believe. However, this teaching is not really found in the Bible, as some claim. The Bible, both Old and New Testament speaks of the Last Judgment as a day of rescue for the faithful and a day of punishment for the unfaithful.

Something else that many people, again including many who call themselves Christians, forget is that no one knows the time nor the hour of our Lord's return. Jesus warns us: (Mark 13:32-33 NIV) **"No one knows about that day or hour, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father. 33) Be on guard! Be alert ! You do not know when that time will come.**

Our OT lesson for today reminds us

Theme: Surely the Day is Coming

1. When the arrogant will burn like stubble
2. When the righteous will shine like the Son

May the Holy Spirit use our study of this portion of his Word of Truth to warn us and prepare us for the day of our Lord's return, whenever it might happen. The words of our text could be called the beginning of the end. These are the first verses in the final chapter of the OT – the final OT prophecy regarding the fiery end of this sinful world. God's people had long complained that the "evil doers prosper, and even those who challenge God escape." (Cf. Malachi 3:15) Based on this faulty perception, many concluded that it was "futile to serve God." (cf. 3:14) God's people today are tempted to raise the same complaint as we see the increasing wickedness of our society and as we come to the realization that we live in a society that claims to tolerate all beliefs but which in actuality is quick to condemn and reject Scriptural truth. However, the evil doers are not getting away with anything. God sees all and will judge all.

The day is coming when all in the world will know that there truly is a clear “distinction between the righteous and the wicked -- between those who serve God and those who do not.” (cf. 3:18)

"Surely the day is coming; it will burn like a furnace. All the arrogant and every evildoer will be stubble, and that day that is coming will set them on fire," says the LORD Almighty.

Already at the time of Malachi there were scoffers like the ones Peter says will abound prior to our Lord's return. (2 Peter 3:3-4 NIV) **First of all, you must understand that in the last days scoffers will come, scoffing and following their own evil desires. 4) They will say, "Where is this 'coming' he promised? Ever since our fathers died, everything goes on as it has since the beginning of creation."**

In their folly, those who scoff at the Lord's return see his delay as an opportunity to engage in all kinds of sinful behavior and as giving them a license to practice every kind of evil. Sadly today we see evidence of this all around us as more and more efforts to legalize things that God condemns – such as abortion, same-sex marriages – become and more and more a part of the culture of our country.

What fools they are who have mistaken the Lord's patience for apathy and weakness on his part! Truly our generation too needs to hear and take to heart the message that *the Day is Coming When the arrogant will burn like stubble*. The Prophet Malachi warns, “Sinners you are living on borrowed time! The day of judgment will surely come.”

On that day God's anger will burn hot, not like the dancing flames of a campfire, but like the white hot flames of the blast furnace -- **"Surely the day is coming; it will burn like a furnace. All the arrogant and every evildoer will be stubble, and that day that is coming will set them on fire," says the LORD Almighty.**

The prophecy that a day is coming when the arrogant will burn like stubble – like the worthless stubs of grain that are left after the wholesome stalks of grain have been harvested – is no idle threat. This is the word of the Lord, Almighty – the word of the one who has created all things with his powerful word, the one who rules over all, the one who sacrificed his Son to defeat the curse of sin, death and the Devil and who has exalted him as judge of all, the one who is the supreme commander of the angel forces who will do his bidding on the day of judgment as Jesus himself assures us: (Matthew 13:49-50 NIV) **This is how it will be at the end of the age. The angels will come and separate the wicked from the righteous 50) and throw them into the fiery furnace, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.**

The words of our text are the words of the Lord almighty and are intended to serve sinners as a warning to serve the Lord with fear instead of provoking his wrath. And there's one other thought that stands in sharp contrast to the false teachings concerning the end of times – God's judgment will not only be fierce; it will be final. There will be no second chances, no one left behind **"Not a root or a branch will be left to them,"** says Malachi.

Centuries before the time of Malachi the Lord had announced his displeasure with the wicked Kings of Judah but at that time he did not leave them without hope. The prophet Isaiah proclaimed: (Isaiah 11:1 NIV) **A shoot will come up from the stump of Jesse; from his roots a Branch will bear fruit.**

Roots and branches are a sign of hope – this is the time of year when the leaves fall from the trees, the perennial flowers and plants die and wither but their roots do not die – the promise of lush growth and beauty next spring and summer. When the Lord Almighty decrees through his prophet Malachi that not a branch or a root will be left to the arrogant and evildoers he is removing any hope for a second chance. His words confirm

the words of the Proverbs: (Proverbs 11:7 NIV) **When a wicked man dies, his hope perishes; all he expected from his power comes to nothing.**

Such messages and such preaching are not popular today – but that simply makes them all the more important. What purpose does such preaching serve? Through such preaching and through such messages the Holy Spirit accomplishes what is called “his strange work.”

We need the sobering warnings of our text because there is an arrogant side to each of us that wants to believe that there will be no day of accounting and that if he should by some chance return that he will come to give us a warning ticket and a second chance to get our spiritual house in order. The clear message of God’s law in our text rejects any such foolish notions. The prophet warns us that the judgment is coming and that it will be final.

Through his prophet Malachi, the Holy Spirit condemns sins and convicts sinners – preparing them for the wonderful message of the Gospel which proclaims: (Ezekiel 33:11 NIV) **'As surely as I live, declares the Sovereign LORD, I take no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but rather that they turn from their ways and live. Turn! Turn from your evil ways!**

Such preaching works contrition in our hearts – sincere sorrow over our sin that leads us to turn to the Lord to implore his mercy. Such preaching offers hope because the day has not yet come. Right now, there is still a branch and root for those who walk this earth. That hope is none other than the Lord Jesus Christ – the shoot from the stump of Jesse that God himself caused to sprout from David’s line: the Lord, our righteousness! (cf. Jeremiah 33:15-16)

Theme: Surely the Day is Coming

1. When the righteous will shine like the Son

The Lord promises: **But for you who revere my name, the sun of righteousness will rise with healing in its wings.**

Several hundred years after the voice of the OT had fallen silent, God raised up another prophet to proclaim a message of repentance. That prophet was John the Baptist who (Luke 1:76-79 NIV) **would be called a prophet of the Most High; for he would go on before the Lord to prepare the way for him, 77) to give his people the knowledge of salvation through the forgiveness of their sins, 78) because of the tender mercy of our God, by which the rising sun will come to us from heaven 79) to shine on those living in darkness and in the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the path of peace."**

In the fullness of time, God sent his Son to be our righteousness. With his perfect life, he has provided the holiness that we need to enter the home of our holy God. Jesus has already faced God’s judgment for us. He has died for us – paying our penalty for sin and removing any threat of future punishment for us.

When the Lord Jesus spoke about the day of the Lord’s wrath and judgment, he also held out hope to those who honor the name of the Lord by believing in his grace and compassion and standing in reverent awe of him. Jesus proclaimed that on the same day that the angels would get rid of anything that is evil in this world that **the righteous will shine like the sun in the kingdom of their Father.** (cf. Matthew 13:40-43)

Just as the Lord Jesus, God’s Son, shines in glory on high so on the day of his return, we will be glorified. We will shine like the Son of God because a light has shined on the people walking in darkness. God has revealed his Son to us – the one who provides health and healing for us by removing our sins from us. The

psalmist David encourages us to praise the Lord and not to forget his benefits reminding us that he is the one (Psalms 103:3 NIV) **who forgives all your sins and heals all your diseases...**

What precious promises our text holds out to us – promises to those who revere his name, but who might also grow weary from time to time wondering if the Lord really will return! We understand and believe that Christ's righteousness is ours and so we long for that time when we will shine like the Son. We long for the time when sins dark night will be over and sins deadly effects completely set aside. We long for that day when the old order of things will be set aside and there will be perfect joy and happiness for all eternity. As we long for that day, we may grow weary in the battle – our faith may grow weak as it is pelted by the devil's attacks and the doubts of our sinful flesh. Therefore, we need a text like this and we need preaching like this to build up our faith – to reinforce the shield of faith by pointing us to Jesus and all that he has done for us.

Once again let us remind us remind ourselves who has made these promises to us – lest we ignore them like we ignore so many of those false doomsday claims. The one who promises that the injustices we experience in this lifetime will be avenged and that we will shine like the Son is the very one who has created us, redeemed us and set us apart to live in his kingdom – the Lord Almighty.

It is the Lord Almighty who says;

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It is the one who is faithful to his promises and who proved his faithfulness by raising his Son from the dead. (2 Corinthians 1:20 NIV) **No matter how many promises God has made, they are "Yes" in Christ. And so through him the "Amen" is spoken by us to the glory of God.**

We can indeed say amen (so it shall be) to our text – even as we pray Come Lord Jesus. Amen.