

Malachi 4:1-2

Last Judgment; November 11 & 12, 2018

I have to tell you this morning that I'm a little disappointed that the mid-term elections are over. I mean, it was nice to get so much mail and phone calls. It was flattering to realize that so many people valued my opinion. It was heartwarming to realize that so many people had such a deep and personal concern for my welfare. Right?

On the other hand....

One of the things that I find bothersome with election literature or ads is the "dark" and "end of the world" picture that is used to describe the "other guy/gal." *If you don't vote for the person that I like, your life is going to end.* This world will never be the same if you vote for the other person. Yet, I have to be honest, I just find it difficult to believe, that if I make the wrong choice, that ONE person is going to wreak so much havoc and cause so much destruction in my life. Isn't it great to know that Jesus says to us: **"My kingdom is not of this world. If it were, my servants would fight to prevent my arrest by the Jewish leaders. But now my kingdom is from another place."** (John 18:36) That doesn't mean that we should look at the issues facing our life and make the best decision that we can. It does mean, however, that Jesus isn't on the ballot. That means that he will always be with us and go with us, no matter how difficult life can get.

That was Malachi's message to the people of Israel. These words of our text are some of the last words of the entire Old Testament. For the next 400 years, God was not going to speak to his people through the words of a prophet. The next time that he would speak through a person, his name would be John the Baptist.

But that didn't mean that God was abandoning his people, even though many had abandoned him. God had delivered his people from Egypt. Even though we were constantly grumbling and complaining to God, he would still continue to provide for them. He continued to love his people. They would worship false gods. They were immoral. They would lie and cheat. Their leaders and priest were corrupt.

Finally, God punished them by allowing the Assyrians and the Babylonians to conquer them and carry them off into captivity. That brings us to the time of Malachi, about 400 years before the birth of Jesus. God lovingly allowed the Israelites to return to their promised land. But they continued in their sin.

Now God was addressing what was soon going to happen. There was a "day" coming, and coming soon, when everything would be destroyed and every sin would be punished. This was not going to be a good day for sinners. ^{4:1} **"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."** Even that warning was an act of love. God still loved his people. He still was calling them to repentance. Even though there was a Day of Judgment coming, God would still send a Savior to them. He would still keep his promises.

It is that day that God judge all the **arrogant** and **evildoers** of the world. When we look at those people, it is so easy for us to point the finger at those who think that they are better than us. It is easy to look at all those evildoers in the world. But what about us? I think about how many times I place my needs above what my Lord wants. I think of all the times that I have spoken or thought badly about someone. How about you? Are you arrogant or evil? If we look into our hearts, we can't help but answer by saying "yes." We have been arrogant. We have been evil. As Malachi says: **"ALL the arrogant and EVERY evildoer."** There are no exceptions!

As you look at these words of Malachi, there is one little word I want you to look at. It is a short word. It is a familiar word. It is an easy word to remember. Did you figure it out, yet? It is the first word in verse 2: **"BUT for you who revere my name, the sun of righteousness will rise with healing in its wings."** That one little word will be one of the most important words that we will ever hear from the mouth of our God. That one little word is a game changer.

God sees OUR evil. He hates every evil thought, word or action that we have. Yet, he looks at His Son, Jesus, and says that we will have **"healing in its wings."** To the people of Malachi's day it looks like God wasn't coming to their rescue. They were under the control of someone else. Their society is overrun by outsiders. Their economy is in question.

Besides all of that, the Messiah, the Promised One, the Savior hasn't come and there has been no sign of Him coming. All they could do is wait. But they could wait knowing that the **Sun of Righteousness** was coming with healing in his wings.

This last week, we got our first little taste of winter. Maybe you like it. Maybe you find it depressing. The cold and snow is here. But doesn't it change everything when the sun comes out. It feels so good to see the sun. It feels so good to feel the warmth of the sun. That's what God has done for us. He has reached down through the waters of baptism. He has brought us the warmth of his love through his Word. His nail-scarred hands and feet say "*welcome home.*" There is a time coming when everything that is so wrong in this world will be made so right.

That's what God wanted his people to know. Even though he would not speak directly to them for the next 400 years, he wanted this world to know that they were not alone. That's what he wants you to know as well. Even though there may be times that we FEEL alone, he wants us to know that we ARE NOT alone. As the tragedies of this world continue to happen as we saw this week again, our hearts going out to people. Even though we may not understand, we can know that we are not alone. That our God will come to bring "**healing in his wings.**"

Therefore, my dear friends, we can look forward to that Last Day. For on that Day, we will receive more comfort that we can ever imagine. Go in peace. Amen.