

In the name of our Triune God: Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Amen.

“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. And you will go out and leap like calves released from the stall. ³ Then you will trample down the wicked; they will be ashes under the soles of your feet on the day when I do these things,” says the Lord Almighty. **This is God’s Word.**

Dear Recipients of God’s Love who look forward to His Second Coming,

What’s the best part of the day? I’m sure you all have your own ideas based on your age and what is going in any particular day. Maybe I should rephrase the question. What is the prettiest part of the day? That might narrow your answers down to sunrise or sunset. After all, can anyone paint a more beautiful picture than the one God paints for us as the sun rises in the morning or as it sets in the evening?

And if you had to choose between a sunny day or a rainy day, most people would choose the sunny day. It seems people are happier when the sun is shining. The portion of scripture before us today is full of word pictures and one of those pictures is of the sun. As we consider the words before us, especially in light of the Last Judgment, **“The Sun appears as a striking symbol of our Savior.” “Burning the Arrogant,”** and **“Healing the Reverent.”**

I. “Surely the day is coming; it will burn like a furnace.” Notice that this is not the warm and comforting glow of a campfire. The picture is of the iron-melting heat of a blast furnace. Why such destruction?

Once again God’s people had turned from God. They thought that God had forgotten them and so they ignored the Sabbath Day Laws. When they did bring offerings, they brought the worst instead of the best. The animals they brought for sacrifice were sickly, blind and diseased. The temple had been rebuilt but the worship lives of the people were in disrepair. It is no surprise that God’s anger burned against them. As Malachi brought God’s message to the people, he did not use the name “Jehovah” (the God of grace) but rather, “The Lord Almighty” pointing to the power of God in his role as Lord and Judge.

And this judgment would be final. **“Not a root or a branch will be left to them.”** There would be no second chance, no time for a “do over.” Solomon said, **“When a wicked man dies, his hope perishes; all he expected from his power comes to nothing.** (Proverbs 11:7). Yet, even in the midst of this harsh message God’s love is still present. **“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! Why will you die, O house of Israel?”** (Ezekiel 33:11). Malachi proclaims this severe warning but it is also a call to repentance and if the people change their ways, the Lord is faithful and will forgive them their sins. (1 John 1:9).

When you hear these words, it's easy to think that God is talking about "those wicked people over there." How often have you sat in the pew thinking he's certainly not talking about me? Are there times when I might be one of the "arrogant" people Malachi is talking about? Do I always bring my best to the Lord? I would like to say that every sermon preached from this pulpit is a winner but if I am honest, I have to admit that I don't always bring the best sermon for you – God's people. Sometimes my efforts do fall short. And I bring offerings to the Lord's altar, just like you, but my attitude isn't always what it should be. When the car breaks or when I think about the mortgage payments I have to make, I am tempted to cut back on what I am giving to God. I know it is probably the same for many of you. You don't always give your best to the Lord either. Sometimes it's unexpected expenses that come up and sometimes it's that desire to go out to dinner or to have the newest I-phone or technical gadget or the super cable package and if there is something left for God then we'll put a little in the offering envelope.

When a call goes out for help with different church projects, it is easier to let someone else do it even though you might have the skills or time needed. Just like the Children of Israel, we think God won't notice, but he does. He knows what is in our heart and mind and he calls out to us with a warning – the time is short. What's your spiritual life look like? Are things getting a little warm because you're getting close to the consuming fires of judgment.

You know that if you throw a frog into a pot of boiling water it will jump right back out. But if you put the frog in a pot of cool water and gradually heat it up, it won't notice until it's too late. The water around you is probably warmer than you think.

So heed the warning of Malachi. Turn from your sinful ways and turn to the Son of righteousness – turn to Jesus for forgiveness and ask him to wash away the arrogance that tries to make its home in our hearts. Ask God to help you to remember to bring your best and to give your best efforts as you look to serve the Lord. After all, God gave his best – his only Son, to heal your hearts.

II. The reverent revere God's name. In other words, they praise, honor, worship and glorify God. That is the response of a Christian to God's grace, mercy and love. That is the Christian's response to God's forgiveness that heals your heart. Paul said, **"So whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God."** (1 Corinthians 10:31)

Malachi describes the joy of God's healing for the reverent in this way, **"But for you who revere my name, the sun of righteousness will rise with healing in its wings. And you will go out and leap like calves released from the stall."**

If you had to chose between a sunny day and a rainy day, which would you pick? Unless there has been a drought, most people would pick the sunny day. People seem a lot happier when the sun shines. We lived in Portland, OR for three years and when people think of Portland they think of a rainy place. It is true that there is a rainy season in the winter but I can remember one summer where we went almost 90 days without rain. They did a study and found that if people moved to Portland during the rainy season, they moved after a couple of years but if they moved during there during the summer, they tended to stay. The sun is good for us. Not only the sun that shines in the sky (sun) but also the Son (Son) that shines in our hearts.

God's Son rose to bring us righteousness on Easter morning. His resurrection assures us that he paid the price for our sins in full – our salvation is complete. He brings healing for our sinful hearts through forgiveness. When we are forgiven, we leap for joy just like a calf that has been penned up in one of those little huts for 6 months and all of a sudden is let out into the pasture – the freedom is great! And so is our freedom from sin that comes through faith in our Savior!

Remember that when you have some of those days that seem long because it looks like Satan is winning. Remember that when it seems like the wicked are prospering and God's people are suffering. It might seem like unbelievers and the wicked have the upper hand, but in the end, God is in control and he watches over the faithful – those who believe and trust in Jesus – he watches over you.

Even when times are tough our God comforts and strengthens us through his Word and lifts us up. Last week, we celebrated the Reformation and God lifted us up as we rejoiced in his grace and mercy that is ours through faith. Today we think about the Last Judgment when Christ will come again. May we always stand firm in the promises of God and as the sun shines outside may it remind you that the Son (God's Son) is shining in your hearts. Amen.