

Twenty-Third Sunday After Pentecost
Year of the Lord 2019

Malachi 4:1–61 “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, says the LORD of hosts, so that it will leave them neither root nor branch. 2But 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. 3And 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.

4“Remember the law of my servant Moses, the statutes and just decrees that I commanded him at Horeb for all Israel.

5“Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the great and awesome day of the LORD comes. 6And he will turn the hearts of fathers to their children and the hearts of children to their fathers, lest I come and strike the land with a decree of utter destruction.”

2 Thessalonians 3:6–136 Now we command you, brothers, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you keep away from any brother who is walking in idleness and not in accord with the tradition that you received from us. 7For you yourselves know how you ought to imitate us, because we were not idle when we were with you, 8nor did we eat anyone’s bread without paying for it, but with toil and labor we worked night and day, that we might not be a burden to any of you. 9It was not because we do not have that right, but to give you in ourselves an example to imitate. 10For even when we were with you, we would give you this command: If anyone is not willing to work, let him not eat. 11For we hear that some among you walk in idleness, not busy at work, but busybodies. 12Now such persons we command and encourage in the Lord Jesus Christ to do their work quietly and to earn their own living.

13As for you, brothers, do not grow weary in doing good. (IDLE PEOPLE ARE THE IMPENITENT.)

Luke 21:5–285 While some were speaking of the temple, how it was adorned with noble stones and offerings, [Jesus] said, 6“As for these things that you see, the days will come when there will not be left here one stone upon another that will not be thrown down.” 7And they asked him, “Teacher, when will these things be, and what will be the sign when these things are about to take place?” 8And he said, “See that you are not led astray. For many will come in my name, saying, ‘I am he!’ and, ‘The time is at hand!’ Do not go after them. 9And when you hear of wars and tumults, do not be

terrified, for these things must first take place, but the end will not be at once.”

10Then he said to them, “Nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. 11There will be great earthquakes, and in various places famines and pestilences. And there will be terrors and great signs from heaven. 12But before all this they will lay their hands on you and persecute you, delivering you up to the synagogues and prisons, and you will be brought before kings and governors for my name’s sake. 13This will be your opportunity to bear witness. 14Settle it therefore in your minds not to meditate beforehand how to answer, 15for I will give you a mouth and wisdom, which none of your adversaries will be able to withstand or contradict. 16You will be delivered up even by parents and brothers and relatives and friends, and some of you they will put to death. 17You will be hated by all for my name’s sake. 18But not a hair of your head will perish. 19By your endurance you will gain your lives.

20“But when you see Jerusalem surrounded by armies, then know that its desolation has come near. 21Then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains, and let those who are inside the city depart, and let not those who are out in the country enter it, 22for these are days of vengeance, to fulfill all that is written. 23Alas for women who are pregnant and for those who are nursing infants in those days! For there will be great distress upon the earth and wrath against this people. 24They will fall by the edge of the sword and be led captive among all nations, and Jerusalem will be trampled underfoot by the Gentiles, until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled.

25“And there will be signs in sun and moon and stars, and on the earth distress of nations in perplexity because of the roaring of the sea and the waves, 26people fainting with fear and with foreboding of what is coming on the world. For the powers of the heavens will be shaken. 27And then they will see the Son of Man coming in a cloud with power and great glory. **28Now when these things begin to take place, straighten up and raise your heads, because your redemption is drawing near.**”

In the Name of Jesus:

the caretakers of my grandson, Samuel Paul, are holding his majestic tiny paws, and helping him with first steps!—Step-by-step, he will grow up right, we pray the Promise of the Father.

That Baby born in Bethlehem has ‘grewed-up right!’ Hasn’t He! AFTER all the talk about what bothers all OTHER ‘grownups’— “distress, perplexity, 26 people fainting with fear and with foreboding of what is coming on the world. For the powers of the heavens will be shaken”—I mean...TWENTY VERSES of that stuff!—He then tells His disciples to look from the impressive stones of the Temple to the Temple the Spirit of the Father has ‘built’: “27 And then they will see the Son of Man coming in a cloud with power and great glory. 28 Now when these things begin to take place, straighten up and raise your heads, because your redemption is drawing near.”

Of course, my dear ones, we’ve known this was on the way from LAST CHRISTMAS! (Or, like normal people, our equals, it’s easy to forget!):

⁸ And in the same region there were shepherds out in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night. ⁹ And an angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were filled with great fear. ¹⁰ And the angel said to them, “Fear not, for behold, I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people. ¹¹ For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord. ¹² And this will be a sign for you: you will find a baby wrapped in swaddling cloths and lying in a manger.” ¹³ And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God and saying,

¹⁴ “Glory to God in the highest,
and on earth peace among those with whom he is pleased!” ¹

My dear friends, the Gospel comes through SO simple-ly at times, even Pastor Paul cannot make it complicated!

We are in a world, an age, a kingdom, in which our heads get pushed down. Jesus Christ came to call out to us: “straighten up and raise your heads, because your redemption is drawing near.” PRECISELY when? 28 “Now when these things begin to take place, straighten up and raise your heads, because your

¹ [*The Holy Bible: English Standard Version*](#). (2016). (Lk 2:8–14). Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles.

redemption is drawing near.”

HE has lived up to the angel-song from His Birthday!
Right...when...WE would FEAR, He covers the FEAR with
Himself!

Think of the time He was baptized!

3 In the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius Caesar, Pontius Pilate being governor of Judea, and Herod being tetrarch of Galilee, and his brother Philip tetrarch of the region of Ituraea and Trachonitis, and Lysanias tetrarch of Abilene, ² during the high priesthood of Annas and Caiaphas, the word of God came to John the son of Zechariah in the wilderness. ³ And he went into all the region around the Jordan, proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. ⁴ As it is written in the book of the words of Isaiah the prophet,

“The voice of one crying in the wilderness:

‘Prepare the way of the Lord,
make his paths straight.

⁵ Every valley shall be filled,
and every mountain and hill shall be made low,
and the crooked shall become straight,
and the rough places shall become level ways,

⁶ and all flesh shall see the salvation of God.’ ”

⁷ 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? ⁸ 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. ⁹ 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.”

¹⁰ And the crowds asked him, “What then shall we do?”²

EVEN John—PRECISELY JOHN THE BAPTIZER!—drove men to the crisis of looking in the mirror, getting on the scale, facing

² [*The Holy Bible: English Standard Version*](#). (2016). (Lk 3:1–10). Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles.

what the man on the cross said, one cross over from Jesus, ‘WE are getting what WE have EARNED!’ There ain’t no more desperate ‘looking down.’ So, what did Jesus do?

STEP-BY-STEP.... Praise God!

Recently I was privileged to hear from a close buddy of Jesus Christ—a man who, as Martin Luther described, has CLEARLY ‘Swallowed the Holy Spirit, feathers and all!’ Boy, was HE closer to Jesus than a poor shmoe like ME! And that man told me what Jesus is like; and those who promote Jesus to the Lord of their life!

‘Ta-da! Look HERE! NOW the world’s gonna see sumpin’! Dontcha wish Y’ALL were on the side of heaven, like WE is on the side of heaven?!’

Thank God, now and then, my dear ones, that you’ve learned from Martin Luther. To all the world’s boasting and provoking, envying and despairing, Luther just said, again and again, ‘Weeell...let’s just check the WORD on that!’

The Word; the Gospel, as Saint Luke recorded it:

²¹ Now when all the people were baptized, and when Jesus also had been baptized and was praying, the heavens were opened, ²² and the Holy Spirit descended on him in bodily form, like a dove; and a voice came from heaven, “You are my beloved Son; with you I am well pleased.” ³

Row of sinners; in line to confess and pray for cleansing; God gets in line with them; no...big...ta-da!

Dear ones: your poor pastor has been at the receiving end of faith, hope and love, from y’all, for years now; and from so many

³ [*The Holy Bible: English Standard Version*](#). (2016). (Lk 3:21–22). Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles.

warriors of the cross who have gone before us. How many times—‘Oh, pastor will hear us, sooner or later. Maybe in 30 years!’—how many times, when I WAS worked up about the huffing and puffing of this world, have the salted and cured saints let me know by word and deed, by demeanor—the confident stance, the uplifted head: ‘Fear not! Your Savior has come. And He is coming, again; again to save! “Your redemption is drawing near!”’

WHAT, dearly beloved, do we want to do to those Malachi calls ‘the arrogant’? You know! When someone is arrogant and pushy to us, FIRST impulse, POW’RFUL impulse is to ARROGANT right back! Push back; and make ourselves some room—Where? In this world that is just about faded to black!

OH! WHO is most in danger to that fire and wrath, of which Malachi sang? HE sang to Israel. Christ always teaches His own, His disciples. Let us learn again from a lifted head, looking for redemption—but from a lifted head that COULD...NOT look up!

⁹ [Jesus] also told this parable to some who trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and treated others with contempt: ¹⁰ “Two men went up into the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector. ¹¹ The Pharisee, standing by himself, prayed thus: ‘God, I thank you that I am not like other men, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even like this tax collector. ¹² I fast twice a week; I give tithes of all that I get.’ ¹³ But the tax collector, standing far off, would not even lift up his eyes to heaven, but beat his breast, saying, ‘God, be merciful to me, a sinner!’ ¹⁴ I tell you, this man went down to his house justified, rather than the other. For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, but the one who humbles himself will be exalted.” ⁴

This is one of your poor preacher’s recurring temptations. When I hear others flap their gums about our Savior, and turn His Gospel Sweetness into the bitterness of the Law—Are YOU on ‘team Jesus?!’ I want to do something—poor Laura has even had to

⁴ [*The Holy Bible: English Standard Version*](#). (2016). (Lk 18:9–14). Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles.

make me stop banging my head on the pew in front of me; good thing; pews hurt!

When I hear the nonsense about the Savior, the Savior says ‘Paul! I will redeem YOU! THAT is why I am returning! Pray for, pity those who still live in fear! Those who won’t let ME be the Savior, Christ the Lord, all by my lonesome!’

Dear redeemed: What shakes you and rattles you and drags down your spirit, even your head? The news? Elections? A changing culture? Or maybe even people doing ‘Jesus-talk?’

Rejoice in Christ’s Baptism, which makes yours and mine more than simple water ONLY! It IDENTIFIES the Holy God with not-holy men! For Him, it was the first step on the way up Golgotha. For US, it is the first step on the path to redemption: the confession of what is most deep down in us:

‘WEEEEEE.... want to ‘arrogant’ right back at the arrogant; push at the pushy. So WE need pardon; and a Jesus in the Jordan River with us. Who needs His Body and Blood more? And now:

Jesus says to you, today, by even my Word, by His Spirit, and most of all, by the giving of His Body and His Blood to His disciples: ‘Take and eat! Take and drink! Take...it...all! All that troubles you! Then: good posture, head confident and heart bold!’

NOT because you and I have something going on with the kingdom unseen that others cannot reach! IN fact, the whole point of our hanging head in confession and raising it at Holy Absolution is to tell this sad world the Gospel; even with a bit of Law!

If you want step by step instructions—the caretakers of my grandson, Samuel Paul, are holding his majestic tiny paws, and helping him with first steps!—

Basic instructions are in the Sermon of Jesus Saint Luke recorded. Jesus, explaining HIS Baptism with the dirty sinners in the dirty Jordan River:

²⁷ “But I say to you who hear, Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, ²⁸ bless those who curse you, pray for those who abuse you. ²⁹ To one who strikes you on the cheek, offer the other also, and from one who takes away your cloak do not withhold your tunic either. ³⁰ Give to everyone who begs from you, and from one who takes away your goods do not demand them back. ³¹ And as you wish that others would do to you, do so to them.

³² “If you love those who love you, what benefit is that to you? For even sinners love those who love them. ³³ And if you do good to those who do good to you, what benefit is that to you? For even sinners do the same. ³⁴ And if you lend to those from whom you expect to receive, what credit is that to you? Even sinners lend to sinners, to get back the same amount. ³⁵ But love your enemies, and do good, and lend, expecting nothing in return, and your reward will be great, and you will be sons of the Most High, for he is kind to the ungrateful and the evil. ³⁶ Be merciful, even as your Father is merciful.

³⁷ “Judge not, and you will not be judged; condemn not, and you will not be condemned; forgive, and you will be forgiven; ³⁸ give, and it will be given to you. Good measure, pressed down, shaken together, running over, will be put into your lap. For with the measure you use it will be measured back to you.”

³⁹ He also told them a parable: “Can a blind man lead a blind man? Will they not both fall into a pit? ⁴⁰ A disciple is not above his teacher, but everyone when he is fully trained will be like his teacher. ⁴¹ Why do you see the speck that is in your brother’s eye, but do not notice the log that is in your own eye? ⁴² How can you say to your brother, ‘Brother, let me take out the speck that is in your eye,’ when you yourself do not see the log that is in your own eye? You hypocrite, first take the log out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to take out the speck that is in your brother’s eye.

⁴³ “For no good tree bears bad fruit, nor again does a bad tree bear good fruit, ⁴⁴ for each tree is known by its own fruit. For figs are not gathered from thornbushes, nor are grapes picked from a bramble bush. ⁴⁵ The good person out of the good treasure of his heart produces good, and the evil person out of his evil treasure

produces evil, for out of the abundance of the heart his mouth speaks.

⁴⁶ “Why do you call me ‘Lord, Lord,’ and not do what I tell you?
⁴⁷ Everyone who comes to me and hears my words and does them, I will show you what he is like: ⁴⁸ he is like a man building a house, who dug deep and laid the foundation on the rock. And when a flood arose, the stream broke against that house and could not shake it, because it had been well built. ⁴⁹ But the one who hears and does not do them is like a man who built a house on the ground without a foundation. When the stream broke against it, immediately it fell, and the ruin of that house was great.” ⁵

Step-by-step, He trains us in the angel-song from Jesus’ Birthday; learning to sing to all the world too!:

‘God in Christ is coming to pardon US! And then, if US; oh, then YOU cannot be left out of that redemption in the Name of Jesus!’
 Amen.

⁵ [*The Holy Bible: English Standard Version*](#). (2016). (Lk 6:27–49). Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles.