

INI

St. Paul's Lutheran Church
2100 16th Street SW
Austin, MN 55912-1749
Pastor Ted Barthels
Sermon preached on
November 7, 2021
Last Judgment Sunday

Scripture Lessons: Hebrews 9:24-28, John 5:19-24

Hymns: 351; 604; 611:1,4,5,7; 52

Grace be unto you and peace from God our Father and our Lord
and Savior Jesus Christ. Amen.

Sermon Text: Malachi 4:1-2a

“For behold, the day is coming,

Burning like an oven,

And all the proud, yes, all who do wickedly will be stubble.

And the day which is coming shall burn them up,”

Says the LORD of hosts,

“That will leave them neither root nor branch.

² But to you who fear My name

The Sun of Righteousness shall arise

With healing in His wings. (NKJV)

This is the Word of God.

Sanctify us, oh Lord, through Your truth. Your Word is truth.
Amen.

In Christ Jesus, God our Savior, dear fellow Redeemed:

INTRO: Judgment Day Expectations

These expectations can and do vary wildly. Many scoff, even as the Apostle Peter prophesied, “*Scoffers will come in the last days, walking according to their own lusts, ⁴ and saying, “Where is the promise of His coming? For since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of creation.”* (2 Peter 3:3-

4) They don't expect the day of the Lord to come at all. They are dismissive of any concerns about a coming judgment.

Others refer to the Day of the Lord's Coming as Dooms Day! The focus of their expectations is on the destruction and condemnation that will happen in connection with the Lord's Coming on that Day.

Still others have expectations of glory, peace, and joy.

These are such contrasting expectations one might conclude that both can hardly be true. So, as we come to these closing Sundays of the Church Year we set aside a couple of Sundays for a review of the truth the Scriptures consistently set forth to inform the child of God and direct our expectations correctly as we eagerly watch and pray for that Day of Christ's return. May the Spirit bless our meditation upon --

THEME: The Coming Day of the Lord.

The Spirit does set before us an expectation of --

I. A Day of Consuming Fire.

*"For behold, the day is coming,
Burning like an oven,
And all the proud, yes, all who do wickedly will be stubble.
And the day which is coming shall burn them up,"
Says the LORD of hosts,
"That will leave them neither root nor branch." (Malachi 4:1)*

The Day is coming! That is the easiest thing to forget as we go about our daily life. And that is when it becomes a problem, when we go about life forgetting that this world as we know it is not forever. This world as we know it is passing away.

This failing to remember the Lord's coming is a two-edged sword, and it cuts both ways. When people are distressed and suffering pain and sorrow, forgetting that this world is passing away can lead people to despair. Even thinking in terms of problems we may be called upon to endure for the "rest of my life" seems overwhelming.

On the other edge of this sword is the temptation to think that we are unaccountable. We may go about life as we please, pursuing the pleasures, and the treasures of this world, because that is what life holds for us. Many conclude that there is no more. People are left with the philosophy, ‘He who dies with the most toys wins.’ What vanity! There is no substance to it even as King Solomon discovered in his life and shared with us in Ecclesiastes.

The Day is coming, burning like an oven. We are not talking about your kitchen stove here. We are about a blast furnace. As a young man I lived near a foundry that specialized in making street drains and manhole covers. The steel they used was all made from scrap iron and steel. It consisted of old machinery, wrecked cars and trucks, and all sorts of odds and ends pieces of used metal. As you drove by the foundry the piles of scrap were heaped up in the foundry yard near the railroad tracks. You could easily identify the things in that pile even as the crane with the giant electromagnet lifted the scrap to dump it in the furnace. What came out the other end was the pure molten steel with all the waste either burned off or separated out by its different melting points. There weren’t any machines or automobiles or tools, or any work of men’s hands left. It was all consumed by the heat of the oven. So it will be with the works of men’s hands -- on that Day.

But what of the people themselves? We know that the Lord does not find any joy in the destruction of the wicked. We read in the prophet Ezekiel: “*‘As I live,’ says the Lord God, ‘I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn from his way and live. Turn, turn from your evil ways!’*” (Ezekiel 3:11) The Apostle Peter reminds us: “*The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, (that is the promise of His coming) as some count slackness, but is longsuffering toward us, **not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance.***” (2 Peter 3:9) We live in a time of grace, a time when the Lord calls for people to repent and find in Jesus forgiveness, life and salvation.

That is the gracious will of God. It is what we were told about in our Epistle lesson this morning, that Jesus came into the world to bear our sins, and die for us, and so He died once and redeemed us by that one all-sufficient sacrifice. But finally, as He promised, He shall come again, and that time of grace ends with His coming on

that Day. Then for the proud and those who do wickedly, they will be caught up in the fiery judgment of God.

We know how it is when it gets so dry, when the fields are nothing more than a lot of tinder that even the smallest spark can set on fire. Every year we see the conflagrations that consume parts of California. So it shall be with the wicked of this world. When the Lord comes on that Day they will be caught up in the fiery indignation of the Lord. *“Our God is a consuming fire.”* (Hebrews 12:29) Nothing will be left. When our text says no root or branch will be left to the people of this world, the Lord is emphasizing the finality of the judgment at the Lord’s return. No hope for life remains for the unbelieving world, none at all!

That is a dreadful picture. The expectation of “Dooms Day” seems to have a strong basis in the Word of God. Thank the Lord that our expectation of that Day is a Day of grace and salvation, --

II. A Day of Eternal Healing.

Yes, the Prophet Malachi lays out a very different picture for the believing child of God. Our expectations associated with the Day of the Lord couldn’t be more different.

*“But to you who fear My name
The Sun of Righteousness shall arise
With healing in His wings.”* (Malachi 4:2)

This is what the Day brings for those who honor God in true faith and love. The word “fear” in this verse is the word for reverence and awe, not terror. We know God through Jesus Christ. We are in awe of His power, yes, but even more so, we are in awe of His grace and love as it has been revealed to us in Christ Jesus. *“God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son.”* (John 3:16) God sent His Son into the world that we might live. Jesus said to Nicodemus. *“For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved. He who believes in Him is not condemned.”* (John 3:17-18)

This is how and why we see Jesus as the bright shining Sun of Righteousness. Jesus secured a righteousness which is imputed to

us by grace through faith. This brings healing from the curse and condemnation of sin. This ends death's reign of terror over us. There is no longer any dread associated with the Day of the Lord because what that Day holds for those who believe in Jesus is glory and deliverance from every evil that afflicts us. There is healing in Jesus' wings as the messenger of God's love and salvation for His own special people.

The expectations of that coming Day of the Lord are eagerly awaited by us. Nothing could be better than what awaits us as the Lord receives us to that place He has prepared for us. In the book of Revelation we have the Lord's own words of promise: *"I heard a loud voice from heaven saying, "Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people. God Himself will be with them and be their God. ⁴ And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes; there shall be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying. There shall be no more pain, for the former things have passed away."* (Revelation 21:3-4)

That Day of the Lord shall indeed be the most glorious of all days as it opens to us the heavenly gates of eternal life. *"The Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. ¹⁷ Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And thus we shall always be with the Lord. ¹⁸ Therefore comfort one another with these words."* (1 Thessalonians 4:16-18) That expands on the prophet's words of what it means that the Lord shall come with healing in His wings.

This expectation is our hope, or you might turn it around and say our hope is our sure and certain expectation of glory. What the Day of the Lord holds for us is such a wondrous truth that we should be talking about regularly, sharing this good hope with others, and using it to comfort one another, not only at the death of a loved one, but with any and all of the struggles and sorrows that people experience in this life.

Something better is coming. The Day of the Lord is coming. Jesus says, *"Surely I am coming quickly."* And we answer with the Apostle John: *"Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus!"* (Revelation 22:20)

AMEN.

“Now may the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that you may abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.” Amen. (Romans15:13)