

Second Midweek in Advent/December 12, 2018  
Malachi 3:1-7/I Send My Messenger  
Holy Spirit Lutheran Church  
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“Behold, I will send My messenger...”

Do we know who is coming among us? Do we treat this service and the Divine One who serves us with proper reverence? Too often, we are casual, going through the motions, not respecting the Lord, the God of hosts, who is here now.

John the Baptist was sent to prepare the way before the Lord, as a herald runs before a ruler to make the road ready. There should be nothing blocking the road, especially not throngs of people clogging up traffic. Also, the people should be alerted to the coming ruler so that they may show homage, bowing the head and so forth. Woe to the man who treats a passing ruler with disrespect or casualness! Such a man may easily lose his head to the headsman’s axe.

In our society, such rules of respect are not usually observed. Etiquette is ignored, and even the highest rulers are mocked by us. This pattern of behavior in our culture is a serious problem when it comes to showing respect to the great King who speaks to us today.

There are many things in us that are inappropriate to the coming of the Lord. This is not only a matter of etiquette or manners, since the way of the Lord are really His work among us. If we put obstacles in the way of His work, we are trying to stop Him from working His Gospel among us.

He wants those things removed that attempt to block His way. In us, there are sometimes human reason and our own wisdom that fight against His Gospel. There is self-love and pride. There is our own so-called righteousness.

God sends His messenger to clear out those things from His path. His messenger today is not John the Baptist, but a much lesser sinner who speaks God's Law. May the Law spoken here be a purifying fire to work humility and repentance in our hearts.

For it is far more than simply renovation and improvement that the Spirit does in our hearts. It is not just the works that are obviously evil that obstruct the Lord. No, it is all of our works and our ways that try to hinder the Lord's work. Even our finest works seek to block Him. For we feel our wonderful deeds need no cleansing or casting out.

But the Lord seeks to justify us. He must burn away all that is ours and replace it completely with His own works. So He must teach us to forsake our own deeds, no matter how shiny and valuable they look to us and others.

So the Lord comes, the Ruler of the universe. The only proper response for us sinners is to bow down in the dust. We should humiliate ourselves in repentance and say, "There is nothing good in me. O Lord and King, have mercy upon me, a poor miserable sinner."

We should never stand with casualness or mocking in the presence of this Lord. For He is a devouring fire that will burn away all that belongs to us. He will either do it to cleanse us, or He will do it to devour us in judgment. If we receive Him in humble faith, then He will raise us up as His priests to offer pure sacrifices, cleansed by His Blood.

So I, God's messenger to you, completely unworthy as I am, stand in the place and the image of John the Baptist. Today the Angel of the Covenant has come among you, who is no created angel, but is Christ the Lord Himself. He has made full atonement for your sins with His Blood, so that there is now the Covenant of Peace between you and

the Lord of hosts. He has washed away all that is filthy and impure in you from God's sight. All your works are now righteous offerings to God that are pleasing in His sight, since He has forgiven all that is unrighteous in you.

Therefore, this place is the New Jerusalem, the holy Temple of God, where His presence dwells. Here He appears before you in His Body and Blood. Let no one approach here in pride. Let all eyes be cast to the dust when we receive His mighty and precious salvation through bread and wine. Even in this evening service, may we recognize the voice of the Mighty Lord in our Midst, and receive His merciful proclamation with trembling and reverent fear.

God grant you this humility, as He grants you also this wondrous salvation. Deo Gratis! Thanks be to God!