

"The LORD Comes to His Temple"

Sermon #4

"Behold, He is Coming!"

Malachi 3:1

22 December Anno Domini 2002

The Divine Service for the Children

Our Redeemer Lutheran Church of Emmett, Idaho

Pastor Michael L. McCoy

Grace, mercy, and peace to you from God our Father and our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Amen.

Dear Baptized Children of God,

What do you think about and how do you feel when you hear these words, "Behold, He is Coming!"? Maybe it makes you smile. Perhaps it makes your heart a little bit scared. Maybe it makes you wonder what this means and who it is that is coming. Most likely you might think you know who it is, but, you just want to make sure that the one who is coming is the one who you think is coming.

Well, a long, long, long time ago ... way before there were Christmas trees and video games ... hundreds of years before there were outdoor lights and indoor toilets ... I mean way before your mom and dad were born ... a long time ago God told one of His prophets, a man named Malachi, to tell people of about the Promise that God was going to keep and that the Promise was going to take place. Part of that promise are the words, "Behold, He is Coming!" Let's hear some more of what the Holy Spirit had Malachi write and then we will find out who is this One Who is coming. The sermon text is from the Old Testament Prophet Malachi, chapter 3, verse 1. Listen to that verse under the theme of ...

... "Behold, He is Coming!"

Behold, I send My messenger to prepare the way before Me, and the Lord Whom you seek will suddenly come to His temple; the Messenger of the Covenant in Whom you delight, behold, He is coming, says the LORD of hosts.

Thus far the Word of the LORD our God.

God said that He would send a messenger to prepare the way for the One Who was coming. The man who was to prepare the way was John the Baptizer. You remember him, I'm sure. He was the son of Zechariah and Elizabeth. God sent John to tell the people that someone very special was coming. That's kind of like how a pastor tells the Good News that God has for you, for your family, for everyone in your church family and, in fact, for everyone in the whole world. "Behold, He is Coming!"

But who is this that Malachi wrote about? I think you already know. We celebrate His Birth Day on

Christmas. When the prophet wrote, "Behold, He is Coming!", that is like saying, "Behold, Christmas is Coming!" That's right, God was coming into this world in a very special way. God the Son would become a baby and would be born to Mary in Bethlehem. His name would be Jesus and His mother would hold Him and then let Him sleep in a manger, which is a feeding box for cows. There was no room at the inn in Bethlehem and so the little Lord Jesus would be asleep on the hay. "Behold, He is Coming!" said the prophet named Malachi, and on the night when the angels of heaven sang, Jesus was born. Jesus is God and Jesus is man, and yet there are not two Jesuses, but one. Jesus is Emmanuel, which means "Jesus is God with us."

But why did Jesus come into this world? Well, it wasn't to find out if we've been naughty or nice. He already knew that. Each one of us has been naughty. We ... you and me ... well, have not been the way God wants us to be and many times we have done things or said words or thought things in our heads that are wrong. We have hit others or bit others. We have been awfully angry with someone else. There were times when we didn't obey mom or dad, and there were times when we obeyed them but grumbled and whined. Some complain about coming to church to hear God's Word.

Jesus was not born to find out if we've been naughty or nice. He has not come into this world to give us what we deserve, and to give us a spanking, and to yell at us for every wrong thing we've every done, said, or thought. Yikes, that would be bad news and we would be very much afraid of Jesus, even the Baby Jesus. We haven't been good either for goodness' sake or for God's sake.

But listen, dear children of all ages, Jesus was born to give you the good things that you don't deserve. Wow, that is really Good News. He has come to be Peace on earth and to make sure that everyone has a Savior. So you don't have to be afraid of this Baby named Jesus. You're not afraid of this little Baby, are you? No, because He is come to bring you God's peace and joy. That's what Malachi meant when he wrote that "the Lord Whom you seek will suddenly come to His temple; the Messenger of the Covenant in Whom you delight, behold, He is coming, says the LORD of hosts."

Oh, that's not the end of the what happened ... not anymore than Christmas is the end of what took place. And you, and all these people here, as well as all the people who are not in this holy place, need to hear how Jesus would become our Savior. Jesus, Who is God, grew up to be a little boy and then a teenager and then a grown man. He lived a perfect life, a life that we have not lived. Jesus never sinned and He always did what was good and right.

In fact, He did something that is absolutely amazing. He paid the price for all of those bad things that you did, wicked words from your mouth and evil thoughts from your head. Now, He didn't pay for them with money or a check or a credit card. He paid for them in His own Body. Because He promised that that's what He was going to do when He came into this world, Jesus, the Son of God, was punished in your place. It's kind of like He took the spanking from God that you deserved. Only it was much, much worse than a spanking. In fact, He bled and He died on a cross. He did that for you.

But Jesus did not stay dead. On the third day and after two nights, Jesus came alive again. Though He had died on the cross for the world and His Body had been placed in a tomb in the world, He rose again from the dead. That is great news - the very best news ever. When the prophet wrote, "Behold, He is Coming!", that is like saying, "Behold, Easter is Coming!" So you don't have to be afraid of this Savior named Jesus. You're not afraid of Him, are you? No, because He is come to bring you God's peace and joy and forgiveness.

So, if this has all happened, and it has!, does that mean we can't say, "Behold, He is Coming!"? No, it doesn't mean that. Think of it this way. Let's say that you are home and it is getting close to Sunday morning or Christmas Eve or Christmas morning. You may say to the rest of your family, "Behold, He is Coming!" And when they ask you what this means, you can answer them something like this:

The Lord Jesus is coming to be with His people at Church in the Divine Service. Let's go! Jesus, along with the Father and the Holy Spirit, will be there where two or three or many more gather in His Name. You and I have been baptized in the Name of the Father and the (+) Son and the Holy Spirit. "Behold, He is Coming!" and I want to be there and hear God's Word, especially the part when the pastor says, "I forgive you all your sins in the Name of the Father and the (+) Son and the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Behold, I send My messenger to prepare the way before Me, and the Lord Whom you seek will suddenly come to His temple; the Messenger of the Covenant in Whom you delight, behold, He is coming, says the LORD of hosts. Amen.