

Sermon preached by The Rev. Charles Rowins at St. Christopher-by-the-Sea, Gibson Island, Maryland, 23rd Sunday after Pentecost, November 13, 2022.

Just as we begin to think seriously about celebrating Thanksgiving and, yes, Christmas, we get this message from the prophet Malachi (**Malachi 4:1-2a**). “See the days are coming, burning like an oven, when all the arrogant and all evildoers will be stubble; the day that comes shall burn them up, says the Lord of hosts, so that it will leave them neither root nor branch.”

Well, that’s not what we were hoping for, is it!

Thank goodness, though, the same Malachi is hopeful. “But, for you who revere my name, the sun of righteousness shall rise, with healing in its wings.” At least “hopeful” if we “revere the sun of righteousness.”

Note here that the option is to revere the small s sun with a u. As in “here comes the sun.”

But isn’t what you and I do in this place revere the capital S Son with an o? As in “the Son of God?”

Yes, there are those who worship the sun, but Malachi is not talking about a suntan. He is talking about God, who holds people like you and me accountable for our decision to worship God. God’s offer. Our decision.

Well, what often follows a decision? It’s called accountability. And that’s what Malachi describes.

Malachi and the other prophets – those folks we often read about on Sundays in the first lesson – are reminders of our decision to do what the Lord would like us to do. Our response, in a variety of ways, is to say “Yes, I’m on board with this relationship. I want to be a follower, a disciple. I want to obey. I believe in what God wants me to do, and I promise to pursue that objective.”

Not just for myself, but for others who will benefit from my commitment to the Lord. There is a link between sun – s u n – and Son – S o n. Our relationship with the Lord, if not all of the time, at least some of the time, should bring warmth to frozen situations and cold hearts. People will not only know us by our professed faith, but as well by our faith in action.

‘The Light of Christ, the Warmth of Christ, the sun of Christ, should radiate from us. By our choice, we are little heaters, with “healing in our wings.”

Malachi suggests that if we don’t follow through on this agreed to assignment – again, our choice - we just might contribute to “stubble” that is burned. In other words, our reluctance to engage can have a negative consequence.

Look at today’s Psalm (**Psalm 98**). What a beautiful portrayal of what can be when “we sing to the Lord a new song.” “Shout with joy lift up your voice sound the horn ... make a noise clap hands ring out.”

We can and, I dare say, do make a difference. God makes the Big Difference, but you and I contribute to that effort in all sorts of ways. And often outside the bounds of the church. Wherever and by whatever means we contribute, we need to be proud of that contribution. We are doing the Lord’s service.

And it’s not always easy, especially if we are surrounded by voices that don’t share our faith or who don’t live out their faith. Today’s passage from Thessalonians is a reminder that “idleness” is always close at hand. A condition that St. Paul speaks to plainly: “Brothers and sisters, do not be weary in doing what is right.” (**2 Thessalonians 3:13**)

Yes, “Imitation” is the key. Being examples to one another and to those not yet in the faith is our calling and our choice and our fulfillment. We’re here. Don’t under-estimate the power of your presence and commitment.

And, don’t under-estimate how much that presence, that faith, that hope will be tested. Look at the picture presented in today’s gospel. “Nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom; there will be great earthquakes, and in various places famines and plagues; and there will be dreadful portents and great signs from heaven.”

Yikes! It sounds like the evening news. It sounds like too much to bear. But we’ve been there before. The world has been there before. And, thank God, people have emerged to lead to a better outcome. And one of those persons is why we are here. From today’s gospel: “You will be hated by all because of my name. But not a hair of your head will perish. By your endurance you will gain your souls.”

God did not leave us in a quandary. God knew that free will was a two-edged gift. He knew that choice was a risk. But he also created us with a propensity to do the right thing. And, in all sorts of ways and through all sorts of conditions, God's Holy Spirit has been active and remains active. And, as St Luke assures us **(Luke 21:18)**, "But not a hair on your head will perish. By your endurance you will gain your souls."

In short, a good outcome. Not easy to see, to feel, to accept, to share in the midst of the storm. But it is a promise from God, as conveyed by His Son and by the Church founded in the Son's Name. And if we can't believe God, then whom can we believe? I'll take, we'll take, we are taking, God. And with that acceptance goes a responsibility, namely to reflect the Sun of Righteousness, to be "little heaters," to bring some warmth to a world filled with coldness. We are called to be difference makers. It's an honor, isn't it?

Our final hymn today **(473)** is "Lift high the cross." It's a favorite and it's powerful. And it is so because of the Refrain: "Lift high the Cross, the love of Christ proclaim till all the world adore his sacred Name." But equally powerful are the stanzas preceding the Refrain. Here you go:

- Led on their way by this triumphant sign, the hosts of God in conquering ranks combine.
- Each newborn servant of the Crucified wear on the brow the seal of him who died.
- Lord, once lifted on the glorious tree, as thou hast promised, draw the world to thee.
- So shall our song of triumph ever be: praise to the Crucified for victory.

God could do this all by Himself, but chooses to call us to help. And to give us the assurance that our meager efforts do indeed contribute to the "Victory."

Malachi, we hear you. St. Paul, we hear you. Jesus of Nazareth, we hear you. Where's that Cross? We're ready to lift. *Amen.*

Lessons for 23rd Sunday after Pentecost – November 13, 2022

Collect: Blessed Lord, who caused all holy Scriptures to be written for our learning: Grant us so to hear them, read, mark, learn, and inwardly digest them, that we may embrace and ever hold fast the blessed hope of everlasting life, which you have given us in our Savior Jesus Christ; who lives and reign with you and the Holy Spirit, one God for ever and ever. *Amen.*

First Reading: Malachi 4:1-2a

See, the day is coming, burning like an oven, when all the arrogant and all evildoers will be stubble; the day that comes shall burn them up, says the Lord of hosts, so that it will leave them neither root nor branch. But for you who revere my name the sun of righteousness shall rise, with healing in its wings.

The Word of the Lord. *Thanks be to God.*

Psalm 98

Sing to the Lord a new song,
for he has done marvelous things.
With his right hand and his holy arm
has he won for himself the victory.
The Lord has made known his victory;
his righteousness has he openly shown in the sign of the nations.
He remembers his mercy and faithfulness to the house of Israel,
and all the ends of the earth have seen the victory of our God.
Shout with joy to the Lord, all you lands;
lift up your voice, rejoice, and sing.
Sing to the Lord with the harp,
with the harp and the voice of song.
With trumpets and the sound of the horn
shout with joy before the King, the Lord.
Let the sea make a noise and all that is in it,
the lands and those who dwell therein.

Let the rivers clap their hands,
*and let the hills ring out with joy before the Lord, when he comes to judge
the earth.*

In righteousness shall he judge the world
and the people with equity.

Second Reading: 2 Thessalonians 3:6-13

Now we command you, beloved, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, to keep away from believers who are living in idleness and not according to the tradition that they received from us. For you yourselves know how you ought to imitate us; we were not idle when we were with you, and we did not eat anyone's bread without paying for it; but with toil and labor we worked night and day, so that we might not burden any of you. This was not because we do not have that right, but in order to give you an example to imitate. For even when we were with you, we gave you this command: Anyone unwilling to work should not eat. For we hear that some of you are living in idleness, mere busybodies, not doing any work. Now such persons we command and exhort in the Lord Jesus Christ to do their work quietly and to earn their own living. Brothers and sisters, do not be weary in doing what is right.

The Word of the Lord. *Thanks be to God.*

Gospel: Luke 21:5-19

When some were speaking about the temple, how it was adorned with beautiful stones and gifts dedicated to God, Jesus said, "As for these things that you see, the days will come when not one stone will be left upon another; all will be thrown down." They asked him, "Teacher, when will this be, and what will be the sign that this is about to take place?" And he said, "Beware that you are not led astray; for many will come in my name and say, 'I am he!' and, 'The time is near!' Do not go after them. When you hear of wars and insurrections, do not be terrified; for these things must take place first, but the end will not follow immediately." Then he said to them, "Nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom; there will be great earthquakes, and in various places famines and plagues; and there will be dreadful portents and great signs from heaven. But before all this occurs, they will arrest you and persecute you;

they will hand you over to synagogues and prisons, and you will be brought before kings and governors because of my name. This will give you an opportunity to testify. So make up your minds not to prepare your defense in advance; for I will give you words and a wisdom that none of our opponents will be able to withstand or contradict. You will be betrayed even by parents and brothers, by relatives and friends; and they will put some of you to death. You will be hated by all because of my name. But not a hair of your head will perish. By your endurance you will gain your souls.”

The Word of the Lord. *Thanks be to God.*

The Word of the Lord. *Thanks be to God.*

Service of Morning Prayer
Pentecost 23 – November 13, 2022

Hymn 525 – stanzas 1-3 - The Church's one foundation

The Church's one foundation is Jesus Christ her Lord;
she is his new creation by water and the word:
from, heaven he came and sought her to be his holy bride;
with his own blood he bought her, and for her life he died.

Elect from every nation, yet one o'er all the earth,
her charter of salvation, one Lord, one faith, one birth;
one holy Name she blesses, partakes one holy food,
and to one hope she presses, with every grace endued.

Though with a scornful wonder men see her sore oppressed,
by schisms rent asunder, by heresies distressed;
yet saints their watch are keeping, their cry goes up, "How long?"
and soon the night of weeping shall be the morn of song.

BCP - Page 40 - Greeting

I was glad when they said unto me, "We will go into the house of the Lord."

BCP – Pages 41 – Invitation to Confession

Dearly beloved, we have come together in the presence of Almighty God our heavenly Father, to render thanks for the great benefits that we have received at his hands, to set forth his most worthy praise, to hear his Holy Word, and to ask, for ourselves and on behalf of others, those things that are necessary for our life and our salvation. And so that we may prepare ourselves in heart and mind to worship him, let us kneel in silence, and with penitent and obedient hearts confess our sins, that we may obtain forgiveness by his infinite goodness and mercy.

BCP – Pages 41-42 – Confession and Absolution

*Almighty and most merciful Father,
we have erred and strayed from thy ways like lost sheep,
we have we have followed too much the devices and desires of our own hearts,
we have offended against thy holy laws,
we have left undone those things which we ought to have done,
and we have done those things which we ought not to have done.
But thou, O Lord, have mercy upon us,
spare thou those who confess their faults, restore thou those who are penitent,
according to thy promises declared unto mankind in Christ Jesus our Lord;
And grant, O most merciful father, for his sake, that we may hereafter live a godly,
righteous, and sober life, to the glory of thy holy Name. Amen.*

The almighty and merciful Lord, grant you absolution and remission of all your sins, true repentance, amendment of life, and the grace and consolation of his Holy Spirit. *Amen.*

BCP – Page 42 - Gloria

O Lord, open thou our lips.
And our mouth shall show forth thy praise.

Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit: as it was in the beginning, is now, and will be for ever. Amen.

BCP – Pages 44-45 – Venite

O come, let us sing unto the Lord;
 let us heartily rejoice in the strength of our salvation.
Let us come before his presence with thanksgiving,
 and show ourselves glad in him with psalms.
For the Lord is a great god,
 and a great King above all gods.
In his hand are all the corners of the earth,
 and the strength of the hills is his also.
The sea is his and he made it,
 and his hands prepared the dry land.

O come, let us worship and fall down
and kneel before the Lord our Maker.
For he is the Lord our God,
and we are the people of his pasture and the sheep of his hand.
O worship; the Lord in the beauty of holiness;
let the whole earth stand in awe of him.
For he cometh, for he cometh to judge the earth,
and with righteousness to judge the world and the peoples with his truth.

Psalm 98

First Reading – Malachi 4:1-2a

Second Reading – 2 Thessalonians 3:6-13

Hymn 408 – Praise to God

Sing praise to God who reigns above, the god of all creation,
the God of power, the God of love, the God of our salvation;
with healing balm my soul he fills, and every faithless murmur stills;
to God all praise and glory.

What God's almighty power hath made, his gracious mercy keepeth;
by morning glow or evening shade his watchful eye ne'er sleepeth.
Within the kingdom of his might, lo! all is just and all is right:
to God all praise and glory.

Let all who name Christ's holy Name give God all praise and glory;
let all who know his power proclaim aloud the wondrous story!
Cast each false idol from its throne, the Lord is good, and he alone:
to God all praise and glory.

Gospel – Luke 21:5-19

Sermon – The Reverend Charles Rowins

BCP – page 358 - The Apostles' Creed

I believe in God, the Father almighty, maker of heaven and earth;

*And in Jesus Christ his only Son our Lord;
who was conceived by the Holy Ghost,
born of the Virgin Mary,
suffered under Pontius Pilate,*

Was crucified, dead, and buried.

He descended into hell.

The third day he rose again from the dead.

He ascended into heaven.

and sitteth on the right hand of God the Father almighty.

From thence he shall come to judge the quick and the dead.

*I believe in the Holy Ghost,
the holy catholic Church,
the communion of saints,
the forgiveness of sins,
the resurrection of the body,
and the life everlasting. Amen.*

BCP – page 54 – the Lord's Prayer

The Lord be with you.

And with thy spirit.

Let us pray.

*Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed by thy Name, thy kingdom come,
thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread.*

And forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us.

And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.

For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever and ever. Amen.

BCP – page 55 – Suffrages A

O Lord, show thy mercy upon us;
And grant us thy salvation.

Endue thy ministers with righteousness;
And make thy chosen people joyful.

Give peace, O Lord, in all the world;
For only in thee can we live in safety.

Lord, keep this nation under thy care;
And guide us in the way of justice and truth.

Let thy way be known upon earth;
Thy saving health among all nations.

Let not the needy, O Lord, be forgotten;
Nor the hope of the poor be taken away.

Create in us clean hearts, O God;
And sustain us with thy Holy Spirit.

Collect for 23rd Sunday after Pentecost

Blessed Lord, who caused all holy Scriptures to be written for our learning: Grant us so to hear them, read, mark, learn, and inwardly digest them, that we may embrace and ever hold fast the blessed hope of everlasting life, which you have given us in our Savior Jesus Christ; who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. *Amen.*

BCP Collect for Sundays

O God, you make us glad with the weekly remembrance of the glorious resurrection of your Son our Lord: Give us this day such blessing through our worship of you, that the week to come may be spent in your favor; through Jesus Christ our Lord. *Amen.*

BCP p. 832 - Prayer for Guidance

O God, by whom the meek are guided in judgment, and light rises up in darkness for the godly: Grant us, in all our doubts and uncertainties, the grace to ask what you would have us do, that the Spirit of wisdom may save us from all false choices, and that in thy light we may see light, and in thy straight path may not stumble; through Jesus Christ our Lord. *Amen.*

BCP – pages 58-59 - The General Thanksgiving

*Almighty God, Father of all mercies,
we thine unworthy servants
do give thee most humble and hearty thanks
for all thy goodness and loving-kindness to us and to all men.*

*We bless thee for our creation, preservation, and all the blessings of this life;
but above all for thine inestimable love
in the redemption of the world by our Lord Jesus Christ, for the means of grace,
and for the hope of glory.*

*And, we beseech thee,
give us that due sense of all thy mercies,
that our hearts may be unfeignedly thankful;
and that we show forth thy praise,
not only with our lips, but in our lives,
by giving up our selves to thy service,
and by walking before thee
in holiness and righteousness all our days;
through Jesus Christ our Lord,
to whom, with thee and the Holy Ghost,
be all honor and glory, world without end. Amen.*

Announcements

Hymn 717 - America – portions of stanzas 1 and 3

*My country, 'tis of thee, sweet land of liberty, of thee I sing;
Long my our land be bright with freedom's holy light;
Protect us by thy might, great God, our King.*

BCP – page 59 – Prayer of St. Chrysostom

*Almighty God, who hast given us grace at this time with one accord to make our
common supplication unto thee, and hast promised through thy well-beloved Son
that when two or three are gathered together in his Name thou wilt be in the
midst of them: Fulfill now, O Lord, the desires and petitions of thy servants as may
be best for us; granting us in this world knowledge of thy truth, and in the world to
come life everlasting. Amen.*

BCP – page 59 – The Grace

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Ghost, be with us all evermore. *Amen.*

Hymn 473 – Lift high the cross

*Lift high the cross, the love of Christ proclaim
till all the world adore his sacred Name.*

Led on their way by this triumphant sign,
the hosts of God in conquering ranks combine.

*Lift high the cross, the love of Christ proclaim
till all the world adore his sacred Name.*

Each newborn servant of the Crucified
bears on the brow the sea of him who died.

*Lift high the cross, the love of Christ proclaim
till all the world adore his sacred Name.*

O Lord, once lifted on the glorious tree,
as thou hast promised, draw the world to thee.

*Lift high the cross, the love of Christ proclaim
till all the world adore his sacred Name.*

So shall our song of triumph ever be:
praise to the Crucified for victory.

*Lift high the cross, the love of Christ proclaim
till all the world adore his sacred Name.*

Dismissal

Alleluia! Alleluia! Go in peace to love and serve the Lord.
Thanks be to God. Alleluia! Alleluia!

Prayer for Veterans Day

Almighty God, we commend to your gracious care and keeping all the men and women of our armed forces at home and abroad. And, on this weekend, we remember especially those who have served previously, both living and no longer with us. Continue to be with them and their families. And continue to be with all of us who have benefited and continue to benefit from their sacrifice and valor. Help all of us, Lord, to step up when called, whatever the danger. In Christ's Name we pray. *Amen.*

