

THE PRESENTATION

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Malachi 3:1-4

3 See, I am sending 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—indeed, he is coming, says the Lord of hosts. ² But who can endure the day of his coming, and who can stand when he appears?

For he is like a refiner's fire and like washers' soap; ³ he will sit as a refiner and purifier of silver, and he will purify the descendants of Levi and refine them like gold and silver, until they present offerings to the Lord in righteousness. ⁴ Then the offering of Judah and Jerusalem will be pleasing to the Lord, as in the days of old and as in former years.

Commentary from Wadie Far

One of the hardest things for any child, and maybe even for many of us, is the time we spend waiting. Waiting is usually accompanied by anticipation; many thoughts go through our minds while we wait. During periods of waiting, we ask ourselves many questions – for example, what if the thing we are waiting for is not as we hoped? And many other questions that occupy our every thought. Even when we are certain that what we are waiting for will surely happen, it doesn't make our waiting any easier.

Our text today invites us to wait differently. It shows us that God has sent a messenger to the people to assure them of the coming of the Lord, but this messenger also carries a warning: To be able to welcome the coming of the Lord, we need to prepare ourselves. If we are not ready, we will

not be able to endure the Lord's coming. To be able to welcome the Lord, we need to examine ourselves and our lives with a critical and honest eye, to make sure that we live by the decrees and commandments of the Lord. Given that we are certain that the Lord will come, we need to embark on the process of preparing ourselves. The process of refining ourselves will not be easy, but it is important. Therefore, instead of spending our time worrying while we wait, let us spend it preparing ourselves and refining our lives to welcome the coming of the Lord.

Discussion Questions

Is your life built on the certainty of the second coming of the Lord, or do you still doubt?

How do we prepare ourselves for Christ's second coming?

Psalm 84

- ¹ How dear to me is your dwelling, O Lord of hosts!*
My soul has a desire and longing for the
courts of the Lord; my heart and my flesh
rejoice in the living God.
- ² The sparrow has found her a house and the swallow
a nest where she may lay her young; *
by the side of your altars, O Lord of hosts, my
King and my God.
- ³ Happy are they who dwell in your house! *
they will always be praising you.
- ⁴ Happy are the people whose strength is in you! *
whose hearts are set on the pilgrims' way.
- ⁵ Those who go through the desolate valley will find it
a place of springs, *
for the early rains have covered it with pools
of water.
- ⁶ They will climb from height to height, *
and the God of gods will reveal himself in
Zion.
- ⁷ Lord God of hosts, hear my prayer; *
hearken, O God of Jacob.
- ⁸ Behold our defender, O God; *
and look upon the face of your Anointed.
- ⁹ For one day in your courts is better than a thousand
in my own room, *
and to stand at the threshold of the house of
my God than to dwell in the tents of the
wicked.
- ¹⁰ For the Lord God is both sun and shield; *
he will give grace and glory;
- ¹¹ No good thing will the Lord withhold *
from those who walk with integrity.
- ¹² O Lord of hosts, *
happy are they who put their trust in you!

Commentary from Wadie Far

We all long to be in a place where we feel safe and secure. For many, that place is home. It is the place where, despite whatever is going on in our lives, we feel that things will be fine. However, we also know that our earthly homes are not permanent; we are mere pilgrims on this earth, and so a day will come when we will leave our earthly homes behind. Once we realize that, we understand that our souls long for something more permanent and more secure than our earthly dwelling, only to discover that dwelling is the house of our Lord.

No wonder our souls long to live in the house of the Lord, for there we will live in ever-lasting bliss. In the house of the Lord, we find our strength and security, we find our happiness and joy. Although some think that we only get to experience this joy and security in our eternal life after leaving our earthly pilgrimage, we get to experience it here on earth if we put our trust in the Lord and live under God's wing, spending our time in the presence of the Lord in our daily lives. While we are at home, at work, at school, or anywhere else, we are in the presence of the Lord and in the dwelling places of our God, if God dwells in our hearts.

Discussion Questions

Where do you find your security and peace?

What does it mean for you to live in the house of the Lord while we are here on Earth?

Hebrews 2:14-18

¹⁴ Since, therefore, the children share flesh and blood, he himself likewise shared the same things, so that through death he might destroy the one who has the power of death, that is, the devil, ¹⁵ and free those who all their lives were held in slavery by the fear of death. ¹⁶ For it is clear that he did not come to help angels but the descendants of Abraham. ¹⁷ Therefore he had to become like his brothers and sisters in every respect, so that he might become a merciful and faithful high priest in the service of God, to make a sacrifice of atonement for the sins of the people. ¹⁸ Because he himself was tested by what he suffered, he is able to help those who are being tested.

Commentary from Wadie Far

While for some, God is far and distant, that should not be the case for us Christians. We believe that God came down to earth to be with us, to guide, to teach, to heal, and to give us salvation. In this belief, we should find great strength, for our God is not a distant, far away God, who does not understand our problems and challenges. Rather, God is the one who humbled himself and took on flesh for us. We believe in a God who wants to dwell in our hearts and wants to be close to us. Jesus paid our debt on the wood of the cross, and gave us life; in return, we are asked to believe in him, and that faith, if it is a living faith, should lead us to care for others as he has cared for us. We are to walk humbly with people, teaching and guiding them, listening to them, proclaiming the gift of salvation to them, and reminding them that our Lord and Savior knows what they are going through. He is not far from their suffering and he has given them life.

Discussion Questions

Have you opened your heart for Jesus to dwell in it?

Do you trust Jesus with your sufferings and challenges, or are you still trying to take care of them by yourself?

Do you lead others to Christ, so that they can find their comfort in him?

Luke 2:22-40

²²When the time came for their purification according to the law of Moses, they brought him up to Jerusalem to present him to the Lord ²³(as it is written in the law of the Lord, “Every firstborn male shall be designated as holy to the Lord”), ²⁴and they offered a sacrifice according to what is stated in the law of the Lord, “a pair of turtledoves or two young pigeons.”

²⁵Now there was a man in Jerusalem whose name was Simeon; this man was righteous and devout, looking forward to the consolation of Israel, and the Holy Spirit rested on him. ²⁶It had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he would not see death before he had seen the Lord’s Messiah. ²⁷Guided by the Spirit, Simeon came into the temple, and when the parents brought in the child Jesus to do for him what was customary under the law, ²⁸Simeon took him in his arms and praised God, saying,

²⁹“Master, now you are dismissing your servant in peace,
according to your word,
³⁰for my eyes have seen your salvation,
³¹which you have prepared in the presence of all peoples,
³²a light for revelation to the gentiles
and for glory to your people Israel.”

³³And the child’s father and mother were amazed at what was being said about him. ³⁴Then Simeon blessed them and said to his mother Mary, “This child is destined for the falling and the rising of many in Israel and to be a sign that will be opposed ³⁵so that the inner thoughts of many will be revealed—and a sword will pierce your own soul, too.”

³⁶There was also a prophet, Anna the daughter of Phanuel, of the tribe of Asher. She was of a great age, having lived with her husband seven years after her marriage, ³⁷then as a widow to the age of eighty-four. She never left the temple but worshiped there with fasting and prayer night and day. ³⁸At that moment she came and began to praise God and to speak about the child to all who were looking for the redemption of Jerusalem.

³⁹When they had finished everything required by the law of the Lord, they returned to Galilee, to their own town of Nazareth. ⁴⁰The child grew and became strong, filled with wisdom, and the favor of God was upon him.

Commentary from Wadie Far

We have reflected on how we should wait for the promises of God, and how we need to be active while we wait and prepare ourselves to receive these promises. In this passage, we see how waiting, preparing ourselves, and trusting in the promises of our Lord will result in us seeing these promises fulfilled by God in God’s time. Simeon did not only wait faithfully but also his heart was also open to the guidance of the Holy Spirit. It was through following that guidance that he went to the Temple in time to see the child being presented by his parents. Seeing the child Jesus and recognizing who he was with the guidance of the Holy Spirit, Simeon realized how, through him, God’s promise would be fulfilled for all people. After that recognition, Simeon praised God for God’s faithfulness. We are also shown a second character, a faithful prophet, Anna, who was also waiting for the fulfillment of God’s promises. When she saw them fulfilled in the child Jesus, she could not contain her delight, proclaiming the Good News to all who would listen.

Discussion Questions

Are you waiting for the fulfillment of God’s promises in your life while keeping your heart open to God’s guidance?

Are you ready to proclaim to the world all the good things that God has done for you?