

## **Sermon Draft**

**Text: Malachi 4:1–6**

**Sermon: “Dawning of a New Day”**

Our text this morning is from Malachi. Malachi’s prophetic career occurred after the people of Israel returned from the exile in Babylon. The books of Ezra and Nehemiah speak of the return and the rebuilding of the temple and the city of Jerusalem. This return and rebuilding and the consequences of turning away from the Lord should have been clear and obvious to the people. Yet God sends Malachi to them because, once again, all is not well. The people are grumbling and complaining, giving God sub-standard sacrifices, and not following the Law of Moses. The more things change the more they stay the same.

A new day dawns every morning. The sun comes up whether we like it or not. And honestly, some mornings we like it, and some mornings we don’t. There’s the first day of vacation, and there’s the first day of school. There’s Christmas morning. There’s the morning of your wedding day. The sun comes up, whether we want it to or not.

And whether we're ready for it or not. Whether you're ready school or work or not. Whether you're ready to preach or not. The sun comes up, and a new day dawns, ready or not.

Malachi told the people of Israel: the sun of righteousness shall arise. And some will want it to, and some will not. Some will be ready, and some will not. For some, that day will be a day of joy, but for others it will be a day of dread. For the arrogant and the evildoers, the sun of righteousness shall arise, and they shall be set ablaze,

But for those who fear the name of the Lord, the sun of righteousness will arise with healing in his wings, and they shall go out leaping like calves from the stall. Leaping at the joy of a new day. When Jesus Comes, it is the dawning of a new day for His people.

The word of the Lord from Malachi: ***“For behold, the day is coming, burning like an oven, when all the arrogant and all evildoers will be stubble. The day that is coming shall set them ablaze, says the Lord of hosts, so that it will leave them neither root nor branch.***

*But for you who fear my name, the sun of righteousness shall rise with healing in its wings. You shall go out leaping like calves from the stall” (vs 1–2).*

The sun of righteousness has arisen from heaven and come down to be our Savior, to become incarnate, to be enfleshed. Jesus is the sun of righteousness who, though swallowed up in the darkness of death, rose from the dead to defeat death. And he is the sun of righteousness who will arise once more on the Last Day, when he will also raise all the dead and give to you and to all who are in him eternal life.

Malachi seems to speak of all those sun rises. Living four hundred or so years before Jesus, of course, he is speaking of when the Son of God arose to be born a man. But he became man to die, and he died to rise, and he ascended to return. To speak of one is to speak of them all. They’re really all one big work. For you. And he wants all people to be ready and joyful. Not to dread that day, but to look forward to it in faith.

But the people were not ready. They should have been. It had not been that long since the nation had been defeated by the Babylonians and taken away as prisoners of war, exiled from their homeland. The Babylonians had leveled the city of Jerusalem and destroyed the temple. After seventy years, when the people returned, they rebuilt the city, the walls, and the temple but it wasn't the same. It wasn't as strong. It wasn't as glorious. A constant reminder of what happens when you turn away from God.

Yet turn away they did. Again. Things were up and running, but all was not well. The people doubted God's love. They were despising his name. They weren't offering to God sacrifices worthy of him, but ones they didn't want, animals that were blemished and lame and blind. They weren't paying their tithes. And maybe worst of all, with all this going on, they were accusing God of injustice! So, God, in love, sent Malachi to them to call them to repentance. To repent of what they were doing. To repent of what they thought of him.

And to remember: ***“Remember the law of my servant Moses, the statutes and rules that I commanded him at Horeb for all Israel”*** (v 4). Remember, or instead of that morning being one of leaping like calves in joy, they will be reduced to weeping piles of stubble and set ablaze.

Remembering the Law of Moses, though, didn't just mean remembering the Ten Commandments, straightening up, and being good. It meant much more than that, because God gave Moses much more than that at Horeb, on Mount Sinai. For after giving Moses the Commandments, God also gave Moses the instructions for the tabernacle the place where God would dwell with his people for the forgiveness of their sins. With the tabernacle and the sacrifices, God was calling his people to straighten up, raise their heads, and look for the day their Savior would rise up. The Commandments would show them their sin; the tabernacle would show them their Savior. That they wait with eager hearts for his morning.

How about us? Do we have such an eager heart for Jesus to come again? for the Last Day? Are you ready for that day? It's hard, isn't it? There's so much to do and so little time. Our lives are complicated, and money is short. There may even be times when you doubt God's love because of what's going on in your life and how things in this world perhaps seem so unjust.

Like the people of Malachi's day, it's easy to focus on worldly things and not to give God our best or even consider him at all, prioritize other things before him, and not really be all that eager for the sun to rise on the Last Day. Because we're not who we should be. We should know better; the evidence of our need is all around us. But when the sun of righteousness arises, when Jesus comes back again, what will he think of me?

Well, God does not want us to doubt, be unprepared for that day, or fear that day. Ever merciful, he promises: ***“Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the great and awesome day of the Lord comes.***

*And he will turn the hearts of fathers to their children and the hearts of children to their fathers, lest I come and strike the land with a decree of utter destruction” (vs 5–6).*

Malachi calls him Elijah. John the Baptist is the name he goes by in the New Testament. He will proclaim repentance, but even more than that, he will point to Jesus and say: *“Behold the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world”* (John 1:29). Behold the sun of righteousness with healing in his wings. Healing for us who are sick with sin, weighed down by life, and in desperate need of forgiveness and joy.

John proclaims the dawning of salvation for us still today. For as he pointed to the Lamb of God at the Jordan, so, too, are we reminded of the Lamb who washes us clean in our fonts, and so, too, does he point to the Lamb of God who comes to us on the altar. We sing *“Lamb of God, You take away the sin of the world”* before we receive the body and blood of Jesus.

The body and blood of Jesus who stretched out his arms on the cross like wings for us to take refuge under, and where his healing forgiveness is found. His forgiveness proclaimed to us at the beginning of each Divine Service, his forgiveness washed over us, and his forgiveness placed into our mouths in his Supper answers the question: When the sun of righteousness arises, when Jesus comes back again, what will he think of me? It will be the same as he thinks of us now as he tells us “You are forgiven”.

And as he is risen, so are we, already now. Each day, a new day in him. Each day dying to sin and rising in him to live a new life. A day to serve others, never growing weary of doing good.

After Malachi preached, it was another four hundred years or so until the sun of righteousness rose. But until that day comes for us, we can live in the confidence of his forgiveness and in joy, knowing that whenever that day comes, we are ready. It will be a morning unlike any other. The day of heaven. The eternal day. When the sun of righteousness will shine forever. Amen