

Second Sunday of Advent: December 9, 2018

Sermonette Theme: God Sends His Messengers to Speak the Truth

Malachi 3:1-4; Luke 3: 1-6 ; 1 Corinthians 4:1-5

Introduction to the Sermonettes:

Sometimes the truth of Christmas gets lost in all of the nice traditions and things we do at Christmas time. A jolly man in a red suit who brings toys and goodies to good little girls and boys is fun, it's just not the truth of Christmas. People making toys at the North Pole, a talking snowman, or a red nosed reindeer make for great cartoons, but they are not the truth of Christmas.

God wants us to know the truth of Christmas, and not only to know what that truth is, but to believe that truth. He wanted those in the Old Testament to know the truth of Christmas, that he would send a Savior, long before there ever was a Christmas. He sent prophets to give the people prophecies that foretold this amazing day. God also wants us to know the truth about Christmas. He gives us the truth in his Word so that we can hear, study, learn and believe it.

This truth of Christmas is not about yuletide cheer, office parties, or secret Santa, the truth of Christmas is about a Savior who has come to save us from our sins. This time before Christmas is a time to look once again at the truth of why God had to send a Savior and how blessed we are that he did come.

This morning we will look at some of God's messengers and we will see the truth of Christmas that they bring to us. May God bless us as we see the truth of Christmas in Jesus and may we be joyful in our preparation for him to come.

First Sermonette: God sends his Messenger Malachi to Speak the Truth: Malachi 3: 1-4

One of those traditions around Christmas is to fill the air with songs and carols that speak of joy and peace. The world around us seeks to find calm on this one evening. It is said that during WWII and the Civil War, Christmas Eve was the one night that the men laid down their arms and had one night of peace.

The message we often hear here is that Jesus comes to bring peace on earth and goodwill to men. The problem is that we don't always understand what that means. Jesus was definitely peaceful and he did teach a message of peace and love. The problem is, he also preached that sin would be a part of this world. He preached that because of sin this world, and our lives, would be filled with problems, troubles, even wars.

When we think about this peace on earth and goodwill towards men we think that Jesus came to solve all of our disagreements, to end all of our arguments and to do away with all the wars. The truth is, Jesus did come to bring peace, but it was not an end to war and trouble, it was a spiritual peace that would bring joy. Jesus came to bring peace to hearts and minds that were troubled by sin and overwhelmed by guilt.

God sent his messenger Malachi with his truth. He prophesied that the Lord would come to earth to make things right. The thought of an all-powerful God coming to earth to make things right is really not a pleasant thought, especially if you are a sinner who has broken the laws of God. The thought of an all-powerful God coming to earth is actually pretty scary. It sounds more like a threat than a blessing.

The truth is, God coming to earth is the greatest sign of his love and mercy. Jesus did not come in vengeance to destroy the sinner, instead, he came to make things right for us, to save sinful people like you and me, by washing our sins away, purifying our hearts and making us spiritually clean.

Malachi prophesies about Christmas long before it happens. He prophesies about the Lord and what he will do when he comes to earth. When our Savior comes, we will see his love in all that he does for us. He will make peace between a righteous, holy God and sinful, imperfect man. When he does this, then we will have joy. We

will have the blessing of being able to bring our offerings of thanks and praise directly to our loving God for all the things that he has done for us in his love, especially sending us a Savior who takes away all of our sins.

Malachi 3:1-4

“See, I will send my messenger, who will prepare the way before me. Then suddenly the Lord you are seeking will come to his temple; the messenger of the covenant, whom you desire, will come,” says the LORD Almighty.

²But who can endure the day of his coming? Who can stand when he appears? For he will be like a refiner’s fire or a launderer’s soap. ³He will sit as a refiner and purifier of silver; he will purify the Levites and refine them like gold and silver. Then the LORD will have men who will bring offerings in righteousness, ⁴and the offerings of Judah and Jerusalem will be acceptable to the LORD, as in days gone by, as in former years.

God sends his Messenger John the Baptist to Speak the Truth: Luke 3:1-6

So often we think of this time before Christmas as a time of joy and happiness. There is a lot of time for that. However, Advent is also time for preparation. We hear the truth of preparation in John the Baptist’s message.

Malachi told the people to watch for the messenger who would come and prepare the way for the Savior of the world to be revealed. When the people saw and heard this messenger proclaim to them, they should be ready for that Messiah to come.

Yet, the messenger would come and would have to speak some hard truths to the people. He would come and tell sinful people, with hearts that had wandered from God into unbelief, that they were not ready to meet this Savior in faith. He would tell them that they had work to do. His message was full of truth, “Repent, for the kingdom of God is near.”

John the Baptist came at God’s perfect time. It was just not the people’s perfect time. They were going about their lives and not thinking about the Savior God had promised. They were taking God and his promises for granted. They did not think about the sins they had committed and were not sorry that their lives were filled with this sin and unbelief.

The Isaiah compared the life of faith to a road. If we look at these people’s lives of faith like roads they were very bad ones. They would have been roads that were filled with rough patches, potholes, & unnecessary detours. This road of the heart needed some work because it was not a road that was prepared for anyone, much less the Savior of the world to walk or ride on.

This was a hard truth for the Israelites and it’s a hard truth for us. We want to think that our lives of faith are all squared away, that our lives are all prepared for Jesus to come at Christmas. We want to think that our road of faith is smooth like the newest laid asphalt on the road, all ready for the king to come.

John the Baptist gives us the same truth that he gave to the Israelites: **“Repent, for the Kingdom of God is near. Prepare the way for the Lord, make straight paths for him.”**

The truth is we have a lot of repenting to do because we sin a lot. We sin knowingly and unknowingly, we sin in weakness and by choice, we have sins of pride and worry.

Our hearts are made ready when we hear and study his Word. Through that Word we see just how terrible any sin is in our lives. The love for our Savior means that we don’t want to hold onto that sin, instead we want to get rid of it. John the Baptist tells us how we get rid of that sin. Not by doing more good than evil, not by working it off. We repent of our many sins and trust in the forgiveness that can only come from our loving Savior.

As we hear and study the Word, the Holy Spirit leads us to prepare our hearts in faith. The Holy Spirit helps us to take those crazy terrible roads of sin and unbelief, and by faith to make them straight. The Holy Spirit leads us in faith to have a heart that is ready and prepared for the love of God shown to us through his Son our Savior.

The best news is that as we prepare for the Savior to come, we hear so often in our worship services. Be at peace, your sins are forgiven.

Luke 3:1-6

In the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius Caesar—when Pontius Pilate was governor of Judea, Herod tetrarch of Galilee, his brother Philip tetrarch of Iturea and Traconitis, and Lysanias tetrarch of Abilene—² during the high priesthood of Annas and Caiaphas, the word of God came to John son of Zechariah in the desert.³ He went into all the country around the Jordan, preaching a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins.⁴ As is written in the book of the words of Isaiah the prophet:

“A voice of one calling in the desert, ‘Prepare the way for the Lord, make straight paths for him.⁵ Every valley shall be filled in, every mountain and hill made low. The crooked roads shall become straight, the rough ways smooth.⁶ And all mankind will see God’s salvation.

God Sends his Messenger Paul to Speak the Truth. Scripture Lesson: 1 Corinthians 4:1-5

One of the last things we hear when we leave our worship service is the comfort of the blessing of the Lord. Usually, the preface to that blessing is, **Go in peace, live in harmony with one another and serve the Lord with gladness.**

One of the great blessings we have is the knowledge of the forgiveness that Jesus was born to give us. One of the responsibilities of a Christian person is the work of sharing the good news of Jesus with others. This is part of serving the Lord in gladness.

We might think that if we come to church on Sunday, put our offering in the plate, or volunteer for something at church that we are fulfilling our duty to serve the Lord in gladness. The truth is there is so much more that the Lord wants us to be doing with our life of faith. Instead of looking at our time with God as 1 hour a week, he wants us to see all those other hours as service to him too.

Paul tells us that we have been entrusted with something very special. We have been entrusted with God’s truth. The truth that sinful people need a Savior, the truth that God loved the world enough to send a Savior, and the truth that this Savior died on the cross to forgive us. The truth that Jesus has done everything necessary to save us. There’s nothing more that we add, nothing more we can add to what Jesus did.

This time of year, we have a lot of polite conversations at get-togethers and parties. We are often told that we can’t talk about our religion or politics. However, at this time of year, many people give religion a pass. In some way they understand that this holiday has some religious aspect to it. The problem is, they may not know what that religious aspect is.

What a perfect time to be messengers of truth ourselves. Instead of letting the time drift by and our friends and neighbors drift away. It is time to be truthful with ourselves. We have not been very good at being our Savior’s messengers. We have not been faithful with the message we have been given by God. Yet, Jesus still gives us many more chances and opportunities to thank him. He continues to surround us with many people every day, that we can share the good news of Jesus with.

This Christmas, see the messengers of truth that God has so graciously sent to you to make sure that you know that a Savior has been born for you. But also remember, as we prepare our hearts and minds in faith, we are also God’s messengers. May we be filled with thanks and faith and invite many more to hear the Christmas joy.

1 Corinthians 4:1-5

So then, men ought to regard us as servants of Christ and as those entrusted with the secret things of God. ² Now it is required that those who have been given a trust must prove faithful. ³ I care very little if I am judged by you or by any human court; indeed, I do not even judge myself. ⁴ My conscience is clear, but that does not make me innocent. It is the Lord who judges me. ⁵ Therefore judge nothing before the appointed time; wait till the Lord comes. He will bring to light what is hidden in darkness and will expose the motives of men's hearts. At that time each will receive his praise from God.