

## Advent Delight

✧ for seeking the LORD (v.1)

✧ for purified offerings (vv.2-4)

In the Name of Jesus coming near to us now, dear preparing Christians:

Malachi's first word today is a spotlight that lights up the stage of life instantly. Sitting in the darkness and gloom of this rushing, raging planet, no one knows how quickly the end will come. But through His faithful prophet the LORD God says, "**Look!**" He wants everyone up and attentive.

Some men prefer to be like a linebacker who blindly steps into the hole in the line. You think you've got it made. As your eyes catch a flicker of movement, 250 pounds of muscle cream you from the side. Boom! That was the pull-the-offensive-tackle play, and you didn't see it coming until it was too late.

"**Look!**" God does not want it to be too late for anyone. He wants to give you **Advent Delight** ...

✧ for seeking the LORD (v.1)

God's challenge is to get you to hold out your hand of faith so He can give you this blessing. "Oh, but Pastor, I pay my own bills. I do my own thing." So you would park a new car in your driveway, then get out some sandpaper to work the shiny new paint? Your special someone gives you a diamond, and you'd brush on some varnish as a "protective coat"? Then why spoil God's gift of **Advent Delight** with your works and merits? Anything we try to add only tarnishes God's gift of righteousness.

"Malachi" means *my messenger* in Hebrew. And the LORD was having a real problem with the messengers He'd sent. Their priests, what we call "pastors," were despising God's name-reputation by allowing the people to bring diseased and crippled sacrifices. "**Try bringing them to your governor,**" Malachi challenged. In the early days folks in our congregation were offering "junk for Jesus," broken down vacuum cleaners, worn out at home, but cluttering the closets at church. God deserves our first and our best, not our leftovers. And "**the lips of a priest should be guardians of knowledge, and people should seek instruction from his mouth because he is a messenger of the LORD of Armies.**" (2:7 EHV<sup>1</sup>)

Our gracious God knows we're children clothed and fed by our heavenly Father. Everything we have He gives us in the first place. We have nothing to give Him but our hearts. While the world around us hustles and bustles to impress the boss, the family, the relatives, the neighbors, God has something greater than all to give us. Not more work, but God's gift of **Advent Delight for seeking the LORD**.

Boom! Spotlights! The Holy Spirit says, "**Look! I am sending my messenger! He will prepare the way before me. Then suddenly the Lord, whom you are seeking, will come to his temple! The Messenger of the Covenant, in whom you delight, will surely come, says the LORD of Armies.**"

His message **of the Covenant** is not more for you to do, but totally, *Done!* God stepped into our world to take away all your guilt and fear. He finds you and hands you the tall, cool drink of living water which is God's Word. He gives you overflowing refills of all-forgiving grace in the Good News sacraments. He left nothing to chance so you and I would not miss **Advent Delight**. God sent a voice in the wilderness crying to **prepare the way** for His coming. John the Baptist called for all to come out **seeking the LORD** – only to find the other way around. God seeks us. He surely came the first time to suffer and die for all. What could possibly keep Christ from coming again in glory to take us home?

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<sup>1</sup> EHV ~ *Evangelical Heritage Version* (<http://wartburgproject.org>). NPH, © 2017. Order: 800-662-6022.

## ☆ for purified offerings (vv.2-4)

The question right before our text is what everyone is asking these days: *“Where is the God of justice?”* There’s so much anger and bitterness, violence, hatred and abuse. *How can God let it go on? Why doesn’t He end all the suffering?* Ask those who question God: Are you sure you’re ready?

The injustice and *violence* God calls out might shock you. Malachi describes people coming to the temple in tears, *weeping and crying* for God’s help: *“Why is this happening?” This is why—because the LORD is a witness in the case between you and the wife you married when you were young, because you have betrayed her—though she was your partner, the wife with whom you made a covenant! No one has done this who has a remnant of the Spirit. And why one? He is seeking offspring from God. See, God wants you for His family! So guard yourselves in your spirit, and do not act unfaithfully against the wife you married when you were young. He hates divorce! That is what the LORD, the God of Israel, says. He hates it when a person wears violence as a garment. That is what the LORD of Armies says. So guard yourselves in your spirit, and do not be unfaithful.”* (2:13–16) God begins **Advent Delight** with the fiery purification of our hearts, our homes – marriage and family.

*“But who can endure the day when he comes? Who will remain standing when he appears? For he will be like a refiner’s fire, like launderers bleach!”* Jesus says, *“When these things begin to happen, stand up and lift up your heads, because your redemption is near.”* (Luke 21:28) Your peace and joy can only come when He performs surgery on the cancer of bitterness, envy and resentment in your heart. That may sound as exciting as going in for surgery, but this will not be delayed. The Great Physician of your spirit, soul and body is 100% successful. He purifies you for His family of faith.

A woman’s Bible study puzzled over the next verse: *“He will be seated like a refiner and a purifier of silver. He will purify the sons of Levi and refine them like gold and like silver.”* One of them agreed to research with a silversmith. She just said she was curious about the process of refining silver. As she watched, the silversmith heated a piece of raw metal in the crucible over the fire. He explained how he had to hold the silver in the middle of the hottest flames to burn away the impurities.

The woman thought about God holding us in a hot spot as “He sits as a refiner and purifier of silver.” She asked if it was true he had to sit in front of the fire the whole time the silver was being refined. The craftsman answered, “Yes, I not only have to sit close holding the silver, but keep my eyes on it all the while it’s in the flame. If the silver is left a moment too long, the heat will destroy it.” After a moment of silence she asked, “How do you know when the silver is fully refined?” The silversmith answered with a smile, “Oh, that’s easy. When I see *my image* in it.”

If today you’re feeling the heat of the fire, remember God has His eye on you, watching closely. He feels the heat too. He knows just how long to keep refining until He sees *His image* in you.<sup>2</sup> In God’s eyes, you are totally new, God’s own **Advent Delight** – washed clean by Jesus’ blood, covered with His holiness. The all-powerful **LORD of Armies** gives great gifts of *“love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control”* – *“the fruit of the Spirit.”* (Galatians 5:22 NIV84)

God wants you to know how precious you are to Him. God’s love is shining in every example I could bring. Those sweet little grandchildren saying, “I love you, Grandma.” “I love you, Grandpa.” The first time that special someone says, “I love you.” That unconditional affection wagging his tail at the door like the only thing in the world that matters is, you’re home! God wants you home with Him.

You are God’s **Advent Delight**. Now **Delight** in Him. *“They will belong to the LORD and bring him an offering in righteousness. Judah and Jerusalem’s offerings will be pleasing to the LORD as they were in the days of old, in years long ago.”* Sincere, heartfelt offerings, yes. But if you really want to give God **Advent Delight**, with a humble, repentant heart just let Him love you. God is near. Amen.

<sup>2</sup> Adapted from email received 10/17/2009. Author unknown.