

4 [a]“Surely the day is coming; it will burn like a furnace. All the arrogant and every evildoer will be stubble, and the day that is coming will set them on fire,” says the Lord Almighty. “Not a root or a branch will be left to them. 2 But for you who revere my name, the sun of righteousness will rise with healing in its rays. And you will go out and frolic like well-fed calves. 3 Then you will trample on the wicked; they will be ashes under the soles of your feet on the day when I act,” says the Lord Almighty.

Feel the Heat

Years ago I bought a set of books by David Gingery. Volume 1 detailed building a small lathe using a charcoal blast furnace to melt and cast aluminum. It certainly was interesting and I later bought a lathe... But my first aluminum foundry was fueled on charcoal, the second furnace ran off of used motor oil. That is when I learned what hot really was. Hot was a six foot flame, standing at a distance, wearing a welding hood, just so I could get a glimpse of the crucible. It was hot, now multiply that by a few thousand acres and you have the forest fires up north or down south with heat so intense that nothing can escape. Everything is burned up.

That is the picture Malachi has as he speaks about the coming day burning like a furnace. But he also sees different kind of heat on the horizon bringing healing. It's the warmth felt after a cold night. It's the first rays after a long harsh winter. This morning feel the heat flee the heat of a consuming fire by finding the warmth from the Sun of righteousness.

For Israel they felt the heat. They were still too close to the foundry. Jerusalem fell to Babylon and carried them away into captivity. There they waited 70 years before God in his grace allowed them to return home. That brings us to the time of Malachi, about 500 years before Jesus. They have returned to ruins and rubble. Jerusalem was no longer a world power or a glorious nation. Even though God brought them back, preserved a remnant through which he would bring the Savior, and kept his promises, they were ungrateful. They continued in their sin. Instead of rebuilding the temple they built up their own houses first.

They treat the LORD worse off than the kings of the earth. They offered sacrifices of blind, crippled, and diseased animals. The priests accepted it. Just think, it was going to die anyway no sense in keeping it around and the meat is still good, the

perfect ones are hard to come by and expensive, “a pleasing aroma to God.” They were ungrateful, angry, and bitter towards God. Malachi challenges them to, “Try offering them to your governor! Would he be pleased with you? Would he accept you?” If you wouldn’t give them to your governor why would you bring them before God?

Malachi warns them, “The day is coming.” “It will burn like a furnace.” He takes us to judgment day and paints a portrait of the harvest, which has already taken place, only stubble remains. A farmer is torching his field preparing for the next crop. Malachi says, “All the arrogant and every evildoer will be stubble, and that day that is coming will set them on fire.” This fire will consume them as easily as stubble. “Not a root or a branch will be left behind.” None of them will be able to escape. Nothing will be left behind. This fire will be so intense that it will consume even the roots. Malachi isn’t speaking about annihilation or going out of existence. We know that Hell is separation from God, rather these verses highlight the fact that no one will escape from God’s just judgment.

We have not been in exile, carted off and carried back. But I imagine we too suffer from the same sinful nature. We may not be thankful of the situation or station God has placed us in life. We may be ungrateful and grumble and complain against God. Why would he allow me to live in such a sinful society? Another shooting down south. The fires up North aren’t any better. Doesn’t God know who I am?

The evildoers seem to prosper and those who challenge God escape from disaster. You may be wondering, “Where is the heat? I waiting, Lord.” It’s the height of arrogance to imagine that since I’m finally on the scene God will finally bring judgment. It’s not all about us. God is not interested in serving our agenda. He is gathering his people, waiting patiently for more. God wants all to be saved. He doesn’t want any to feel the heat of a consuming fire. So when should we expect this consuming fire?

Maybe we still don’t realize what God has said through his prophet Malachi. There are two words that should terrify every one of us. “All the arrogant and every evildoer will be stubble, and that day that is coming will set them on fire.” But isn’t hell reserved for really bad people? Yes and we are those really bad people. We are arrogant in thinking our life and our stuff are too important, more important than spending time with God or in his church. Arrogant in thinking that God is here to serve and make us comfortable here and now. arrogant in assuming that God will always forgive the evil

that I have no desire to change. Evil is the opposite of good. That description fits us, “Arrogant and evil” and a day, Judgement Day has been prepared. It’s a day none will be able to escape from. It’s terrifying.

Thankfully that’s not where Malachi stops. There is one more very important word that follows this judgment, “*But.*” *But for you who revere my name, the sun of righteousness will rise with healing in its rays.* Feel the heat from a consuming fire but step back and feel the warmth from the sun of righteousness.

Those who revere God’s name believe in God and everything that God has done. It means to take God at his word and trust him, hold him in high regard and trust that for those who believe, “*The sun of righteousness will rise with healing in its wings.*” We know that this sun brings healing as well. We know who this sun of righteousness is. It’s the Son of God, Jesus Christ. He is the righteous one.

The one who would come through the nation that appeared so godless and beyond hope. It must have felt like a long winter. Malachi is the last book in the Old Testament and then came the 400 years of silence. The faithful struggled and suffered but God had not given up on them. It may have felt like a long winter in Wisconsin, or Iowa. The worst winter on record that drags on and feels like it will never end but just as the sun will rise and the heat will come, Jesus will come again. The sun rises *with healing in its rays. And you will go out and frolic like well-fed calves.* You can almost imagine the picture of a cow cooped up all winter waiting to get back out and then leaping for joy over the pasture.

After 400 years of silence God came among his people. Spring came with the arrival of John the Baptizer who prepared the way for Messiah. The sun of righteousness. The righteous one who did no evil nor arrogantly served himself. He brought healing on the sabbath. He brought life and salvation through the dark days he endured. There on the cross he felt the full weight of sin. He suffered hell for us and in our place as God’s wrath over sin was poured out like a consuming fire.

Does it feel like Jesus is long in coming? Does it feel like winter? Even with the cool weekend I can’t imagine cold. But we know how cold we have been towards God. We’ve turned our backs to him. We remind ourselves of it at the beginning of every service. “I a poor miserable sinner.” What is true for sinners out there is true for us. We

deserve to be burned up in the same fire. But the sun has risen and you can feel its warmth.

Jesus is the light of the world whose dawn was fast approaching. We will experience more than a beautiful sunrise. The sun of righteousness was not just some empty promise. Jesus was the fulfillment. He lived that perfect life we failed to. He brings the perfect life (righteousness) in his wings and just as the rays of the sun cover the earth so too this righteousness covers all people. How can we be angry and sad over such trivial things in this world when God warms our hearts and forgives sin? Our cold attitude toward others was forgiven at the cross. We constantly need to be reminded what we've been delivered from. There is no consuming fire waiting for you but the dawn of a new day, the end of winter, and the warmth of the sun of righteousness as it brings healing.

We will still struggle in this life. God isn't about to take us out of it. If he raptured us away who would be his light to the nations? Who would be the salt of the earth? We don't know when Jesus will come in his glory but when he comes a second time it won't be to bear sin, but to bring salvation to those who are waiting for him. We won't be condemned. Live your lives like you know what waits for you because it is the truth. We don't have any reason to be angry, depressed, or bitter but we have every reason to rejoice and thank God.

It may feel like winter. It may feel like it is never going to end. But that never stopped me from heading out to the driveway setting up shop and pulling out the foundry. Soon after the heat was on I had a 6' circle of summer. There was comfort even in the middle of Wisconsin and lake effect snow. So when it feels cold, bitter, unbearable, turn to the promises of God. The sun will rise. His Son has risen and he gives us his perfect life. Feel the warmth. Amen.