

Commentary on the Gospel for Wed, Dec 23rd 2015

Thus says the Lord GOD:

Lo, I am sending my messenger to prepare the way before me;

And suddenly there will come to the temple the LORD whom you seek,

And the messenger of the covenant you desire.

Yes, he is coming, says the LORD of hosts.

But who will endure the day of his coming?

And who can stand when he appears? (Mal 2: 1-2)

Today's readings startled me. I was expecting comforting words anticipating the nearness of the birth of our savior. But the words of the prophet Malachi are not comforting — just the opposite. The message of Malachi is challenging and disturbing! The Prophet Malachi reminds us that the messenger God sends to our world not only announces God's word to our world but is also the final judge of the world. Michelangelo's famous Last Judgment scene in the Sistine Chapel in the Vatican is a vivid reminder of this final judgment.

Advent is the season of preparing our hearts to celebrate Jesus' first coming into our world. The question posed by today's reading is stark: Have we reviewed our lives and examined them in terms of fidelity to living Jesus' message? Are there any dark corners where we resist that light? Are all our relationships free from hatred and non-forgiveness? Are our daily occupations integrated with the two great commandments of loving God and our neighbor? Are all our crosses and sufferings brought to Christ for guidance and strength in carrying them? In short what dark corners of our hearts still await illumination by the light of Christ's word?

We are also reminded today of the birth of John the Baptist, the precursor of Christ. Recall that John preached a "baptism of repentance for forgiveness of sin." In this John echoes Malachi.

We conclude our Christmas preparation today with a final Advent prayer for deliverance:

O come, O come, Emmanuel,

And ransom captive Israel,

That mourns in lonely exile here

Until the Son of God appear.

Have a blessed day!

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