

SERMON: *“Arise & Shine: Healing Light.”*

Rev. Geoff Ross Sunday, December 13, 2020, St. Andrew’s Presbyterian Church.

[Every weekday morning at 6:00am/in darkness/my alarm goes off to the sound of George Harrison’s guitar kicking into “Here Comes the Sun”! Like ‘Groundhog Day’/every-morning at 6am/“Here comes the sun, do, dun, do, do/Here comes the sun, and I say/It’s all right.” And/in the darkness/I do my best to believe it....]

I mention this because *“Here comes the Sun/SON!”* is theme of today’s reading from the prophet Malachi. Like Isaiah/Zechariah before him, Malachi gave word to God’s judgement/wrath/displeasure/frustration/with the People of God/he spoke of faithlessness/punishment:Again, not really easy/pleasure reading/something you reach for in Advent. But, the promises of hope/peace/joy can only make sense in context with how far things had gone:it is only by understanding the extent of the darkness that we can fully understand the joy of finally witnessing the light of God’s healing/forgiving love/grace. This week, Malachi offers to the People of God/in darkness that promise/prophecy of the coming Messiah/King – the rising of the Son/*“sun of righteousness/with healing in His wings”*

[“Here Comes the Sun”/appeared/Beatles’ album:Abbey Road-Almost didn’t! Frustrated/3rd in line for songs:wrote “HCtheS” for the “Let it Be” album-was dismissed.GH/actually left the Beatles!dark/frustrating period.GH:quoted about state of mind/frustration/weather: “it seems as if winter in England goes on forever, (“Little darling, it’s been a long cold lonely winter/Little darling, it feels like years since it’s been here...”) “by the time spring comes you really need/deserve it.” And we do/don’t we?!]

Like us – only much worse – Malachi longed for the Son! He lived through the dark days of the Persian occupation of Judah(mid-5thCentury/BC). The darkness was everywhere/encompassed everything. Malachi’s contemporaries/People of God were abandoning God/hope in God’s promises/openly questioning: *“Where is the God of justice?”*(Mal 2:17) In/with dark times/words God’s People were asking; *“God, you said/promised that you will come/right all the wrongs/heal every hurt/vindicate your people/defeat every enemy! You promised!/But none of this has happened-where is the hope/peace/joy?”*

We know the frustration! In our times/*“we count the arrogant happy/see evildoers prosper/put God to the test/get away with it/escape”*; to borrow from Malachi!(Mal:3:15). Overcome, cynicism/sarcasm/despair seeps into our prayers/faith:in desperation we, too, cry out, *“Where is the God of justice?”* But Malachi warns us about giving in to our doubts/fears/despair: it’s wrong, he says, to be fooled/believe falsehoods/accept the deceits that Jesus/Christ never came/will return/God’s promises are null/void/fantasy propagated by this dark/fallen/sin-stained world. Why? Because falling for lies (then/now) is to die/succumb to darkness/death. It against this that Malachi looks in hope/proclaims; *“Here come the Son”* – when everything’ll be *“all right/the smile’s returning to their faces/seems like years since it’s been here/It’s all right/Sun, sun, sun, here it comes...”*

This is THE prophecy/promise: light – hope/peace/joy – will come. It’s easy to give up/in, but no matter how big/hard/difficult/impossible whatever you’re facing/going through, God will guide you through/nothing is impossible for God! Hold fast to God’s promises – the Son will come because of God’s love/compassion for His people/us/you/me. And we heard say this in our reading: *“They shall be mine, says the LORD of hosts, my special/treasured possession on the day when I act.”* (Mal 3:17)

[“Treasured possession”/most endearing term God has for his people. – used 8 times/twice in Luke/describe how Mary felt (treasured/heart) when told she had been chosen to bear God’s Son/what the shepherd’s repeated what the angels said, that; “born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is the Messiah, the Lord.”(Luke 2:11) God treasured His people/He treasures you/me/all of His children. So, even though they/we/you/I sometimes didn’t feel valuable, they/you/we were/are still loved!(Titus 2:14/1 Peter 2:9)]

And this tells us a lot about God/God’s love:they weren’t valuable people; but God loved them – and calls them/us his *“treasured possessions.”* In fact, we’re so valuable that God’s heart aches for us/to restore/raise us up/make us/all things new/fulfill His promise to be-with us by healing us/bringing in a new day/when darkness/gloom/dread will be scattered/death’s grip shattered/when we – just like the shining sun will rise/leap like newborns/calves onto the fields of praise.(Mal 4:2)

[Coda/song: “Sun King”-fragment/piece in the side-two melody/John Lennon: “a dream of a King entered his palace to find all his guests were laughing/happy.”/In the medley, wanted a change of atmosphere: ‘Here comes the Sun King.’/‘Everybody’s laughing/happy’ – vision of joy/shalom/promised heaven/holistic health/complete perfection.]

Friends, this is the promise/joy of God’s love/grace; that the Sun of Righteousness will heal/restore us/you/me/all of creation-heaven/earth. Sadness/pain/suffering/sin/everything will be wiped away/become a new creation/best of ourselves. The Good News is that Malachi’s prophecy was fulfilled/will be fulfilled: The joyful message is one of promises made/fulfilled. Christ came to us in Bethlehem and he will come again! He was born/He is Risen and, as the light that the darkness could not overcome – He will come again to defeat death so that paradise would be restored/healed forever! Imagine! Our hopes fulfilled. What joy!/exuberance!/abandon!/freedom! When/on that great day you/me/all of God’s children/creation will celebrate with great joy/shout/sing aloud, *“Here comes the Son!”* Amen.