**The Last Prophet: John**

**Prophecy At John’s Birth**

**Luke 1:57-80**

Advent 2 Mid-week – 12.7.2022

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

Prophets are sent by God to proclaim His Word, not the imaginings of their own hearts. Although, many prophets told the people what they wanted to hear – not proclaiming God’s clear Word. God’s prophets today, those called by God to proclaim His word, are also to declare God’s clear Word – not always what the people want to hear.

God’s command has not changed in time. Those called by God to proclaim His Word, are to call sinners to repentance for the forgiveness of sins. Prophets always point to the mighty work of God’s salvation, for God’s people always seem to get themselves into a mess with their disobedience to His holy will.

We see it in Malachi’s prophecy as he warns that the messenger of God will prepare the way before Him. No one will be able to endure the day of His coming. The One to come is like a refiner’s fire and fuller’s soap – who will purify God’s people. And, God’s people will bring in offerings in righteousness to the Lord.

In our Introit Psalm, God declares, “Call upon Me in the day of trouble; I will deliver you, and you shall glorify Me.”

What troubles do we have? We could talk about the ones we see in our daily lives, troubles as we perceive them, but are those really our worst troubles? Or, are they only outward evidence of something greater?

Sinfulness rears its ugly head in our lives, in fact, it is the very cause of all our troubles, our sinfulness and the sinfulness of others.

Today, we are looking forward to the coming of God’s Christ. It is Advent! Christ’s first Advent was foretold by the prophets, John being the last of that line to foretell Christ’s first advent in our flesh. Last week John foretold the coming of God’s Christ by leaping in his mother’s womb at the presence of God, tabernacling in the womb of Mary.

We are excited this Advent. We have joined in with the masses who are already filled with the Christmas spirit. We want Advent over, we want to hear the Christmas carols, we want to get to the baby in the manger, we want the whole family together.

But it is still Advent! We are in the prophetic stage. John is still prophesying to us.

Remember that Zechariah had been struck mute in the temple. Now, at John’s birth, Zechariah wrote that his name would be John. His name is a prophecy, a proclamation of God’s plans for the One who was to come. The name John means, “God is gracious.” Jesus is coming to be the very grace of God embodied in human flesh. At his prophetic revelation in writing John’s name, God is gracious – Zechariah’s voice is returned to him and he is able to again speak.

At the return of his voice at John’s birth, Zechariah is blessed with the Holy Spirit and prophecies.

*“Blessed be the Lord God of Israel, for he has visited and redeemed his people*

*and has raised up a horn of salvation for us in the house of his servant David,*

*as he spoke by the mouth of his holy prophets from of old, that we should be saved from our enemies and from the hand of all who hate us; to show the mercy promised to our fathers and to remember his holy covenant, the oath that he swore to our father Abraham, to grant us that we, being delivered from the hand of our enemies, might serve him without fear, in holiness and righteousness before him all our days.*

*And you, child, will be called the Prophet of the Most High; for you will go before the Lord to prepare his ways,*

*to give knowledge of salvation to his people in the forgiveness of their sins,*

*because of the tender mercy of our God, whereby the sunrise shall visit us from on high to give light to those who sit in darkness and in the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the way of peace.”*

 He prophesies as if the work of God’s Christ is already completed. Jesus is the horn of salvation, a horn being a triumphant power. He has visited and redeemed His people. It is prophesied as completed, for it is seen by God as accomplished in all those who await it in faith and hope. This Coming One will save us from our enemies, from the hands of those who hate us.

We probably think of our enemies as those who can see with our eyes, and know by their actions, as those who hate us, who do not like us. We all have those we perceive as our enemies, those in this life who have hurt us in some way, shape, or form. But the enemies which God is prophesying victory over through John’s father are those who keep us from serving God without fear, in holiness and righteousness before Him all our days. Our enemies are those who cause us to sit in darkness and the shadow of death.

I pray you hear this dear friends. We are to serve God without fear. We are to serve God in holiness and righteousness. We are to serve God in holiness and righteousness ALL  OUR  DAYS. We are to serve Him in holiness and righteousness not just Sunday mornings or Wednesday evenings for an hour, we are to serve God in holiness and righteousness – 24/7/365 – ***All our days***.

Do you serve God in holiness and righteousness every day? Are your thoughts perfect, without the stain of sinfulness in them? On Sunday you prayed the same collect you prayed a few moments ago. In it, you asked God to “stir up your hearts” so that you might “serve Him with pure minds.”

Our minds and hearts are where sinfulness resides, and from which it rears its ugly head in our lives. And once sinfulness rises in our hearts and minds, it will also flow from our mouths and our bodies in actions and deeds. But not always! Sometime sinfulness sits in our hearts and minds and percolates – vile evil that never sees the light of day, but which rots us from the inside out.

 Dear friends in Christ, this ought not to be so. It is for this reason that God sends His prophets, those who speak God's word to God's people.

God's prophets point to God's Advent in Christ Jesus. He came once to purchase forgiveness with His innocent suffering in death upon the cross. He Advents still, coming to deliver to us the forgiveness He purchased. He will Advent again on the last day, so that we might live and serve Him without fear in holiness and righteousness all the eternal days of our lives.

God's word comes to you from the mouths of His prophets. God's word goes out to prepare before the Lord, His ways. You are given the knowledge of salvation, called to repentance for the forgiveness of your sins. The salvation comes to you from the tender mercy of God, in Jesus Christ. It is in Christ that your feet are guided into the way of peace.

You are at peace with God in your baptism, your daily contrition and repentance for the forgiveness of sins. You are being raised to New Life In Christ each and every day.

Your feet are guided into the way of peace, gathered before the throne of God's grace to receive from the hands of your Savior King His Advent among you – His body to eat and His blood to drink.

You are made new in Christ. You are the forgiven and redeemed – you are the purified – living in the salvation that is Christ Jesus. In Christ your feet are guided in the way of peace to you serve Him without fear. You serve him in Holiness and righteousness all your days; today, tomorrow, and for all eternity.

Blessed be the Lord God of Israel, for He has visited and redeemed His people. He has visits and redeems you. He Advents to you now – in water, word, and meal! Christ guides your feet into the way of peace – peace with God now, and forevermore. Amen.