

We are now in 3rd Sunday of Advent we are looking at the theme, "The coming of Christ is good news for the oppressed." How does the coming of Christ two thousand years ago become good news for the oppressed? In the Old Testament reading from the book of Malachi we are given some clue as to what Christ would do. The prophet tells us that Yahweh would send a messenger ahead of him to prepare the way for him after which the Lord will come. However, the Lord will come as a judge especially when the people were complaining that the wicked were flourishing and that God was not just. When Jesus began his ministry he disclosed himself as the one who has sent by God to bring good news to the poor, to tell the prisoners that they are free and to set free those who are oppressed. During the time of prophet Malachi the people were blind to their own sinfulness and oppression and were pointing fingers at others. Similarly, in our times we too are quick to accuse others and ask God to judge them not realising that we ourselves are oppressors and sinful human beings who will be judged. When we invoke God to come down and judge he will judge everybody equally and therefore, we need to be careful about invoking him as judge.

The prophet continues to say that when the Lord comes as judge who can endure the day of his coming? "Who can stand when he appears? For he will be like a refiner's fire and launderer's soap." The answer to the questions is that no one can stand before him because he is a Holy God. The Lord's people are described as dirty laundry. Clothes were washed by trampling on them with cold water using some kind of soda or bleach to purify the dirt in the clothes. Similarly, God will deal with his people. God will refine and purify all of us and uses us for his glory. He will also act like a refiner's fire cleansing us from all our impurities. The imagery that is used of a refining silver and gold. When silver is heated then all the impurities are spitted out by the metal and pure silver is obtained. Some commentators say that when the refiner can see his own image in the silver then he knows that the silver is absolutely pure. Likewise God removes the impurities from us so that he can see his own image in us.

Yahweh also warns the people of Israel that he would testify against sorcerers, adulterers and perjurers, against those who be fraud labourers of their wages, who oppressed the widows and fatherless and the foreigners. Yahweh shows that his judgement would be swift and not slow as his critics had implied they had accused God of injustice but now he lists their injustice. Both the people and the priest wanted Yahweh to act in judgement on others, little realising that according to God's standards everyone will be judged. In fact, they were so blinded to their own falsehood, that they did not think anything was wrong with them. Sometimes, we too can be like that, blinded to our own falsehood but always accusing others. God warns us that if we oppress the poor and don't pay wages to our labourers and do not lead upright lives then he will judge us.

When Jesus came, he too was concerned about the poor, the needy and the oppressed. The blind were receiving sight, the lame walked and those who were leprosy been healed. The deaf began to hear and the dead were raised to life, and the good news preached to the poor. Today also God calls his followers to be good news to the poor. We are called to care for the needy and oppressed just like how Jesus did. May God bless each one of you.