

MINISTRY BY MAIL
Lutheran Conference of Confessional Fellowship
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Second Sunday In Advent, December 8, 2024

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(Hymns found in The Lutheran Hymnal, CPH, 1941)
Hymns: 106, 94:3, 359, 207, 543.
Lessons: Isaiah 60:1-22, Ephesians 5:8-21, John 1:1-14.
Sermon Text: Malachi 4:2.
Sermon by Pastor Robert Mehltrittter

In the name of Jesus Christ, Dear Fellow Redeemed,

Surely you have all enjoyed a sunrise. Even before the sun rises on a clear day, or even on a partly-cloudy day, you see light above the horizon. If you have ever carefully watched in the moments, and even the hours before the sun rises, you see colors and light and everything becoming brighter and clearer. The darkness, the night goes away and is replaced with light.

With the sun comes warmth as well as light.

God uses such a picture familiar to all humans, a picture of a sunrise, to show the blessings that came into the world with Jesus Christ.

Today let's look at that picture from Scripture of

“THE SUN OF RIGHTEOUSNESS”

- 1. The Sun of Righteousness is the Son of God**
- 2. He brings healing to sin-sick hearts.**
- 3. Let us live as his beloved children!**

In this last book of the Old Testament God tells us *“Surely the day is coming; it will burn like a furnace. All the arrogant and every evildoer will be stubble, and that day that is coming will set them on fire,” says the Lord Almighty. ‘Not a root or a branch will be left to them.’* (Malachi 4:1, NIV84)

That destruction is the fruits of sin, the wages of sin, as the Apostle Paul tells us in the letter to the Romans: *“For the wages of sin is death.”* (Romans 6:23, NIV84)

That would be the fate, the eternal destiny of everyone except for one fact God tells us in his Word. No one, not one single human being is exempt from dying a physical death. And if there were no cure for sin and disobedience, no payment for iniquity, no trade-off for transgression, that would be the beginning of unending punishment for every human being.

But we also read in the last book of the Old Testament, *“But for you who revere my name, the sun of righteousness will rise with healing in its wings.”* (Malachi 4:2, NIV84)

Many will fall away and be damned eternally. But some will remain faithful to the one whom God through the prophet Malachi calls *“The sun of righteousness [who] shall arise with healing in His wings”*. This is a beautiful picture of how eternal life comes to mankind.

Ever since Eve and Adam, believers have been looking and waiting for that one to come. There has long been a glow in the night sky. They know the sun is coming. And now, it peeks above the horizon and leaps into the sky in all its splendor. And it brings healing. It brings life – eternal life!

When we read the complete verse from the Apostle Paul in Romans, this is the complete picture: *“For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.”* (Romans 6:23, NIV84)

If we think of the physical sun in the sky, scientists tell us that without the sun in the sky, we would not exist. There would be no light or heat or life. Of course, when we look at God's creation history in Genesis, we realize that we exist because God created all things and gave each one of us life. Before God created all things, there was nothing, and that “nothing” included darkness. It is not merely because there is a sun that we have life

and light and warmth. God created all things including the sun and gave us physical life. But he gives us more than a physical life to endure on earth for maybe 60 or 70 or more years on earth.

God uses this picture through the prophet Malachi to give us a picture of the light, the warmth, the life that God gives us by sending a Savior to rescue us from the eternity of fire and destruction, from the day of judgment which will see everyone who did not accept Jesus Christ as Savior condemned to eternal fire.

Just as the sun rises in the morning and brings light and warmth and opportunity for growth to mankind, God sends his Sun of Righteousness to give us light and warmth and opportunity to serve him and our fellow mankind.

Just as the earth would be complete darkness if the sun does not rise, in the same way, without God sending the Sun of Righteousness to give us light and life, we would remain in complete darkness.

We would remain in the darkness of sin and everything that is the result of sin. Without the Sun of righteousness coming into our hearts and lives, there would be nothing but eternal death after the earthly death brought about by sin.

This Sun of Righteousness is Jesus Christ. The Apostle John tells us ***“The true light that gives light to every man was coming into the world.”*** (John 1:9, NIV84) Jesus Christ is that Sun, that light, that life. He himself told us ***“I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life.”*** (John 8:12, NIV84)

He brings light, warmth and healing because he is the light. He comes healing the sin-sick heart with the forgiveness of sins. He heals and restores. He brings life – eternal life.

And Jesus Christ brings righteousness. Ok, there’s a word we use often – righteousness. But let’s remember what it really means: Righteousness means sinlessness, moral perfection, goodness. And because God gives us righteousness, we can stand “not guilty” before God of all the sins we have committed. God gives that to mankind like a judge who declares us not guilty. And that becomes yours, your own personal possession through faith in Jesus Christ. Scripture says ***“You are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus,”*** (Galatians 3:26, NIV84)

We have no righteousness until the Sun – Jesus, comes into our hearts and lives.

In the English language, we have sort of a play on words, sort of a double meaning, depending on how we spell the word pronounced sun. When the word is spelled S-U-N it means the brilliant light shining in the daytime that God created to rule the day. When the word which sounds the same way is spelled S-O-N it means the male child of the father, and in the case of Jesus Christ, this is the only-begotten Son of God the Father. Jesus is both the Sun –S-U-N – of Righteousness and the Son – S-O-N – of God the Father.

God’s only-begotten Son, the one he sends as an infant to Bethlehem is the one who brings brightness into the lives of men.

Both the sunshine and the Son of God rise upon us, come upon us because of God’s love. Just as the Sun rises on all men, so God has declared all humans righteous. But to take advantage of that righteousness that God gives freely you must believe it. ***“Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved, but whoever does not believe will be condemned.”*** (Mark 16:16, NIV84)

Listen again to God’s promise: ***“But for you who revere my name, the sun of righteousness will rise with healing in its wings.”*** (Malachi 4:2, NIV84)

God gives us a beautiful promise and he delivers on that promise! For you who fear my name, who honor me, who respect me, who revere me that same day that will burn in judgment for unbelievers will be a day of a beautiful sunrise.

To those who revere, who honor the name of the Lord God, that Sun of Righteousness will rise upon them. Can’t you just picture a sunrise with a few clouds around it looking like wings of a bird? Or see the sun’s rays looking like wings of a bird?

The prophet starts with that picture and speaks of the healing that the Son of God, the Sun of Righteousness brings. The sickness of sin is taken away, is erased, is blotted out.

And which of us isn’t sick of sin? We find it everywhere. We find it in the unbelieving world and all the terrible things it says and does. We find it in people around us. We even find it in ourselves.

God's Son – his Sun of Righteousness – brings healing with the forgiveness of sins. And just as we know we are forgiven by God; we reach out with forgiveness to others.

Christ gave the Holy Spirit to those who are his, to shine in their hearts, and to be a Comforter to them.

Malachi gives us the picture of calves. No sick calf feels like jumping. The sickness of sin is past. Our souls can rejoice and leap for joy in the salvation we have from God.

And as we go out from the stall of sin, we can give that forgiveness to others, showing and sharing the Love that God has placed into our hearts.

Several hundred years before Malachi wrote these words, Isaiah had much to say about the light that the Sun of Righteousness would bring. He often spoke of it as if it had actually happened. ***“Nevertheless, there will be no more gloom for those who were in distress. The people walking in darkness have seen a great light; on those living in the land of the shadow of death a light has dawned.”*** (Isaiah 9:1–2, NIV84)

Also through the prophet Isaiah, God tells us that the Sun of Righteousness, the Savior, has the mission and the calling to rescue all mankind. God the Father ***“says: ‘It is too small a thing for you to be my servant to restore the tribes of Jacob and bring back those of Israel I have kept. I will also make you a light for the Gentiles, that you may bring my salvation to the ends of the earth.’”*** (Isaiah 49:6, NIV84)

And as you heard in our Old Testament lesson Isaiah writes: ***“Arise, shine, for your light has come, and the glory of the Lord rises upon you. See, darkness covers the earth and thick darkness is over the peoples, but the Lord rises upon you and his glory appears over you. Nations will come to your light, and kings to the brightness of your dawn.”*** (Isaiah 60:1–3, NIV84)

And when the Savior finally came to earth, we read of the old man Simeon, when he held Jesus as a baby in his arms saying ***“For mine eyes have seen thy salvation, Which thou hast prepared before the face of all people; A light to lighten the Gentiles, and the glory of thy people Israel.”*** (Luke 2:30–32, KJV)

Now that this light, this Sun, this Son has come into our lives, he is not to be hid in a corner, but to be made known, shared, given to others.

By sending out the Gospel-message into all the world the Lord offers the redemption gained by the Messiah, the healing of the Sun of Righteousness, to all men.

The Apostle John in his second letter assures us that ***“the darkness is passing and the true light is already shining.”*** (1 John 2:8, NIV84)

This light has shined upon us. We read in Ephesians, as you heard in our Epistle lesson, about ourselves: ***“For you were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Live as children of light (for the fruit of the light consists in all goodness, righteousness and truth) and find out what pleases the Lord. Be very careful, then, how you live—not as unwise but as wise, making the most of every opportunity, because the days are evil. Therefore do not be foolish, but understand what the Lord’s will is. be filled with the Spirit. Speak to one another with psalms, hymns and spiritual songs. Sing and make music in your heart to the Lord, always giving thanks to God the Father for everything, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. Submit to one another out of reverence for Christ.”*** (Ephesians 5:8–21, NIV84)

Because God has sent his only-begotten Son, the Sun of Righteousness to us, let us live as God's beloved children! Amen.