



Pastor Ken's Sermon

HYMN MEDITATION- REVELATION 22:20
2ND SUNDAY OF ADVENT
DECEMBER 6, 2020

"AMEN. COME LORD JESUS"

Our opening hymn this evening – *"O Come, O Come, Emmanuel"*, is best understood by thinking as a faithful follower of Yahweh – the God of Israel, the great "I AM" would have in the centuries after Malachi served as the last of the prophets around 430 BC. After Malachi, the voice of the prophets literally went silent. The book of Malachi ends with these words *"See, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the great and dreadful day of the Lord comes. And he will turn the hearts of the fathers to their children and the hearts of the children to their fathers, or else I will come and strike the land with a curse."* As the centuries passed Jews became more and more attuned to those words – glued to them almost. What was it Malachi said...God is coming...but when?

These words were more than a reference to family unity – turning the hearts of the fathers to children and children to fathers is prophetic, even poetic speech for faithfulness in Israel. Just a few verses earlier, Malachi had said *"but for you who revere my name, the sun of righteousness will rise with healing in his wings."* Jews who remembered Malachi's promise of one who would "turn hearts" turned in the thoughts of their hearts to the sort of leader who would unify all of Israel's families. They would become a people who thoroughly revered God's name. The "fathers" passing on faith eagerly – their children receiving it eagerly. Their hearts *"turned to one another."*

And so in the years following the prophet Malachi, the Jewish people increasingly became an "expectant people" – this "one" who would come – equal if not exceeding in faith and spirit the great prophet Elijah animated their lives, enlivened their worship, and upheld them when dark times threatened to overwhelm them. *"He is coming...they would remind themselves...for so said the prophet. It has been 2000 years since the one who was to come...came. You and I know that – many Jews failed to recognize it, many heard him with their own ears and said "no...you're cannot be the one."* Even the great John the Baptist, of whom Jesus said *"among those born of women there has been no one greater..."* who in his baptizing ministry spoke of Jesus as "the one" with such certainty and clarity – would eventually sent messengers from his prison cell in the waning days of his life to ask Jesus *"are you the one who was to come, or shall we look for another."*

We could discuss the Jews and their expectations at length...keeping in mind always that those who did recognize him are our mothers and fathers in the faith. But tonight, the question is why do Christians still sing songs like this...why do we say *"O Come, O Come Emmanuel"* when we of all people know Emmanuel has come?

Well, because Advent, for which this song was composed, is intended to encourage us to be ready lest we, like so many before us, “miss” his coming - the one whom the Church says; “Christ has died...Christ is Risen...Christ will come again” is also the one who when he described himself in rather distressing terms, saying he would come to us as an hungry, thirsty, imprisoned stranger – startled his followers – who said “*when did we see you like this...and not tend to you?*”

If the people of Israel were “glued” to the very last words of their Scriptures – the words of Malachi about “*one who is to come*” – Christians ought then hearken not only to the words of Matthew 25, in which Jesus says he comes to us in distressing disguises – but also to the very last words of our New Testament – Revelation 22:20, which say “*he who testifies to these things says ‘Yes, I am coming soon.’*” To which the church says “*Amen, come Lord Jesus.*”

The church is, or at least ought to be, a people who live on the edge of expectation – no less zealous to do what Malachi told the Jews to do...revere the name of the Lord...no less eager to turn our hearts toward one another in the unity of the faith...but we are also people who live in the expectation that “next time” He comes, it will be to lead us “*from death’s dark shadows...and give us victory o’er the grave*”, and, in a subsequent verse of the hymn that we’ve omitted tonight, it says “*O Come...and open wide our heavenly home.*”

Each stanza of this hymn includes an Old Testament word for Messiah – whom we know as our Lord Jesus. *Emmanuel* – from Isaiah 7:14...*Branch of Jesse* from Isaiah 11:1...*Dayspring* from Isaiah 14:12...*Key of David* from Isaiah 22:22. With the naming of each the hearts of the faithful are called to yearn for the “*one who is, and was, and is to come*” as Jesus is described in Revelation 1:8, but also who in with the eyes of their heart look for him – he who even as we pray “O Come” is the very one who is with us still.

So why do we sing a song like this – when we know Jesus was born – died – and ascended. Because we know that while his saving work *for* us was accomplished on the cross, his saving work *in* us when he came to us in baptism, and his saving work rekindled in us when we come to the Supper...Christians believe his saving work is not done till we see him face to face – when the disguises go away - our faith become our sight. A promise is what faith clings to....otherwise it would not be faith, would it? It remains thus till the promise is fulfilled. For that we wait...and while we wait pray...and sing... There is no way to deny that Christians of every age dwell in cloudy times – so our prayer is well framed by this wonderful song - “*O Come O Dayspring come and cheer our spirits by your advent here...disperse the gloomy clouds of night, and death’s dark shadows put to flight.*” Amen...Come Lord Jesus.