

Bethel

Prayer Meeting Addresses

Number 82 An Advent Prayer

Reading: Malachi 3. 1-6, 16-18; 4. 1-2

1 Behold, I will send my messenger, and he shall prepare the way before me: and the Lord, whom ye seek, shall suddenly come to his temple, even the messenger of the covenant, whom ye delight in: behold, he shall come, saith the Lord of hosts.

2 But who may abide the day of his coming? and who shall stand when he appeareth? for he is like a refiner's fire, and like fullers' soap:

3 And he shall sit as a refiner and purifier of silver: and he shall purify the sons of Levi, and purge them as gold and silver, that they may offer unto the Lord an offering in righteousness.

4 Then shall the offering of Judah and Jerusalem be pleasant unto the Lord, as in the days of old, and as in former years.

5 And I will come near to you to judgment; and I will be a swift witness against the sorcerers, and against the adulterers, and against false swearers, and against those that oppress the hireling in his wages, the widow, and the fatherless, and that turn aside the stranger from his right, and fear not me, saith the Lord of hosts.

6 For I am the Lord, I change not; therefore ye sons of Jacob are not consumed.

16 Then they that feared the Lord spake often one to another: and the Lord hearkened, and heard it, and a book of remembrance was written before him for them that feared the Lord, and that thought upon his name.

17 And they shall be mine, saith the Lord of hosts, in that day when I make up my jewels; and I will spare them, as a man spareth his own son that serveth him.

18 Then shall ye return, and discern between the righteous and the wicked, between him that serveth God and him that serveth him not.

1 For, behold, the day cometh, that shall burn as an oven; and all the proud, yea, and all that do wickedly, shall be stubble: and the day that cometh shall burn them up, saith the Lord of hosts, that it shall leave them neither root nor branch.

2 But unto you that fear my name shall the Sun of righteousness arise with healing in his wings; and ye shall go forth, and grow up as calves of the stall.

Address

This is popularly known as the Advent season on which we have just entered, not that we keep the church calendar. Yesterday was celebrated as Advent Sunday. But the sudden realisation that now we have entered December! It is 1st December. The year is hastening to its close. The Christmas season will soon be upon us. Now my thoughts concerning our prayer meeting: that we might be graciously prepared, that the season may not pass us by unmoved, untouched; that the Holy Spirit might graciously lead us into some of the glorious truths, that

“He left His radiant throne on high!
Left the bright realms of bliss!
And came to earth to bleed and die!
Was ever love like this?”

These wonderful things! And may we together as a congregation pray that these things may not pass us by, that we might be led into them, that we might be partakers, that we might break through like David’s three mighty men to reach the well of Bethlehem, that we might be lifted above inferior things.

Then what kind of things are we thinking about? Well, I can just name them tonight, because it is not a preaching service; it is a prayer meeting: holy gratitude for all that the Lord Jesus did. “Thanks be unto God for His unspeakable gift.” Humility before Him. It is said that that eminently godly Puritan preacher, Richard Sibbes, was so overwhelmed with the matchless condescension of the Son of God in His incarnation that he walked about as the most humble of men. And faith, because apart from faith which brings distant objects near and that can take us to the manger, apart from that, there will be no profit. Especially love. “How blest is the season at which we appear!” But there is not any blessing if there is not any love in our hearts. O may our hearts be touched with love divine!

And the hope, amidst all the darkness of this evil world and the darkness of our sin and unbelief and failure; that hope which stands eternally the same and which has not changed over two thousand years, “that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners.” O but not forgetting the holy fear of God, and that will give us a reverence and it will separate us from the world and the spirit of the world and it will make us distinguish. May we be helped to teach our young people and children to distinguish between the awful mix-up there is on every

hand. Some of the things that are sung are so beautiful, but some of them nonsense; some of them blasphemous. Above all may the fear of the Lord be in our hearts from beginning to end, to glorify the Saviour. May the Lord bless us with a spirit of prayer in the spirit of our opening hymn:

“Show us that loving Man
That rules the courts of bliss,
The Lord of Hosts, the Mighty God,
The eternal Prince of Peace.”

*This address was given at Bethel Chapel, Luton, by Mr. B. A. Ramsbottom,
on Monday, 1st December, 2014*

