

## “Hearts Turned”

Malachi 4:1-16  
2 Thessalonians 3:6-13  
Luke 21:5-28  
23<sup>rd</sup> Sunday after Pentecost

“Behold, the day **is coming**. I will send you **Elijah the prophet before** the great and awesome day of the Lord comes And **he will** turn the hearts of fathers to their children and the hearts of children to their fathers, **lest I** come and strike the land with a decree of utter destruction.”

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

### Bridge

We’ve begun a study through the book of Revelation this past Wednesday morning and one of the things that it is **famous for** is its presentation of **“horns” that blow in warning** before **“bowls of God’s wrath” get doled out**. The implication is that **if the horns of warning get heeded, bowls-ful of wrath get averted**. For instance (in the case of our Old Testament reading in Malachi), if warnings against “arrogance” and “evildoing” turn the **arrogant to humility** and **evildoers to good**, then the “burning of **those people** like in an oven to stubble” won’t be **their** end-result. In other words, with repentance and the changing of bad ways turned, instead, toward God in attitudes that are His way, then gaining His forgiveness won by Jesus and appreciating it with its mercy and grace will offer a **completely different course and destiny**. If only one **listens and follows the Lord’s path and directives (cares for them enough to do something about them and not nothing or a continuation of wrong)**, then one could **look forward to “leaping like calves from the stall”**, and start doing **some of that now appropriately**,

yet not any of that Good without “**fearing the Lord’s name**” and **having reverence-for** and **adoring** the “**Sun of righteousness**” ... the “**Lord of hosts**”.

### Text

The “**day is coming**” for a **final judgment in that**, and if we do no more (for the moment) than just **hear that trumpet-call and heed it** we’ve made, then, an appropriate **START** to something that’s **not** a burning fire but, instead, intensely pleasant and joyful-even rather than horrendous and rightfully-frightening. If we **listen** to the every-November’s (end of the Church year) message and then **care** (not being complacent or apathetic or bored-about-it but rather **seriously concerned**), then the Lord has made **headway** in steering you away from destruction ... and **wonders ARE there for you to behold as you want them.**

But you have to **listen and care first**. November’s message **always is** that we **be seriously-conscious about a judgment that is upon us**. And God gives us (in that) **much to be conscious of**. And if there’s a **time to begin caring about that**, then **here** ought to be one automatic **STARTING POINT**. I know a pastor who ends all of his services not with “the Lord be with you” or “go in peace and serve the Lord” but rather “**time is short and Hell is hot**”. He must, obviously, think that November’s not enough time to **become really conscious and concerned about judgment** and, so, thinks that **any day** is the right one to **start thinking about what’s coming in the Lord’s judgment**.

“The **day is coming ... behold ... burning like an oven** when all the arrogant and all evildoers will be stubble.” Jesus said that the noble stones of even the best in human

construction are going to fall: “the days will come when there will not be one stone upon another that will not be thrown down”, yet presents ways by which this coming can be **pleasantly looked forward to** (anticipated with wonder and joy, not with false security but right and accurate security in that). Jesus will, one day (and, maybe, very soon) look glowingly not unlike He does on our bulletin cover ... but that could be **terrifying for some but need not be for any. Criteria for that** must be met though; and there is **more to that** than a wishful hope and includes (as Malachi puts it) a “**turning of the hearts of fathers to their children and the hearts of children to their fathers**”. That’s more (by tons) than just civility or even an earthly family affection, but an **eternal duty and faithfulness** that can only result **from a willing receiving first individually of God’s desire for each of us** and then by “**children**” **through us** (which is **every neighbor who’s supposed-to-be in our care**). It’s not a saving condition based on **works of our effort**, but it is a **submission to service and an honoring of God that has Him and His kingdom central in both directions (how we accept what God gives and how we, for Him, give that further).**

“**Fathers**” and “**children**” are **first literal designations**. The 4<sup>th</sup> Commandment speaks to this readiness for judgment to an **nth degree**, but **first it must take its form in “fatherhood” and that father’s “children”**. “Hearts” must be “**turned**” each group toward the other. C.S. Lewis (and I know I quote analogies lots from him, but they’re good analogies) separates the human “**brain**” and “**gut**” from the “**heart**” in **characteristics** (and I think that’s helpful here, **expressed-first** by God through Malachi when He speaks of the **turning of “hearts”** rather than **just “minds” or “guts”**). “**Gut**” is

the **tug of nature** (blood seemingly thicker than water) where dads (moms too, of course) naturally have **affection** for the flesh of their flesh, and kids their parents. “Gut-wrenching” is an emotional “gut-level” natural pull of families **to each other**. It is, just, **nature** (and try testing that by getting between a mother bear and her cubs). “**Feelings are what feelings are**”, nature makes for **natural** “gut” concern like romance and honeymoon periods of marriage and loving your kids no matter what. All of that is by the **natural (nature-made)** “gut-level” tugs and desires that **happen just because they happen**. God’s not talking, though, about **gut-level feelings** making us **naturally** care for family members in **earthly regards** ... but **much more than that**.

Our “**brain**” also is **of nature, choosing** whether or not to **ascent to what we believe or feel**, but “**hearts**” **turned toward God** (not by nature but by the nurture of the Holy Spirit through God’s Gospel), **that leads** the “mind” and “gut” to amplify both **thoughts** and **emotions beyond** their rule. “**Hearts**” turned to God **dictate** (and **rightly so**) what we think and decide (joy, for example, being different than happiness as joy is a **Godly-heart**-led thing).

**Appropriate readiness for judgment** demands “**hearts**” **turned**, and “**fathers**” get made **Godly ones** by themselves being **Godly-turned “children” first, receiving themselves** **Godly “hearts”** before they’d ever have **that to give** ...

... and “**Elijah the prophet**” has everything to do with **how** this “turning of hearts” happens. “**Elijah**” **represents** all prophetic words of horn-blowing warning or concern about readiness or even encouragement toward the Good that’s coming. It’s the “horns” that, if heeded, **avoid** the “bowls of wrath” but also deliver the Good News of Gospel

encouraging and making pleasant what we can look forward to. God through **another Elijah** in Malachi says that **people His can** “go out leaping like calves from the stall” at that news and time, as **pleasantly different** from being “burned like an oven to stubble” as **anything could be**. Note the **stark contrast in outcomes that are prophesied-of (either/or)** within just that same paragraph of text.

### **Application**

There **will come a time**, fathers and mothers, when you **will want** your children to not only not be afraid of Jesus’ return, but to be extremely excited and joyful about it ... comfortable in Him. The “horn blowing” of today’s message is that (**EITHER WAY**) “the day is coming”, so **NOW** is the time to see to it that our “children” are secure in the good side of judgment. **Baptism** and the faith of **rejoicing over that is readiness**. And that ought, always, to be **pleasant** (Jesus on our bulletin cover **I crave to see any moment now**). “Dads”, **love** your “children”, “**hearts turned**” to them and “children”, **honor your parents and the adults who prepare you for judgment**, “**hearts turned**” to them which will make you ready for all of what’s coming.

C.S. Lewis wrote another book that (in title and content) preaches this readiness and dutifulness. The book is “**Men with Chests**”, and it **insists** that everyone **have “heart”**, which (as he described it) **IS** Godly and mature and yet humble (substantial, devoted, and imaginatively **pointed-toward-God** and, then, **reflecting Him**). As opposed to heads and gut-led bodies and souls, “**hearts**” **led by God** is the proper notion. And **grace** supports that ... even **is** that. So may **our “hearts”** be “**turned**” by **God**, in +Jesus’ name. Amen.