

Thirty-third Sunday in Ordinary Time

Lectionary: 159

Reading 1

Malachi 3:19-20a

Lo, the day is coming, blazing like an oven,
when all the proud and all evildoers will be stubble,
and the day that is coming will set them on fire,
leaving them neither root nor branch,
says the LORD of hosts.

But for you who fear my name, there will arise
the sun of justice with its healing rays.

Responsorial Psalm

Psalm 98:5-6, 7-8, 9

R. (cf. 9) The Lord comes to rule the earth with justice.

Sing praise to the LORD with the harp,
with the harp and melodious song.

With trumpets and the sound of the horn
sing joyfully before the King, the LORD.

R. The Lord comes to rule the earth with justice.

Let the sea and what fills it resound,
the world and those who dwell in it;
let the rivers clap their hands,
the mountains shout with them for joy.

R. The Lord comes to rule the earth with justice.

Before the LORD, for he comes,
for he comes to rule the earth,
he will rule the world with justice
and the peoples with equity.

R. The Lord comes to rule the earth with justice.

Reading 2

2 Thessalonians 3:7-12

Brothers and sisters:

You know how one must imitate us.

For we did not act in a disorderly way among you,
nor did we eat food received free from anyone.

On the contrary, in toil and drudgery, night and day
we worked, so as not to burden any of you.

Not that we do not have the right.

Rather, we wanted to present ourselves as a model for you,
so that you might imitate us.

In fact, when we were with you,
we instructed you that if anyone was unwilling to work,
neither should that one eat.

We hear that some are conducting themselves among you in a
disorderly way,

by not keeping busy but minding the business of others.

Such people we instruct and urge in the Lord Jesus Christ to work quietly
and to eat their own food.

Gospel

Luke 21:5-19

While some people were speaking about
how the temple was adorned with costly stones and votive offerings,
Jesus said, "All that you see here--
the days will come when there will not be left
a stone upon another stone that will not be thrown down."

Then they asked him,

"Teacher, when will this happen?

And what sign will there be when all these things are about to happen?"

He answered,

"See that you not be deceived,

for many will come in my name, saying,

'I am he,' and 'The time has come.'

Do not follow them!

When you hear of wars and insurrections,
do not be terrified; for such things must happen first,
but it will not immediately be the end."

Then he said to them,

"Nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom.

There will be powerful earthquakes, famines, and plagues
from place to place;

and awesome sights and mighty signs will come from the sky.

"Before all this happens, however,

they will seize and persecute you,

they will hand you over to the synagogues and to prisons,

and they will have you led before kings and governors

because of my name.

It will lead to your giving testimony.

Remember, you are not to prepare your defense beforehand,

for I myself shall give you a wisdom in speaking

that all your adversaries will be powerless to resist or refute.

You will even be handed over by parents, brothers, relatives, and friends,

and they will put some of you to death.

You will be hated by all because of my name,

but not a hair on your head will be destroyed.

By your perseverance you will secure your lives."

Commentary and Background on the Readings

These readings, which fall near the end of the liturgical year, focus on **eschatology**—the study of the "last things": death, judgment, heaven, and hell. They provide a message of both **judgment** and **hope**, urging believers to persevere and live righteously while awaiting the Lord's coming.

Reading 1: Malachi 3:19-20a

- **Background:** Malachi is the last book of the Old Testament prophets, written after the return from Babylonian exile (around 450-430 B.C.). The people were often discouraged and lax in their religious duties, doubting God's justice.

- **Commentary:** This passage offers a stark contrast between two groups on the "day of the LORD."
 - **Judgment:** For the **proud and evildoers**, the day is a terrifying fire, "blazing like an oven," that utterly destroys them ("leaving them neither root nor branch"). This imagery emphasizes the **completeness and finality of God's judgment** against wickedness.
 - **Vindication/Hope:** For those who "**fear my name**" (meaning, who revere and obey God), the day brings the "**sun of justice with its healing rays.**" This is a powerful image of **salvation, vindication, and restoration** for the faithful. God's judgment is not only punitive for the wicked but also redemptive for the righteous.
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Responsorial Psalm: Psalm 98:5-6, 7-8, 9

- **Background:** This is an enthronement psalm, celebrating God's reign as King.
 - **Commentary:** The psalm is a joyful, universal call to praise God because "**The Lord comes to rule the earth with justice.**" It resonates perfectly with the themes of Malachi and the Gospel, confirming the core message: **God will ultimately reign**, and His rule will be defined by **justice and equity**. All creation (sea, world, rivers, mountains) is called to participate in this joyous anticipation of God's just arrival.
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Reading 2: 2 Thessalonians 3:7-12

- **Background:** Paul wrote this letter to address various issues in the Thessalonian church, including a misunderstanding that the Second Coming (the *Parousia*) was so imminent that some had stopped working.
 - **Commentary:** Paul emphasizes the importance of **dignified work** and condemns idleness and disorderliness. He presents himself and his companions as a **model** of self-sufficiency, working "in toil and drudgery" to avoid burdening anyone. The key instruction is clear: "**if anyone was unwilling to work, neither should that one eat.**" This passage is a practical application of eschatological hope: **expecting the Lord's return is not a license for passivity**; rather, it demands responsible living, hard work, and a rejection of meddling in others' affairs ("minding the business of others").
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Gospel: Luke 21:5-19

- **Background:** This passage is part of Jesus' "Eschatological Discourse" near the end of his ministry, sometimes called the "Little Apocalypse" in Luke. It speaks on two levels: the imminent destruction of the Jerusalem Temple (which occurred in A.D. 70) and the events preceding the final end of the world.
 - **Commentary:** Jesus predicts the **total destruction of the magnificent Temple**—a shocking prophecy to his listeners. He then answers their question about the "when" and "what sign" by listing various troubles: false prophets, wars, natural disasters (earthquakes, famines, plagues). He warns them **"do not be terrified"** and that these are not immediately "the end."
 - The focus then shifts to the **persecution of the disciples**. They will face betrayal and hatred.
 - However, a powerful promise is given: their persecution will become an opportunity for **"giving testimony"** (martyrdom means "witness"), and they will be given **supernatural wisdom** to speak.
 - The passage concludes with the theme of **perseverance**: "By your perseverance you will secure your lives." Jesus calls the disciples not to predict the future, but to **faithfully endure** the present tribulation.
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Relationship Between the First OT Reading and the Gospel

Both Malachi and the Gospel of Luke address the theme of **the End Times** and the **Day of Judgment/Vindication**, but they do so with a different emphasis that highlights continuity in God's plan.

1. **The Inevitable Day of the Lord:** Malachi predicts the day is "coming, blazing like an oven," a day of judgment. The Gospel confirms this certainty. While Jesus first speaks of the destruction of the Temple and tribulation, these events are **precursors** and **signs** of the greater final judgment and the Lord's ultimate reign, a day when the promises of Malachi's **"sun of justice"** will be fully realized.
2. **Two Contrasting Fates:**
 - **Malachi** divides people into the "proud/evildoers" (who will be burned like stubble) and those who "fear my name" (who will see the sun of justice).

- **Luke** similarly divides people into those who will be terrified and deceived by false signs, and the faithful disciples who, through **persecution and perseverance**, will ultimately "**secure their lives.**" The faithful enduring disciples of Luke's Gospel are the inheritors of the "healing rays" promised in Malachi.
3. **The Call to Perseverance:** Both readings urge a stance of **active waiting**. Malachi calls for a reverent fear of God's name (obedience). Luke calls for **perseverance** through trials. In both cases, the proper response to the certainty of God's coming judgment is a **life of fidelity and endurance** in the present.

Questions for Action (Putting the Readings into Practice)

The readings challenge us to examine how we live in the light of Christ's certain return and final judgment.

From Malachi and the Gospel (Judgment & Hope)

1. **Self-Examination:** Do I primarily live like one of the "proud and evildoers," focused only on immediate personal gain and ego, or do I consciously strive to "fear God's name" and act justly?
2. **Focus on the Eternal:** When I am faced with personal, national, or global crises (the "wars and insurrections" of the Gospel), do I allow myself to be "**terrified**" and distracted, or do I use those events as a reminder to "**stand erect and raise my head**" (Alleluia verse) because my ultimate redemption is near?
3. **Witness:** How can I use a difficult or challenging situation in my life this week to "**give testimony**" to the faith, trusting that Christ will give me the "wisdom in speaking" to articulate my hope?

From 2 Thessalonians (Work & Discipline)

1. **Responsibility:** Am I taking responsibility for my own well-being and fulfilling my duties (in work, family, or community), or am I acting in a "**disorderly way,**" expecting others to carry my burden?
2. **Idleness vs. Ministry:** Do I spend time "**not keeping busy but minding the business of others**" (gossiping, judging, or excessive media distraction)? How can I replace that idleness with quiet, focused work and service to build up my own life and community?

3. **Integrity:** How can I imitate the model of Paul and Silas by living a life of **hard work and integrity** that presents a credible witness of Christian virtue to those around me?