

Swedenborgian Sunday School Notes for the Revised Common Lectionary

Malachi 3:1–4 • The Day of the Lord's Coming

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Malachi 3:1–4 . . . The day of the Lord's coming
Luke 3:1–6 Prepare the way for the Lord!

Overview

Our lesson for the second Sunday of Advent moves from the promise to our preparation for the Lord's coming. Our goal for the class is to have the children realize that even though the Lord is always ready to come and save us, this can only happen if we do the work of preparing ourselves for the Lord's coming. This work is to stop doing things that we know are wrong, and to be kind and thoughtful to each other.

Key Points

- The Lord's coming was prophesied at the end of the Old Testament, leading into the New.
- We must prepare for the Lord's coming by correcting our wrong thoughts, feelings, and actions.
- When we correct our own faults and live a good and kind life, we will always be saved *spiritually*.

Example for Teaching Children

Are you getting excited about Christmas? What are you and your family doing to prepare for it? (Allow *time to talk about Christmas preparations*.) A lot of our Christmas preparations have to do with decorations and presents and food, which are all physical things. They are *good* things, but there is another even more important way to prepare for Christmas. We need to prepare ourselves *spiritually*.

Does anyone know what this means? What is the "spiritual" part of ourselves? (*Pause for responses*.) Our spiritual part is what *feels* and *thinks*. This is very important, because however we feel and think, that is how we will act toward each other. If we have bad feelings toward someone we know—if we think someone is stupid and worthless—we will probably say and do mean things to that person. That is not the way the Lord wants us to be! But if we have good thoughts and feelings toward other people, we will do nice things for them and try to make them happy.

What does this have to do with Christmas?

Did you know that some people don't like Christmas? This may be hard to believe, since you probably think Christmas is one of the most exciting times of year. But for some people, Christmas is one of the hardest and most depressing times of year. For

other people, Christmas doesn't mean much at all—except a lot of busyness and shopping.

For some people, Christmas is a sad time of year because they have no family to share it with. One of the nicest things we can do is to invite someone who is lonely to share our Christmas with us.

But for others, Christmas has lost its meaning because they have lost the spiritual part of it. If we are not ready in our *thoughts* and *feelings*, the Lord's coming will make us sad or angry instead of happy.

How do we prepare for the Lord's coming? By recognizing any wrong thoughts and feelings in ourselves, and deciding not to think and act that way toward people anymore. This was what John the Baptist was sent to tell people before the Lord Jesus came. If we listen to that message, our spirits will be lifted up, and Christmas will be truly joyful.

Basic Correspondences

refiner's fire = purification through temptation

gold & silver = the love and truth in us

valley filled = the humble raised to heaven

hills made low = the proud thrown down

way of the Lord = living as the Lord teaches

Thoughts from Swedenborg

John the Baptist was sent beforehand to prepare people to receive the Lord through baptism because baptism symbolizes purification from evil and false things, and also rebirth from the Lord through the Bible. Unless this symbol had come first, the Lord could not have manifested himself.

Apocalypse Explained #724b.7

"The voice of one calling in the desert, 'Prepare the way for Jehovah, and a highway for our God,'" means that we should prepare ourselves to receive the Lord. "Desert" means where there is no goodness because there is no truth, so that there is no religion yet. "Every valley will be lifted up, and every mountain and hill made low," means that all people who are humble at heart—that is, all who are involved in good and true things—are received, for people who are received by the Lord are raised up to heaven. "Every mountain and hill will be made low" means that all who are conceited—that is, all who are in the love of self and the world—will be thrown down.

Apocalypse Explained #405g.36