

Thursday, July 2, 2020

Devotional Thoughts from Pastor Jim Murr...

"And now we call the arrogant blessed.

Evildoers not only prosper but they put God to the test and they escape.

Then those who feared the Lord spoke with one another.

The Lord paid attention and heard them, and a book of remembrance was written before him of those who feared the Lord and esteemed his name.

'They shall be mine, says the Lord of hosts, in the day when I make up my treasured possession, and I will spare them as a man spares his son who serves him.

Then once more you shall see the distinction between the righteous and the wicked, between one who serves God and one who does not serve him."

Malachi 3: 15-18

I guess I will come clean and fully admit something to you. I have been angry lately. My anger was at its peak when the violent "protesting" was going on. It is still going on to a certain degree in certain cities. I am not referring to the peaceful protesting. I'm talking about the looting and the destruction and the violence that was going on a few weeks ago.

What I was most angry about was the fact that those who were committing these crimes against innocent people and property were getting away with it, while the victims of these crimes had to just watch it happen. As it says in the above reading in Malachi: "Evildoers not only prosper but they put God to the test and they escape." These criminals were and still are putting the police and government to the test, AND THEY ESCAPE!

The reading from Malachi is focused on something larger than this, however. The reading is talking about the history of mankind, and how so often evildoers seem to go on their merry way in life, while their victims lie in the wake of their destructive ways. The frustration being expressed here in Malachi is the question, "When will God do something about this?" When will "evildoers" be punished, and when will those who serve God be rewarded for their faithfulness?

We were created with a sense of justice within us. Let it be known that this sense of justice is from God. He IS just! In fact, He listens and pays attention when this complaint is being lodged against Him. He gets it. He feels the same way about injustice as most of us do. And He makes a promise here in Malachi: The day will come when "you shall see the distinction between the righteous and the wicked, between the one who serves God and one who does not serve him."

It's just not time yet. But the time is coming. If you believe in justice, God agrees with you. He believes in justice too. But the Bible also says that "the Lord takes no pleasure in the death of the wicked." God loves the looters, the vandals, and even the murderers. He loves them just as much as He loves you and me. Our sins are no less serious in God's eyes. To God, sin is sin. God wants to give all evildoers the chance to repent and to come to faith in Jesus.

But He will not wait forever. The day of "distinction" will come. Our God will bring you and me out the mess of this world; and we will live with Him in bliss and glory forever. And so we wait. We wait with confidence and patience. And maybe our anger can be transformed into patience. And our patience be transformed into compassion. And our compassion into love. Maybe we will eventually find ourselves praying for those who do evil, rather than just wanting them to get what

they have coming to them. If it were not for the grace of God, even you and I would "get what we deserve." Thanks be to God for His grace in our Lord Jesus Christ.

God's peace!
Pastor Jim