

“Purity” Sermon for December 9, 2018 Lection:
 Malachi 3:1-4, Luke 1:68-79, Luke 3:1-6
 Sermon Text: Exodus 20:7 (Third Commandment)
 7 “You shall not misuse the name of the Lord your
 God, for the Lord will not hold anyone guiltless who
 misuses his name.

+++++

Luke gives us more details than the other Gospels
 concerning the preaching of John the Baptist to
 those who came out to him (3:7-8,10-14):

"You brood of snakes!... 8 Prove by the way you live that
 you have repented of your sins and turned to God. . . .

"If you have two shirts, give one to the poor. If you have
 food, share it with those who are hungry." 12 Even corrupt
 tax collectors came to be baptized and asked, "Teacher,
 what should we do?" 13 He replied, "Collect no more taxes
 than the government requires." 14 "What should we do?"
 asked some soldiers. John replied, "Don't extort money
 or make false accusations. And be content with your pay."

The methods used for purification of water include
 the physical processes—filtration, sedimentation,
 and distillation; biological processes such as slow
 sand filters; chemical processes such as flocculation
 and chlorination and even electromagnetic radiation
 such as the use of ultraviolet light. Usually a

municipality uses more than one. We do not know which but we believe that the water we use is pure. Today's lection warns us that suddenly, our Lord will come, and he will purify us, the spiritual sons and daughters of Levi like a refiners fire (Malachi 3:3). The question is asked, who will be able to endure God's purification process? Who will be able to face him when he comes unexpectedly to purify? The Apostle Peter reiterates what we read in Malachi. Judgement will begin with the House of God, not with the world. 1 Peter 4:17 (NLT) reads:

17 For the time has come for judgment, and it must begin with God's household. And if God's purging begins with us, what terrible fate awaits those who have never obeyed God's Good News?

John reminded his hearers that being baptized, confirmed as a child of Abraham, circumcised and consecrated is not enough. Our behavior must be kingdom behavior. Draw near to God and he will draw near to you, purify your hearts, you

doubleminded. Our behavior is critical in determining our usefulness for God. The dross, the rust, the mold and other foul substances must be removed if we are to be pure for God. God's word also tells us:

3 He will sit like a refiner of silver, burning away the dross. He will purify the Levites, refining them like gold and silver, so that they may once again offer acceptable sacrifices to the Lord.

The promise is very similar to our sermon last Sunday. Just as God repairs us without cost through the reparation of Christ, so God purifies us for the holiness of our vocation. God's judgment results not in our destruction, but in our purification. But if left unpurified, we are useless and will be discarded. He desires to refine us, so that we may, once again, offer service acceptable to the Lord.

"Simon Pure" is a term we used to use to speak of that which is absolutely pure, genuine, authentic. When we were in elementary school, we had to buy

a writing pad called “Simon-Pure.” It had no lines. We had to measure, draw the lines and then print within the boundaries. God gives us a “Simon-Pure” blank slate, that we can write divine new lives upon.

The process has already been established. Ours is to hear, obediently heed, be healed and be purified through Christ. In the name of the Creator, Redeemer and all sustaining source of life everlasting. Amen.