

PENTECOST 24, C – November 24, 2019  
SCRIPTURES – Mal. 3:13-18; Col. 1:13-20; Luke 21:29-36

How ironic it is that the end of the Church Year, with its emphasis on the visible return of Christ from heaven and all that will accompany that great event – the resurrection of the dead; the final judgment, with its eternal reward and eternal punishment; a new heavens and a new earth, in which Christ alone rules – how ironic that now is when this is our focus; now, the time of year when our world is in what is perhaps the time of its greatest self-absorption and self-exaltation. Right now we are being urged to buy, buy, and buy some more... to get together to indulge, celebrate and enjoy ourselves... to focus upon and enjoy the present, and not prepare for the future (unless you're putting something in lay-away). We know what we're heading toward and preparing for in the world. What does God want us to look toward and prepare for? ***“The day when I make up my treasured possession,”*** He says in Malachi 3, ***“when 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.”***

***“When once more you shall see...”*** So, there was once a time when the blessedness of serving God was seen? Well, I suppose Adam and Eve saw it in Eden. But, ever since their fall into sin, and with it the fall of all creation, the rule of God and the blessedness of obeying Him is mostly hidden. Where is the distinction between the righteous and the wicked, between one who serves God and one who does not serve him? It's not very evident. I can understand the frustration of the people whom Malachi quotes. ***“It is vain to serve God,”*** they said. ***“What good does it bring? Evildoers not only prosper; they [even] put God to the test and escape.”*** What they complained about hasn't changed. I mean, who are the wealthiest people? Who are the most highly regarded and sought after? Is it God-fearing Christians like you? No, so often it's athletes who father children with many different women... self-indulgent business leaders... movie stars who boast of their sexual liaisons and call us who promote marital fidelity, sexual purity, and living for God and not oneself mean-spirited and dangerous. ***“What good does depriving myself or exposing myself to rebuke for obeying God do? Why bother?”*** You may not have said this, but even thinking it is just as much a challenge of God and a rebuke of Him as is saying it.

Life in this world is far from fair, no question... but the day is coming when it will be; when our lives will again be what God intended when He first made all that we see and know, and also what we cannot see and do not know... **all things visible and invisible**, as we say in the Nicene Creed. The kingdom of God – His visible rule, not only in heaven but also upon earth: it is near, Jesus says. It is close at hand. So: be