

This is the day the LORD has made; let us rejoice and be glad in it. Amen.

There's a joke that people within our own church body commonly make. "How many WELS, Wisconsin Synod Lutherans does it take to change a light bulb?" "CHANGE?!?! WELS Lutherans don't believe in change!"

Now, of course, this is just a joke I've heard before, but isn't there some truth to that statement. Maybe it's because of our brash, stubborn German heritage, but if there's one stereotype people will make about WELS Lutherans, it's that we don't like change. Change in music. Change from traditional worship. Even change in the place where we might sit at church. Often, it's hard to accept change, and not just here at church, but in all our lives.

But change is a normal part of our lives. Earth undergoes four changes every year as seasons change from fall to winter to spring to summer. Our federal government changes every four years as new officials are elected to hold office. Changes, coming up, in November elections, candidates promising changes in our city, our state, our country, changes for the better. Even every day change occurs as you wake up, a little older than when you went to bed the night before.

If you look at your own life, it's not hard to see the change that occurs. So many different changes that you and I experience every day. And often, change happens for the better, like a promotion at work, or an addition to the family, or the purchase of a new home. But not all change is positive. For every good change that comes our way, you can guarantee there are another handful of changes that are going to be negative.

Well, this morning, we're going to talk about one of those changes. Our verses, from Malachi, they hint about a change in a relationship. Can you see what relationship that is? The relationship we share with our God in heaven, because, believe it or not, every person has some sort of relationship with God.

Now, obviously, we'd like to have a good relationship with God, right? But do we? You know, I often think of our relationship with God like a boyfriend/girlfriend relationship, not because of the intimacy, but because of how many of those relationships end.

You know how, don't you? Usually, one person ends up saying to the other, "It's not you, it's me," or, in other words, what they really mean is "you've changed, and we're just not compatible anymore."

In our relationship with God, someone has changed. And it's not God. He's very clear about that in our verse from Malachi. No, you and I are the ones who have changed.

Now, you might be thinking, "I haven't really changed. I'm still the same person I've always been, trying to live a good life, do the right thing, try to be the best person I can be, the person God wants me to be."

And you might be pretty good at doing that. Pretty good...but perfect? You've never had a lustful thought or a hateful or angry thought towards anyone else? You've never once said anything inappropriate, a swear word, a lie, gossip, or anything demeaning to anyone else? You've never hit the

wall or slammed the door out of pure frustration or did anything to break any of our government's laws, even something as simple and as silly as going one mile over the speed limit?

Pretty good, but not perfect.

Well, then logic would say, why would God expect anyone to be perfect when he knows no one can be? Because he can. Because he's perfect. Because that's what he's demanded of the life of every person since the creation of the world, when there were two people, Adam and Eve, who were perfect and sinless, at least for a short time they were. From the time God said, "Be holy, be perfect, because I the Lord your God am holy," his mind has not changed.

And don't let Satan, don't let your sinful nature fool you, trying to make you think God's the one who has changed, like how he can say he cares about us, but then lets troubles and sufferings come into our lives, which I know you and I have all experienced.

We can turn the tables and point fingers at God. But you and I are the ones who have changed. From God's perfect creation to horrible sinners who can't go one day, probably not even more than one hour without sinning, doing some kind of wrong.

Well, then, of course, reason says, "But surely God looks past our mistakes. Surely he won't punish us and send us to hell because of them." But God's words do not change. So when he says, "All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God," that includes you and me. When he says, "The wages of sin is death," that is the punishment we deserve, an eternity in hell.

"I the LORD do not change." Those are God's words to us, and there are no sweeter words than that. Do you know why? Do you know what that means for every single one of us here today? You and I are not destroyed. You and I are not destroyed for eternity.

Now, I know our verse says that since God does not change, "the descendants of Jacob are not destroyed." It's talking primarily about the Israelites, God's chosen people, who rebelled and sinned against God time after time in the Old Testament. They turned away from him over and over again. They definitely weren't perfect as God commanded them to be. But God didn't destroy them. He didn't punish them as their sins deserve. He didn't cast them off into the fires of hell.

Do you know why he didn't? The same reason you and I aren't punished as our sins deserve. Because God does not change. Yes, he is the God who says that "the wages of sin is death," but he's also the God who follows that up immediately by saying, "BUT the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord."

He's the LORD who does not change. Now, let's talk about that special name for a few moments, the LORD. That name, when used in all capital letters, is the most beautiful name for our God. The LORD is used to refer to the God of free and faithful grace. The God who shows and showers his amazing love on us.

It's no accident our verse uses that wonderful name. Because here's what the LORD not changing means for you and me. When you and I, or rather, when all humankind fell into sin and imperfection as

a result of Adam and Eve eating of the forbidden fruit, God's love did not change. I mean, he could have, and struck them down with his wrath, and sent them straight to hell. But he didn't. Instead, he made the first gospel promise, the promise to send a Savior who would pay for every sin of all time, ours included.

That Savior was his only Son, Jesus. And here's how Jesus saved us. He lived for us, meaning he was holy and perfect in our place because we can't. He died for us, on the cross, suffered the eternal consequences for all our sins, but by his death, he wiped every sin away, defeated sin, death, and the devil. And then he rose for us, came back to life, from the grave, victorious, all our sins forgiven.

Jesus, our Savior, God's Son, who lived, died, and rose for us because the LORD, the God of free and faithful grace, his love does not change. Even though we have been the rebellious child, the adulterous spouse, the ungrateful servant, God's love does not change. So you aren't destroyed. Hell is not your future. No, because of Jesus, you are saved. You are God's child. Heaven is yours. All because of the LORD, who does not change.

As long as you and I live, change will continue to occur. Every day, you will grow older and older. Seasons will come and go. Life around us will continue to change. But whatever changes take place throughout your lives, you can be certain of one thing. God is our constant. He will never change. That's a good thing. Because God doesn't change, you will not be destroyed. Thank the LORD for that. Amen.