

The Gospel of Malachi

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[0 : 00] All right, so, you like those animations, those videos? Part of the problem with getting talented people who are artistic to do stuff in the service is that things get too funny.

And so, there's a really, don't let the humour of that video mislead you about the seriousness of the message, okay? Because what we saw there was a humorous kind of shadow of what we're going to hear tonight from Malachi and what we just heard in the reading, okay?

So, appreciate the work that they've done and then allow yourselves to be affected in the right way by Malachi. We're going to be looking at the last part that we just heard in the reading.

We're going to be tracking through it pretty much verse by verse. So, have that Bible out in front of you. That's Malachi chapter 3 verse 13 and we'll get to work. So, one of the things that, by the way, if you don't have a Bible, just get up and get one, okay?

So, I don't feel bad about that. One of the things that really struck me and Renee when we first came to this church was the diversity that we saw in the church.

[1 : 08] I'm talking about the multicultural flavour here at the church. So, we grew up in a place called Diamond Creek. You might have been there once on the way to somewhere else. It's a little town and when we grew up there, at least back in those days, I think it was the most Caucasian suburb in Australia.

So, there was not a lot of multiculturalism there. In fact, the only Asian I ever met was my sister who we adopted from South Korea when I was little.

So, we came here and we were just blown away by the diversity. Just a lot of different kinds of people. But what we're going to see tonight is, even though you might look around and see a lot of different kinds of people from a lot of different backgrounds, we're going to see that really at the end of the day, on the great day, there's only going to be two kinds of people.

There's two kinds of people we just saw in the video. There's two kinds of people that Malachi is going to talk about and that Jesus is going to talk about as well.

There are going to be those who honour God, who worship Him, who will receive compassion and mercy and eternal life. And there's going to be those who dishonour God, who are arrogant toward Him, who disbelieve and who are going to inherit punishment for their sin.

[2 : 32] We have the righteous and the wicked and we're going to see how it goes for them in this passage. So, let's take a look at verse 13. We'll jump straight in. This is God speaking through Malachi.

So, we saw this a couple of weeks ago, didn't we?

There's this bunch of kind of lapsed believers who are tending towards unbelief. They've become very jaded and very cynical because they bought the lie that being God's people meant material blessings in this life.

But they've seen in their own experience when they were exiled from their land, they've seen in their own lack of blessing in this life and they've seen in the blessing of the evildoers that that's all a lie.

And so, now they're starting to doubt their faith in God. There's no benefit, they say, in following God. What's the point? What's the point of going about as mourners before the Lord?

[3 : 51] That's probably got something to do with repentance. They count the arrogant, happy, evildoers not only prosper, but they escape. Cheaters do prosper.

That's the truth, isn't it, in our life? Cheaters do prosper. And so, we asked the question a couple of weeks ago, what's God going to do about it? How's He going to set things right?

But you might have come out of that week not really changed in your view, in your cynical Christian view. I mean, it's true, isn't it? If we look around, I mean, we can say all we like that worldly

pleasures aren't as pleasurable as they promised to be, and that's true, but it's not like they're unpleasant.

I mean, they're pleasures. And yet, we see Christians everywhere suffering. In parts of the world, they're martyred and killed.

They have their families taken away from them and tortured. Maybe in your own experience, it's more like, you know, you see friends of yours who say that they're Christians, who are taking part in relationships that God would disapprove of, and you see them enjoying themselves, and you're trying to keep yourself as holy as possible, and yet they seem to prosper.

[5 : 05] They're having all the fun. Or maybe you're like me, and you experienced a devastating episode in your life. For me, 20 years ago, my mum died of cancer, and she was a faithful Christian woman, and her husband was a faithful Christian man.

And, you know, they just adopted my sister. She was a year old. We were three boys. We were just kids. And so, where's the justice? Evil people prosper.

God's people suffer. And so, they looked around, and they became cynical. And they started to give up the faith. Their faith was so intertwined with their prosperity, that when they didn't get it, they started walking away.

We've seen this back in the other chapters of Malachi. These people keep cropping up a lot. One group of people that we have not seen until now, is the other group. Group number two.

Verse 16. Then those who revered the Lord spoke with one another. The Lord took note and listened, and a book of remembrance was written before him of those who revered the Lord and thought on his name.

[6 : 20] This is a different group of people. It's the people who fear God. They obey God. They love God. And they speak with one another, it says. Those who revered the Lord spoke with one another.

It doesn't say what they were talking about, but probably imagine that it's pretty much the opposite of what the jaded, cynical Christians were talking about. That these people were encouraging one another and saying, look, things aren't all rosy.

We're not prospering. Evil people do succeed, but let's hope in God. He's promised that there will be a day of deliverance. He's promised to reward the faithful.

And so they encourage one another to keep on going. They talk about the greatness of God. They talk about God's word and discuss important things together. And so God notes down their names because he likes what he hears on their lips.

He hears what they're saying about him and he likes it. And so you might see a little correlation if you're familiar with the Bible with the book of Revelation where it says that God has a book called the book of life.

[7 : 28] And in it are the names of everyone whom he has chosen for salvation. There's a slight difference there because here it seems like he's noting their names down in response to things that they're saying about him.

And in Revelation, it's very much people have their name in the book of life even before they're even born. It's without regard to whether they've done good or bad. It's just God's sovereign choice. But the similarity between the two books is that it's God's promise written down that he will remember them. He'll remember them as his people.

These people, they might have been people who heard Malachi preaching. They went along to evangelistic service and they heard him preach and they became believers at that point. They were converts, didn't grow up in a Christian home, you know, walked in off the street, got invited by a friend and they responded.

They might actually be people who have walked away from faith and they've heard Malachi preach and they want to come back to the God who they've walked away from. It doesn't say and it doesn't really matter but this is what new Christians are like, isn't it?

[8 : 32] This is what new converts are like. It's what people who come back to faith are like. They love to talk about Jesus. They're the greatest evangelists. They're the ones who are inviting their friends because they most intensely understand the grace that they've been given.

So, I reckon that's a challenge to us, people like me who've grown up in the church. It's a challenge to us to make sure we maintain our zeal and our love for God and for speaking about Him and telling our friends about Him because sometimes we can get a little sleepy.

But these people love to talk about God. And so, we've got two groups. We've got people who are walking away from faith. We've got people who are coming to faith and God tells them about a day that's coming.

It's a very important day. Verse 17. He says, read with me, They shall be mine, says the Lord, the Lord of hosts, my special possession on the day when I act and I will spare them as parents spare their children who serve them.

So, we've got this day that keeps being talked about in Malachi, particularly in chapter 4. So, in 3.17, yeah, it's the day when He will act.

[9 : 54] It's in 4.1. It's a day that is coming, a day of judgment. In 4.3, it's the day when God will act.

In 4.5, it is the great and terrible day of the Lord. And that's like the full name for it, the day of the Lord. And this is a really important day right throughout the Bible, the day of the Lord, the day when God comes, when He steps into history, when He says, enough is enough.

And when He finally acts to bring justice to a world that's gone completely crazy. So, God promises that on the day of the Lord, in the midst of a world where cheaters prosper and God's people suffer, He's going to come and He's going to act decisively.

It's going to be a day of justice, it's going to be a day of punishment and a day of reward. And it's coming. But it's not yet. So, remember, now we're 450 years before Jesus' time and sometimes it's a bit difficult when we read the Old Testament and it talks about the day of the Lord coming.

It's hard to figure out whether they're talking about when Jesus first comes or is it when Jesus is going to come again. And so, we get a sense here that it's a bit of both. That the day of the Lord came in part when Jesus came to earth in the incarnation, the theological term, when the Son of God came as a man.

[11 : 26] That was the first coming. And justice started to be done at that point. The kingdom was inaugurated and Christians everywhere since have been building the kingdom and building it on justice and liberation for those who have been oppressed and poor and downtrodden.

And so, justice starts when Jesus comes but it doesn't come fully until He comes again. It's the second coming that is the capital D, day of the Lord.

And so, just like Malachi's people, we're looking forward to that day, are we not? Yeah. We're looking to the day when Jesus comes back and just ends it. I mean, unless you've had your head in the sand, you see the suffering in this world.

There are very few people, though there are some, who have not endured any great trial in their life but it is coming. It comes for every one of us and at that point, you want to cry out to God and just say, come and end this.

And that day is coming. It's the second coming of Jesus and it's the day where everything will be put to right. And on that day, there'll be two groups of people.

[12 : 40] Verse 18, Then once more, you shall see the difference between the righteous and the wicked, between one who serves God and the one who does not serve Him.

So, it's going to be a day of distinction. It's going to be black and white. For the first time ever, we're going to see the distinction between God's people and those who have rejected Him.

So, verse 18, it's the righteous and the wicked. These people are talked about throughout Malachi and Old and New Testaments. We've also got those who serve God and those who don't serve God. We've got those who fear God and we've got the arrogant who don't fear God.

And I want you to think now that, this is really important, don't think that the Bible is talking about the good people and the bad people, like the good church boys and their cardigans and then the bad boys with their Harleys.

It's not like that. It's not like the smokers and the non-smokers or whatever. The message of the Bible is that every one of us is the unrighteous one.

[13 : 46] That really, there is only one group of people, the unrighteous. And there was only one man who was righteous. That was Jesus. And what happened was, what Martin Luther calls the great exchange, that the perfect man, Jesus, who is God in human flesh, died on a cross for our sins, that there's an exchange that happens, that him who is sinless, died so that we might be sinless.

The Bible says that God made him, that's Jesus, who knew no sin, who was perfect, to be sin for us so that we might be the righteousness of God.

To be righteous means to be justified, to be made right. It's like a legal, you're not guilty kind of term. So do you get how that happens, the exchange?

We are unrighteous, every single one of us, but because Jesus is righteous and because he died on a cross for our sins, he takes our punishment and when we put our trust in him, we get his righteousness.

It doesn't mean that we never sin. We've already acknowledged that in the confession. It doesn't mean that we don't screw up. It doesn't mean that we don't do unrighteous things. But at this judgment day that might happen before I get down from the pulpit, that day when it comes, people have their trust in Jesus, are counted as righteous.

[15:12] Isn't that crazy? I'm counted righteous. I'm counted perfect, sinless. Even with all of the crap that I do, all of the sins that I commit, it's the great exchange.

Jesus talks about this great distinction in Matthew 25. You might have heard it. It goes like this. He says, When the Son of Man, that's Jesus, when I come in glory and all the angels with me, that's when all the angels come with Jesus on the judgment day, then Jesus will sit on the throne in his glory.

All the nations will be gathered before him and he will separate people one from another as a shepherd, separate sheep from goats. From goats.

And he will put the sheep at his right hand and the goats at his left hand. This kind of teaching about heaven and hell, reward and punishment really gets caricatured as a kind of fundamentalist preacher.

I've got my collar done up. I'm red in the face. I'm slamming the pulpit. But actually, Jesus, the most compassionate man who ever lived, sets it out for us very, very plainly. And he goes on to say that those people who separated as goats will be punished forever in hell, separate from God's love, very much present in his judgment.

[16:45] And those whom he separates as sheep will be rewarded for their faithfulness, for their righteousness. So there's two groups of people, there's two eternal destinies, and there's one choice that's before us tonight for every single one of us.

It says the very similar thing in verse 17, They shall be mine, says the Lord. These are the people he has compassion on, the sheep, my special possession on the day when I act.

And I will spare them as parents spare their little children. And he's right to say he spares them. Remember I said that everyone's unrighteous, no one deserves to be counted righteous.

And that's the flavour that we get here. He says, I will spare them. It's not that they deserve it. Don't hear me say that. No one deserves it. But he spares his children from what they do deserve, which is judgment.

It's like the prodigal son. Do you love that story? That's my story. That's my testimony. Grew up knowing my loving heavenly father and then very much telling him to get stuffed, walking away and committing all kinds of folly and sin.

[17:58] And then like the prodigal son, in response to God's compassionate call turning around and coming home, not expecting to find grace, but very much finding it in the open arms of God.

That's like these people here. They're like children whose father greets them with open arms and spares them. But it's also a day of punishment.

Okay, so let's look at chapter 4. Let's not gloss this over too much. 4 verse 1. See, the day is coming, burning like an oven, when all the arrogant, all evildoers will be stubble.

The day that comes shall burn them up, says the Lord of hosts, so that it will leave them neither root nor branch. So here you've got a farming illustration.

It's like the wheat fields that have been harvested and you've just got the stubble and then farmers used to do it here. I don't think they do it anymore, but they used to burn the fields completely, just set it alight and it would burn down to the ground.

[19:05] Just dirt. Nothing left. And that's the picture of judgment that we have here. I think inevitably we shy away from talking about hell and eternal punishment, but that's what we have here and that's what Jesus has told us about as well, that God's punishment is going to be full and final, that evildoers will not get away with it as those arrogant, sometimes believers suggested.

Evildoers will not prosper, but God will finally and fully judge them for their arrogance and for their lack of belief. No one gets away with anything.

No one ever gets away with anything. I wonder what makes you angry the most. I mean like righteously angry.

It might be when you think back on the lives of Stalin, of Hitler, of Pol Pot. It might be when you see injustice in the world. For me, number one on my list is rape.

That just, it makes me want to cry and kill someone at the same time. That's how I feel. When I think about rape, about someone taking someone and taking advantage of them and brutalising them in that way and robbing them of that purity, that makes me want to do something sinful.

[20 : 31] By the way, being angry about it is not sinful. That's another sermon. But I wonder what you think of when I talk about stuff that makes you angry, injustice.

Do you ever feel just helpless? Yes. The Bible encourages us that justice will be done. That no sin will go unpunished.

And it's not just Hitler and it's not just Stalin. It's not just Pol Pot. It's not just gang rapists. It's every one of us. Every one of our sins will be punished. You can either be punished for it or Jesus was punished for it.

On the day of judgment, you can be punished forever for your sin or you can put your sins on Jesus who was punished once for all for your sins. They're the options.

Let's look at verse 2. This is the way I want us to go tonight. Every single one of us. But for you, for you guys, I pray, and for me, for you who revere my name, the sun of righteousness shall rise with healing in its wings.

[21 : 53] How beautiful is that? You shall go out leaping like calves from the stall and you shall tread down the wicked for they will be ashes under the soles of your feet on the day when I act, says the Lord of hosts.

So we've got justice here again. And it's going to be like this, this picture of a calf that's been locked into a stall and then finally released. I spent a lot of time when I grew up, when I was growing up at my uncle's farm.

He had a really big farm in Albury and he raised cattle and so we used to go out there and help him milk cows and shear sheep and when it came to springtime and the calves were being born, we'd grab these calves or I would watch him grab these calves because they were bigger than me and anyway, he would wrestle them into this stall.

It's a very small area locked in with gates and it's there that you give them the ear tag, maybe you give them a hot brand and it's terrible. Like they've just been ripped away from their parents, they're chucked in this very confined space and then they're kind of subjected to pain and they're just distressed and suffering and that's like the picture for Christians today.

You might not feel it but in many ways that's the picture for us. That's what we've got to look forward to for the rest of our lives. We're hemmed in into this, locked into this world full of sin and suffering and pain and there's no justice, very little but we hope and we groan for the day when the stall will be opened and we'll be released and that's what it says it's going to be like.

[23 : 32] That we shall go out leaping like calves from the stall. That when Jesus returns rather than being afraid of his judgment we will run to him as our saviour.

That as he takes us to be with him in heaven for eternity we'll burst out onto the shores of heaven like calves leaping for joy out of the stalls. That's what it's going to be like. And that's the encouragement for us tonight.

In the midst of suffering we've got that kind of joy to look forward to. So on that day the day that Revelation 21 says will be a day of joy no more tears no more crying no more pain.

On that day it's going to be a day of punishment and a day of compassion. That's why it says in verse 5 it's a great and terrible day.

It's a great day for some a terrible day for others. And in the meantime we wait. We wait. Every day of our lives is orientated towards that day and we wait.

[24 : 40] What do we do in the meantime while we wait? Check it out. Verse 4 He says Remember the teaching of my servant Moses the statutes and ordinances that I commanded him at Horeb for all Israel.

So in this life rather than being cynical unbelieving rather than doubting the goodness and justice of God we need to live by God's word.

We need to understand that his justice and judgment is coming and we we can't give up. We can't give up. What about you guys here tonight who are not sure where you stand with this?

You're not sure if you're a sheep or a goat. You're not even sure about that metaphor. You may not even be sure about what I'm saying about eternity. Maybe you want to be a sheep.

Maybe you want to be one of God's sheep. Maybe you want eternal life. Maybe you're sick of the suffering in this world and you want to be released like a calf jumping for joy.

[25 : 44] What do you do? You go to Jesus. You go to Jesus. Let's look at it. Verse 5. He says, Lo, I will send you the prophet Elijah before the great and terrible day of the Lord comes.

He will turn the hearts of parents to their children and the hearts of children to their parents so that I will not come and strike the land with a curse. every one of the Gospels, Matthew, Mark, Luke, John, says that that verse there and particularly that reference to Elijah is actually a prophecy about John the Baptist.

So, we saw this a couple of weeks ago that Elijah here is kind of a foreshadowing of John the Baptist. John the Baptist, remember, came around Christmas time.

he was born along with his relative Jesus and he prepared the way for Jesus to come. That he was like the prophet Elijah making the way for Jesus to come.

And so, when it says that he will turn the hearts of parents to their children, that's a bit of a debated verse but at the very least it means repentance, that we should have our hearts turned towards God, that we should turn back to God, that Jesus makes that possible for us, that we don't have to make any sacrifice or do any kind of penance or do any kind of good works to get ourselves right with God but that we just need to repent.

[27 : 15] That means to turn around, to turn back to God and he will lovingly enfold us. And furthermore, it actually does mean, it actually does have connotations of mended relationships between children and parents and parents and children that the gospel, when we embrace it, when we're saved, actually affects the way we live, that when we're members of the kingdom of God, it affects the way that we relate to other people and to our parents and parents to children, that it makes possible a legacy of godliness in your family, that you might come from a really dodgy family, that family didn't care for you, that Christians didn't raise you to love God and yet when you become a Christian, you have an opportunity to start a new legacy, a new family line, that honours God, that you get married and you have kids and raise them to love Jesus and that's how a fresh family line is wrought and so Jesus very much does turn our hearts back to our heavenly father and even to our own parents in that way.

So guys, I'm done but I want to plead with you, don't forget the future, don't forget the future.

Have a correct understanding of what is coming for every one of us here. There's a saying that there's only two certainties in life, death and taxes and that's not necessarily so, that you're always going to have to pay taxes but death may not come to you.

If Jesus comes, if the day of the Lord is tomorrow, you will not die. You will go straight to judgment and you'll either be judged for eternity as an enemy of God or you'll be lovingly enfolded into his new eternal kingdom.

There's two groups, there's two destinies, there's one period of time to respond and it's right now. It's right now. That's why God's given you your life, that's why you're here tonight, he wants you to respond.

[29 : 24] So I'm going to pray for us. After I pray, we're going to sing. It's going to be an opportunity for us to give out of our tithes and offerings, to give money to the work of the gospel in this place.

If you're new or visiting, if you're not a believer, if you're not yet a believer, don't give us any money, you're our guest, it's great to have you but for regular members, please give generously to the work of this church.

Before we do that, I do want to pray for us. Now listen, this is your opportunity. The Bible speaks a lot about people turning back to God who once knew him. If that's you, you know, if you used to come to church, if you were baptized, if you knew God but you walked away, God's beckoning you to come back, he really is.

He won't reject you no matter what kind of dodginess you've got up to in the meantime. If you're here tonight, you're not a believer, you've never known Jesus, you're never raised by your parents to love Jesus, in effect, you've rejected Jesus, now's the time to respond.

Now's your window of opportunity. I'm going to pray for you and I'm going to be available to pray with you after the service or to answer your questions, we can chat. All right? So let's bow our heads in reverence for our great king and judge and let's pray.

[30 : 47] Father, we're not playing games here tonight. This is not a game. It's a serious sermon, it's a serious message from Malachi.

We thank you for the last four weeks where we've seen the way that we ought to live as Christians and believers but I thank you most of all for tonight for a clear picture of our destiny, that there are two destinies on offer to us.

It's very much up to us to respond and I pray now that we respond with faith, with gratitude, with love, with fear, with compassion, with adoration.

Father, the best sermon in the world won't turn anyone's heart to you.

So I pray, Lord, I plead with you, please act. Please work the greatest miracle in the lives of each of us who are here tonight to turn our hearts back to you, to throw ourselves on the mercy of God and to know, to know that you will never reject us, that you will never withhold salvation from us, that you will never bar the way to heaven.

[32 : 12] So do it, Lord. Do it for Jesus' sake, I pray. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.