

How have we wearied God?

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[0 : 00] Well, I wish you all a very happy Pentecost today. It's a day of real celebration because this is the day when the church is born.

It's the day we celebrate this anniversary of the Holy Spirit coming on God's people in Jerusalem after Jesus ascended into heaven. And it is a real day of celebration because the Holy Spirit is our life changer and he is the presence of the living God in each of our lives.

He is with us. And it's the Holy Spirit that makes this religion of Christianity, as we call it, not a religion, but a relationship with the one true living God who saves us and who transforms us.

That we serve a living, risen Jesus Christ who strengthens us to serve him and blesses the world through us, who reconciles us to God the Father.

So every day we are knowing the love of God in our minds and in our hearts, in our lives. It's because of the Holy Spirit with us. He brings us joy, this great joy that can't be taken away because it is the joy of belonging to God our Father forever.

[1 : 18] forever. So this is a day that gives us such hope. It is a day of celebrating God's work in us forever. So I'd like to go and talk about Jesus, what he spoke about in John before I go into Malachi because in John 15 and 16, Jesus teaches about the Holy Spirit.

And he says three things about the Holy Spirit when he comes to you. Three things that happens for us. First of all, Jesus says that the Holy Spirit will bear witness to Jesus and will glorify him.

And then secondly, Jesus teaches that when the Holy Spirit comes, he will convict the world concerning sin and righteousness and judgment. And then the third thing he says is that when the Holy Spirit comes, he will guide you into his truth, all truth.

And that again, Jesus is glorified through that. And it's a wonderful thing to be going through the book of Malachi because in Malachi, the living God speaks to his people directly.

And that same Holy Spirit is at work in those words of Malachi. They fill that book. And amazingly, when you go through Malachi, and perhaps it's not amazing, you see Jesus' words come true about how the Holy Spirit works in those three ways that he taught his disciples.

[2 : 50] And I want you to look with me at Malachi 2.17 on page 802 in your Bibles. And it'll be very helpful to go along with me and see how the Holy Spirit works in these short verses.

So first of all, the Holy Spirit convicts the hearers of sin and righteousness and judgment. Look at verse 17, chapter 2. He says to the people of Israel, Well, that's not a good thing to hear, that your words weary God.

And the people are amazed and they can't believe this could be the case. How could our words weary God, they said. It's a blind spot for them. And we can relate to them because all of us have blind spots.

It is often difficult to see our own sin. We're often very comfortable with them. Or we've rationalized them over time. And the sin that was very comfortable in Malachi's time was the continual complaining to God.

And I said that wrong. It's actually a complaining about God. Because they weren't speaking to God. They were speaking to each other. And they were saying, Everyone who does evil is good in the sight of the Lord and he delights in them.

[4 : 13] Or they were asking, Where is the God of justice? Is he gone? Is he just? And you see what was happening is they were seeing people around them in Jerusalem doing evil.

They were lying and taking advantage of people in business. They were having affairs. They were taking on other gods, other religious practices. And as a result, they seemed to be prospering.

And things looked really good for them. Thank you very much. They were very happy. It looked as though, anyway. It's not fair, they said to each other. We're going through the motions of following our God.

And we're not doing nearly as well as those who are blatantly sinning. And life is not all that exciting being a follower of God. Why is he taking so long to make things right?

Why is this day of the Lord, when he does this, makes things right, why is it so late in coming? Now those questions really have worldly reasons behind them.

[5 : 16] It's because they wanted to be successful and healthy and strong so that others around them could think highly of them. That there could be kind of an immediate reward for doing these things of following God.

And notice that all of the complaining is about God to each other continually. And that it involves lying about the character of God.

And in doing this, you know, in saying that he's evil, that he is absent, they actually tear down one another's relationships with God. And they spread mistrust in God.

In fact, they discourage each other so much that if you jump down to verse 13 in chapter 3, the people start saying, it's not worth serving God.

There's no profit in following him. Why should we bother? And so their complaining about God reveals that what is happening inside of them spiritually is they are pulling away from God.

[6 : 24] They really have wandered far away from God in their minds and in their hearts, even as they are doing the motions of being a follower of him.

And I think there's a warning for us here because you and I are tempted in the same way to follow the ways of the world. In other words, to really want the world's approval and to be successful in the eyes of the Lord.

We want God to change an unhappy situation. We want him to bring success to us and perhaps even to our church. We want him to bring prosperity. We want him to give us status in the eyes of the world.

You know, for our own sense of well-being. Our own sense that things are successful because we follow God. It's not for the sake of God's glory or for the good that he can do through us and in us.

So it's a real disguised sin, a blind spot that we're susceptible in this world of success and bounty. The Holy Spirit reveals this and he calls the people of Malachi, and really you and I, to turn our grumbling against God into prayers to him, seeking after his face in the difficult situation.

[7 : 40] So today the Holy Spirit convicts us if we are blaming God because we don't like his timing or we don't like his methods. And he says, draw near to God. Talk to him about the things that hurt us.

Talk to him about the injustice that you see in the life around you, but also the injustices that you may have experienced yourself personally. And the best way to do this is to look at the Psalms.

A Psalm like Psalm 73, which I invite you to look at Psalm 73 during this week to come. We don't have time now. It's a Psalm of somebody who is experiencing great hardship.

And he's saying, why God? Why is this happening? And far from pulling away from God in that situation, he seeks God's face. And he praises God in the midst of it.

And there is a repentance that takes place in that Psalm as well. The Holy Spirit really is searching your heart and asking you, how might you be pulling away from God because he hasn't met your expectations?

[8 : 46] Are you bitter against him? Because his timing isn't your timing. Many years ago when I was in university, we had a sudden death in our family.

And it was really a difficult grieving process. And we actually had a bishop come and visit our house, a pastoral visit. And he was very, very helpful.

He was wise. He said something very simple and profound that I still remember. He said these kinds of things, these afflictions, either make you bitter or better.

And those are searching words. The people of God in Malachi were bitter. Their hearts were wandering away from God because of the difficulty they were experiencing, because of the ways that it seemed like it wasn't worth following God.

But in his love and mercy, the Holy Spirit convicts of sin. He shows us where we are becoming bitter in order to make us better.

[9 : 54] And that's why the Holy Spirit doesn't stop at convicting the people of Malachi of sin. He goes on to the second way that Jesus said the Holy Spirit would work.

The Holy Spirit in Malachi bears witness to Jesus Christ. It's amazing. Look at chapter 3, verse 1. This happens so clearly in this book of Malachi.

He says this, Behold, God says, I send my messenger, and he will prepare the way before me. And the Lord whom you seek will suddenly, in other words, unexpectedly, come to his temple.

And the messenger of the covenant, in whom you delight, behold, he is coming, says the Lord of hosts. And I wonder if you see three individuals in that verse.

You know, there is God Almighty, the Father, our Father, who is speaking. He's the one who says, Behold, I send. And at the end, he says, The Lord of hosts is speaking to you.

[10 : 52] But then he sends his messenger to prepare the way for me. And that messenger, does that sound familiar, is John the Baptist. And the Gospels tell us that that is fulfillment of what is being said in this verse.

John the Baptist, who is preparing the way, for whom? It is for Jesus. And there's our third individual. He says, The Lord whom you seek will suddenly come to his temple, and the messenger of the covenant, in whom you delight.

Behold, he is coming. See, that person, the one they delight in, is the long-expecting Messiah, Jesus Christ, the hope of Israel.

He is the Lord, who is mentioned here. He is the one who comes to the temple, his temple. And it's his, because he comes to replace it, and it sacrifices.

And of course, he is the messenger of the covenant. That covenant, that if you remember in Malachi, means that he has chosen his people. He loves them, and continues to love them.

[11 : 57] He chooses them to be a people that will belong to Jesus as their king forever. The messenger of the covenant. We're going to celebrate that in communion. Jesus says, This is my blood of the new covenant.

It is about being reconciled to God. So out of that covenant of love, Jesus answers that question, where is the God of justice? By dealing with all injustice in himself, including the injustice within you and me and within the people of Malachi.

And he does that by dying on a cross as the one perfect, final, forever sacrifice for the forgiveness of our sins.

And then that Lord rises in power. And as we celebrated 10 days ago, he ascends, and as he is Lord of lords and King of kings, he will come again for a final judgment when all wrongs will be made right.

That is Jesus who is glorious. You can't say God is not just, or he is absent when you see Jesus. Jesus, the Holy Spirit bears witness to him.

[13 : 13] And he promises the people of Malachi he will come. And we're here this morning because he did come. God himself, God and man, come for us and for our salvation.

But the Holy Spirit reveals something unexpected and uncomfortable about his promise to come to them. He says in Malachi that he is a fire.

He is a refiner's fire that changes people. And here's the third way that the Holy Spirit works when he comes to us, as Jesus said. And that is he continually, every day, leads us into the truth of God, into all truth.

And that truth is what we see in verses two through four. It's the truth that people need refining. We need forgiveness of our sins and that God is the one who refines, who changes us, shapes us.

So verses two through four says, but who can endure the day of his coming? Who can stand when he appears? And the answer is no one. We all have impurity and sin that cannot stand before the holy God.

[14 : 26] This is the bad news. For he is like a refiner's fire and like a fuller's soap. He will sit as a refiner and purifier of silver and he will purify the sons of Levi and refine them like gold and silver.

This is the good news. And they will bring offerings in righteousness to the Lord. And then the offering of Judah and Jerusalem will be pleasing to the Lord as in the days of old and as in the former years.

You see, there are really two ways that the fire of God can be experienced. It can be as a refining fire or as a consuming fire.

This is the one year anniversary of this massive wildfire that swept through Fort McMurray. There was 2,400 buildings that were absolutely demolished and incinerated.

It took months for that fire to stop. Nothing could stand in the way of that all-consuming path of that wildfire. And this is true of God's justice.

[15 : 33] It consumes everything that is sinful and evil. Nothing can stand before it. And God promises down in verse 5 that this is going to happen, that he draws near for judgment on the last judgment day.

He's going to be swift witness against the sorcerers because he is pure, against the adulterers because he is faithful, against those who swear falsely because he is true, and against those who oppress the hired worker in his wages, the widow and the fatherless, because he is the defender of the vulnerable.

And he will testify against those who thrust aside the sojourner. And that's because he is the refuge of all who need him. And finally, he witnesses against all those who don't fear him.

And that's because he is holy, he is mighty, he is worthy of all honor. It is a terrible thing to be in the path of that consuming fire.

And this is the final destiny of everything that opposes God. But before this, the Holy Spirit shows us in his mercy that we can experience God's fire as a refining fire, as a fire that actually brings deep and lasting goodness in our lives.

[16 : 59] You notice what it says about the people of God. They're compared to gold and silver, which is marvelous. It means that we are precious in God's sight.

Absolutely precious. But also it means that our sin is like dross. It is like impurities in this precious gold and silver.

And you and I are part of that people of God. This tells us that we, even as we are precious to God, have sin and impurity in our lives.

And the Holy Spirit leads us into this truth by revealing our sins. That's why we take a moment of silence before we go into confession, which we will do in a few minutes, as we ask the Holy Spirit to show us what are those impurities, what are those sins that you can show me that you are refining?

Last week, if you remember right, last week was a beautiful, sunny, hot weekend. And I was very motivated to set up our above-ground swimming pool that day. So we have in the backyard a sandy sort of platform to be able to put that pool on.

[18 : 16] It's a big pad of sand. But the thing is, you have to prepare that sand because there are impurities in it, two impurities that cause problems for the pool. One is that there are weeds that grow up through it and they're quite powerful.

They can actually go through the liner. And the second thing are the sharp stones that get in there. And so the biggest part of our putting up the pool, the biggest work, the thing that took the longest time was raking that sand back and forth and back and forth.

And I had my two sons helping me with this. And it was a long process. And you'd think you'd have everything and then another sharp rock would come up. And then there's another weed that we missed.

And finally, after hours of work, there was a nice, pure, sandy pad there for the pool. So we set up the pool. We actually jumped in right away.

The pool was pretty cool. But we jumped in, had a great time, and we haven't used it since. We're hoping for hot weather again. This is a picture of the refining work of the Holy Spirit.

[19 : 20] Because there is a meticulous work that the Holy Spirit does in bringing up to mind and showing us those things which are harmful to us.

Which really are things that affect deeply our relationship with God. And there is a loving care and work that is happening that we are called to actually participate in.

To keep in step with the Holy Spirit as he does this work in our lives. And he does this because we are precious to God. This is what Jesus wants for us in our lives.

He is in the process of burning away the impurities of sin that we sometimes don't see in each of our lives. He is about washing us with his most precious blood as we will say in communion as well.

And that washing gets rid of the things which might not have been noticeable by us. In Matthew 3 John the Baptist said something that's so applicable to the Holy Spirit.

[20 : 27] He said, I baptize with water but Jesus will baptize people with the Holy Spirit and with fire. So you see that this function of the Holy Spirit is to be a fire who refines us and works that process in us.

If you look at that image of God in verse 3 God sits as a refiner and purifier of silver. It means he's taking time. He's sitting down impatiently as silversmiths did in Malachi's time taking meticulous care with fire to determine the color of the metal and if it was pure.

And the reason that silver is chosen here by the way is because it's technically more intricate to do that process of refining than it is with gold.

It took a lot of time and care. And in reading about this refining I read that the process of purifying was complete and the silversmith knew the dross was all burnt away when suddenly the silver was like a liquid mirror.

in which the refiner could see their reflection in that precious metal. And that is a helpful image because it shows us that the purpose of the Holy Spirit's work is to really make it so that we are more and more reflecting Jesus.

[21 : 50] Reflect the image of Jesus. And this hope purifies us that we know that one day we will see Jesus as he is. And we are purified in that hope of knowing this.

And you know the question that God asks us today is are you resisting this work of the Holy Spirit or are you keeping in step with it? And I know the question that comes up for us is that here how do I do this?

We see how the Holy Spirit works. He is patiently carefully and lovingly burning sin away from us. He is scrubbing us clean so that we more and more reflect Jesus' image. and it sounds uncomfortable and the answer is that it is.

Often that's the way the refining takes place. It is through the difficult things in our life. And that's why Malachi uses those images. God uses the difficult and sometimes very painful experiences in our lives to get rid of our sin.

And he redeems all that is hard and painful and difficult. There's a couple of verses of the great hymn How Firm a Foundation that really expresses us well.

[23 : 01] We're not going to sing this today so I'm going to say it. You'll be glad to know I'm not going to sing it for you. But there's two verses that come from Isaiah 43. Listen to those words. It says, When through the deep waters I call you to go the rivers of sorrow will not overflow for I will be with you in trouble to bless and sanctify to you your deepest distress.

And when through fiery trials your pathway will lie my grace all sufficient shall be your supply. The flame shall not hurt you I only design your dross to consume and your gold to refine.

Now everyone whether you are a Christian or not goes through rivers of sorrows or you go through fiery trials. But it's only the Holy Spirit that can refine us through this.

I mean only He can make us better rather than bitter through it. And I know the question comes up well how can we experience that fire of God the judgment of God as a refining rather than a consuming fire.

And the answer is in Jesus. Jesus was consumed on the cross for us. So He went through the consuming fire of judgment in our place.

[24 : 23] And that's how we can know that God's fire in our lives will always be a refining fire. A fire that is making us ready to see Jesus face to face in heaven one day.

So that in those afflictions He actually leads us towards God into God into the truth of God. Into us knowing that He is worth trusting. that Jesus loves us more than we can fathom.

That He is our one hope worth holding on to worth persevering with. He is the only strength for us to repent and to really forgive and be reconciled.

He alone can bring the deep healing in our hearts minds souls and our bodies that we desperately need. In every affliction the Holy Spirit makes us like Jesus through it all.

and He makes us people who offer ourselves as living offerings to God that please Him. That's a joy for us. That's what's promised to the people of God in verse 4.

[25 : 25] And there is real movement in our lives by the Holy Spirit by His power. I want to close by telling you about a situation where I was at an archdeacon's meeting this week and one of the clergy there shared about helping with a remarkable weekend retreat that was put on by Rachel's Vineyard which is a ministry of support and healing for women who have gone through abortions.

And some men were there too who experienced the effect of abortion in their life as well. And all had really experienced a sense of deep loss and grief and guilt as well.

There were about a hundred people at that weekend and the gospel was very clearly presented. The gospel that tells us of Jesus who forgives who brings repentance who brings healing and who brings perfect hope and new life.

And everyone experienced prayer with prayer teams that weekend as well. And this person told us that it was an extraordinary time of being changed by the Holy Spirit.

They all experienced God's love and healing in remarkable ways. And all had gone through really fiery trials and deep rivers of sorrow. The thing that struck me is that in their testimony this minister said that many were moved from asking the why questions to the what questions.

[26 : 58] So they were moved from asking why have these painful things happened to me to asking what is God who loves me doing through this affliction?

What is God doing through my pain? It was really a move to trust and it was a move towards confidence in Jesus and hope in the Holy Spirit's work in their lives.

It's really the returning to God that Malachi calls for in verse 3 or in verse 7 of chapter 3 if you look down there. Return to me God says and I will return to you.

You will experience the presence of God working in your life. And I think that this Pentecost Sunday God is calling you and me through Malachi to allow the Holy Spirit to move you in this way as well.

The Holy Spirit is calling us to commit yourself afresh to His refining work in your life. God's Holy Spirit is the helper and He helps you by convicting you of sin by witnessing to Jesus the living Lord Jesus and by leading you into all truth the truth that frees you that brings you healing that brings you the joy of serving Him.

[28 : 20] So may you know that joy of the Holy Spirit working in your life in this way so that each day you can present your bodies as living sacrifices holy and acceptable to God which is your spiritual worship.

Amen.