Bold Predictions

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Preacher: Rev Calum M Smith

[0:00] We can turn back again to our reading in Malachi, and at the end of chapter 2 into chapter 3, we see that verse 17 begins a section there, if you're using the ESV with the title, The Messenger of the Lord, and it speaks of that at verse 1 of chapter 3.

Behold, I send my messenger, and he will prepare the way before me. And 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, says the Lord of hosts. And so on.
Amen. And ask, well, what's your expectations of the Christian life? Maybe you're just starting out in the Christian life, and your expectations, there may be many different ideas that you have, what it's going to be like.
Maybe you've been many years as a Christian in this world, and your expectations from when you were first converted to now, they've changed. And no matter where we are in life, whether we're a Christian or not, we maybe have an idea of what the Christian life might entail. What would you expect in the Christian life?
Your answer today might depend on your experience, how you've heard the gospel, where you've come from, all kinds of different things. But we can have maybe many similarities in what we might think of expectations of what the Christian life might be like.
[2:00] We're hoping it's going to be a better life, a better life perhaps than what we've had without Christ. And that surely has to be true. It is a better life to be a Christian, to be born into that faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.

It is a great life because it's a life that God has given to us. It's a gift from him to know with joy, to know with gladness, that saving faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.
So it's better. Then you might think, well, I want to make a difference. I want to do so much as a Christian in this world, in my community, my workplace. We can have great expectations in that way.
We can have great expectations for the church where you look at the gospels, where you look at the book of Acts and you're thinking, oh, wouldn't it be wonderful to see days like the early days, the early chapters in the book of Acts when you're seeing thousands converted in one day.
When you hear then maybe accounts of revivals in our own nation, in the world, or even in our own islands here, you're thinking to yourself, wouldn't it be wonderful to see these kinds of days?
[3:09] And maybe for some those expectations have been realized. You've seen great blessings in times of revival, times of great joy in the Lord.

But it's not always so. Reality and expectation are sometimes two very different things. If you were to look at the people in Malachi's days, he's writing to them here.
Their expectations and their reality are two different things. They have been a people who have been taken into captivity. God's people have been taken into captivity by the Babylonians, an evil nation.
But God had brought them back. And as you're reading in the book of Malachi, you're also seeing this is the same time as the writings of Haggai, Nehemiah, Zechariah.
These kind of books are all around the same period. When the people are coming back from their exile, from having been taken into captivity, they're now returning. Returning home to rebuild their lives.
[4:12] Nehemiah, we're seeing that rebuilding of the wall going on. And with Malachi and Haggai, we're seeing the rebuilding of the temple. Rebuilding their lives, their lives of faith.

And they've maybe got a great expectation of what things are going to be like. But reality is quite different. But it's on them.

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It's not on God. It's because of their attitudes, because of their ways, because of how they're living, what they're doing. There is consequences upon them.
And as you're looking through Malachi, what you're seeing is that the people are trying to blame God. It's almost like it's all God's fault.
But then God is turning it back on them and asking questions of them. Why is God allowing evil to prosper is one of the questions they might have.
[5:15] Where is God in the midst of all that's going on? Other nations who have seemingly rejected God are prospering. And it was challenging to their faith.

But was it God's fault? Could they blame God for this? Or could they not look at themselves? Well, it's almost like they refuse to look at themselves.
We'll see that as we go into these verses that we've read. But where does it leave us today as we start looking at this passage? Where are we with the Lord?
What stage are we at in terms of our own lives? And our expectations of what a Christian life might look like? What it entails? What hopes? What fears it brings?
We go through various challenges. We go through various ups and downs. But we ask ourselves, where is God in it all? Is God with us?
[6:14] What we sang in Psalm 14, where the people are asking that question, where is God? The fool, it says in his heart, says there is no God.

So that's not the conclusion that we want to come to at all. We want to see that there is a God. And in Malachi's day, as he was writing to them, they were this kind of wondering, well, where is God? What's he doing? But it would be foolish to say there is no God. But even when they're saying there was a God, they were still being foolish. They were being foolish in how they were dealing with God.
So we ask ourselves, well, what are we doing with God today? How are you looking to God? How are you trusting in God?
What are you making of God? Are you saying there is no God? Are you saying there is a God? If you're saying there is no God, well, what's the consequences of that? There are serious consequences.
[7:16] Because without God, we are lost for all eternity. But even if we're saying there is a God, maybe many of us, all of us may be here tonight will say, there is a God, but who is he to you tonight?

Is he a God who you deal with in your own ways, in your own expectations? Or is he a God that you listen to through his word and all that he says in it?
We shouldn't expect perfection in our lives. We cannot achieve it. But we should strive to do our best.
And so when you look at Malachi, you see the people were not striving to do their best for God. Second best would do. You see it in chapter 1 with their offerings.
In verse 6 of chapter 1, A son honours his father and a servant his master. If then I am a father, where is my honour? And if I am a master, where is my fear?
[8:21] Says the Lord of hosts to you, O priest, to despise my name. But you say, how have we despised your name? By offering polluted food upon my altar.

And then he goes on to say, You were offering me blind animals and sacrifice. Is that not evil? Were they giving their best for God?
No. They were holding back the best for themselves. So they weren't fools in the sense they said there is no God. But they were saying there is a God, but we'll deal with him on our terms.
As we wish. As we desire. And so they weren't even striving to do their best. They were very much giving a second best way to God.
What of us this night? You say there is a God, but what are you giving to him? Are you giving your best? Are you giving your all?
[9:18] Are you giving your life? Or are you holding back? Holding back a bit for yourself. To say, well, I will deal with God in my way and on my terms.

Well, it's into this kind of setting that Malachi writes. And he writes to challenge the people. To question them. To point them in the right direction. There's direct questions.
There's direct... God is speaking very powerfully towards them. But it's for their good. And for ourselves, too. When God warns us, it's for our good.

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And there's three things we can look at in this passage. The first is the kind of questioning of the people. The accusations that they're making towards God.
The second thing is the Lord's response. And what we see is a bold prediction there in verse 1 of chapter 3.
[10:17] A very bold prediction. But then the third thing we see that there are present consequences. For the people then and for ourselves today as well.

So we've got the accusation of the people. The bold prediction. And the consequences in the midst of it all. So the first thing is the accusation of the people.
You see God is speaking directly to them. He spoke directly there to the priests in chapter 1. He's asking them questions. If I am the master, where is my fears?
He's the Lord of hosts in verse 6. But they say, how have we despised your name? Their question is an accusation made against them. But then they make an accusation back against God.
How have we despised your name? And then the second one in verse 7. How have we polluted you? They're almost so blind they cannot see it. And you see it again in verse 17.
[11:15] Speaking of chapter 2. Speaking directly to the people. You have weiried the Lord with your words. But you say, how? How have we weiried him? What's he on about?

It's a statement against the people and their unfaithfulness. But they just don't see it. When it says you have weiried the Lord with your words. It's not meaning that they were praying too much.
Or too urgent in their prayers. Instead we see it's a weiried the Lord with their complaints. Their attitudes towards them.
But they're just saying, but how? How have we done this? And they're told by saying everyone who does evil is good in the sight of the Lord and he delights in them.
Or by asking, where is the God of justice? So this is how they are weiring God. Their accusations against him.
[12:18] And yet they cannot see it. They're asking, but how? Where did we go wrong? What would God say of us tonight? Of you and of me tonight? Direct words from God.

Maybe it wouldn't be you have weiried me with your words. It might not be that. It might be. But what have he said to you this evening? And he says it to me as well.
You're a sinner. You're a sinner. Is your answer me? But how? What have I done?
What have I possibly done wrong? How can you dare call me a sinner? Well, what would the response of God be? Are you not a sinner?
Are you not one who has displeased God? We do it all the time. We can look at our lives and see just how we fall short of the glory of God again and again and again.
[13:21] The people in Malachi's day had weiried him with their words, their attitudes towards God. Maybe that's our sin. Questioning God. Why didn't you help me in this situation, God?

Why didn't you do as I asked? Maybe we weiried him with our words. Maybe we weiried him with our actions. We come to church. We sit under the word.
We go away and we'll do our own thing until the next time we come in through these doors. Or our thoughts, which we sin against God and again and again and again.
And we ask if God says, but you're a sinner. We say, but how? Me? No, that's not me at all. It is.
And so what is our response to God?
How have we done this? Well, they looked at God and they were seeing this and they were saying, but how could we possibly do this?
[14:18] They looked at themselves and they weren't giving their best to God. They weren't listening to God. They weren't giving their best offerings. Their whole attitude was wrong.

And so their worship was not right. Everyone who does evil is good in the sight of the Lord and he delights in them. That's what they were saying.
Look, this world we live in, everybody who does evil is actually good. So what's the point? All he says again, where is the God of justice? Why isn't God bringing justice upon these evil nations?
These are the kind of attitudes that they have. If God is doing nothing to stop evil prospering, how can there possibly be a God?
Or why should we give our best to him? They have no thought of how they're acting before God.
[15:18] Instead of coming humbly with thanksgiving before him, they're just coming with their complaints, their groans and their moans. And yet they still expect God to give the best to them.

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They still expect God to do everything that they ask for. But surely, as he speaks to them, he speaks to us. What's our expectation of God today?
For him to do everything as we desire? Or for us to bring ourselves just humbly before him and seeing, Lord, I am here to follow and obey you.
Dr. Andrew Boner once said that he could tell when a Christian was growing. He says, In the Gospel of John, doesn't it?
That quote from Andrew Boner. What's John the Baptist say? He must become greater. I must become less. And that's the one this version, chapter 3, verse 1, is speaking about.
[16:52] Behold, I send my messenger. We're going to look at this in a little bit more in a moment. But the messenger there is looking ahead to John the Baptist's coming.

And John the Baptist was one who would say, He must become greater. I must become less. The people here were almost reversing that. We'll carry on in our own way.
And we'll put God in his place. So are we giving God the increase? Are we giving God the glory that is due to his name?
Are we doing our best for him? Not perfection. We cannot achieve it. But doing our best. Giving our best for him in all that we do.
We have to examine ourselves in light of Scripture. We have to examine ourselves in light of the challenges that God gives. That's what they had to do here when he says, You have wearied the Lord with your words.
[17:56] If we have wearied God. If we see that we are sinners. What does it do for us? Does it make us blasé and just say, But that's not me.

Does it make us say, But how? How have we possibly done that? Or does it open our eyes to see the reality of where we are? That we are lost without him.
Well, Malachi here is throwing the people back to God. Looking for them to repent. To turn. And that is the ongoing nature of the word of God.
Calling us to repentance. Calling us back to himself. So we see this accusation. How have we wearied you?
What have we done? How does the Lord respond in this? Well, the second thing we see here is a bold prediction. A wonderful prediction.
[18:58] When you look at verse 1. Behold, I send my messenger and he will prepare the way before me. And 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, says the Lord of hosts. Many a bold prediction has been made that came to nothing. Here's a few for you.
In 1903, the automobile, the car had just started to become a thing. Henry Ford in America produced a car. But what was the attitude of many around?
Well, one, a president of one of the banks in America had said this, the horse is here to stay. The automobile is only a novelty, a fad. It will soon pass.
Well, where is the horse now? The horse is a luxury. The car is something that everybody has. Or another one, bold prediction, a rocket will never be able to leave the Earth's atmosphere.
[20:04] The headline in the New York Times in 1920. Did it happen? Yes, it did. Well, here's another bold prediction.

Nuclear-powered vacuum cleaners will probably be a reality in 10 years. Made in 1955 by an owner of a vacuum cleaner company. Thankfully, it never came to be.
There can be all kinds of bold predictions made. You see it every day of life. Bold predictions being made whether it's in politics or sport or just life in general.
But what about the predictions of God? When you think of the question, where is God? Where is the God of justice? As the people asked here at the end of chapter 2.
What is the prediction that God gives? How does God answer it? Well, he gives a bold prediction. A very bold prediction.
[21:12] What greater response could be given than saying, I am here. I am with you. And I am coming into the world. This God who they had looked to, who had taken them into captivity, who had brought them back out of it, the God who they were hearing of down through all the generations, the one who had led his people out of Egypt.

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Here is the one that they were trying to worship but couldn't and yet he's making this bold prediction for them. I am coming to you. What is he looking at here?
Well, God announces this and he says what? Behold. Behold. The first thing is to stop and to look and to listen.
God is speaking. Behold. Look at me, not yourselves. And when you think of Malachi writing, it's 400 years before the Lord Jesus will be born into this world and yet he has this prediction, this bold prediction.
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, says the Lord of hosts. God is going to come into this world but he is sending a messenger.
[22:43] My messenger, he will prepare the way before me. Who is he talking about there? He's talking about John the Baptist. John the Baptist would come proclaiming the way for the Lord.

Proclaiming that greater than he comes after him. So the messenger would come and then the Lord would come. Would come suddenly.
Would come suddenly. Not in the way they were expecting, not in the way they were looking, but he would come suddenly. Suddenly he will appear to his temple.
When you think of that bold prediction, what did the Lord Jesus do? Where was he found? Was he not found teaching in the temple in his youth? Was he not found among the people day by day in his public ministry?
He came and he came with a message. He came the messenger of the covenant in whom you delight. Behold, he is coming, says the Lord of hosts.
[23:51] But then it goes on in verse 2, but who can endure the day of his coming? And who can stand when he appears? He's coming with that sense of judgment.

Who can endure? stand? It's very like Psalm 130, which we sang this morning. Who can stand if you should mark in equity against us?
Who could possibly come before the Lord, the Lord who is coming to be present with his people? None. None could stand. None could endure.
But what you see is the Lord here is speaking of his grace, the messenger of the covenant in whom you delight. The covenant of God is being proclaimed that God is a God for his people.
And a God who calls his people to himself. And our expectations may be that God should just do as we please. But the expectation really should be that God could do as he pleases.
[24:54] But he doesn't. He doesn't just give us what we deserve. He shows us grace because he is a God of covenant. And he's not coming to destroy.

Not at this stage. He is coming to purify. Who can endure? Who can stand when he appears? For he is like a refiner's fire and like fuller's soap.
He will sit as a refiner and purify, purifier of silver. And he will purify the sons of Levi and refine them like gold and silver. God does a work of restoration, of cleansing.
God sends his son, the Lord Jesus Christ. This is his bold prediction. He's going to send his son into this world to fulfill his covenant, to fulfill his promise, to purify, to make right his people who will come by faith.
So the Lord is taking action. God is doing it. We don't deserve it, but he is a gracious God. And so he sends his son.
[26:08] He takes action that we might find through him salvation, that we might find through him hope to transform a people, a people who have been offering unacceptable sacrifices.

We see then as he refines them in the end of verse 3, refine them like gold and silver, and they will bring offerings in righteousness to the Lord, then the offering of Judah and Jerusalem will be pleasing to the Lord as in the days of old, as in the former years, a restoration in that relationship.
That is what he is looking for. That is the bold prediction of the Lord here. What does it mean for ourselves today? Well, Jesus has come into the world and he is the one who can purify our sin and make us right with God.
Not on our terms, not looking to him and not giving our best to him, but he calls us to himself to give our all to him, to serve him, to love him with all our hearts.
That is what he is looking for. And so in our lives, in your heart and my heart tonight, how are we with this God?

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[27:34] We have heard a bold prediction that has been fulfilled. We are now at the stage where we look back on this prediction. It has been fulfilled, but behind it too is a prediction that has got a future as well.

Because he comes in judgment. And ultimately he will come again in judgment. And he will come again to call us, to give account for ourselves.
What have we done with the son that he gave? What have we done with Christ? Have we put him away or have we clung to him?
So the bold prediction is that there is a saviour, one who is a messenger of the covenant, one whom we can delight in, who can forgive us our sin.
What is our expectation then now for the life of the Christian? Is it to do as we please or to look at him? Because when we see this, we see there is a need in our present situation.
[28:44] And what is our need? Well, it leads us to think, what does it mean for them and what does it mean for us? One of the problems that the people had here was there was no fear of the Lord.

They did not fear God. And the fear of the God is the beginning of all wisdom. That is what we are to look to. But as William Garnall once said, we fear man so much because we fear God so little. That's the kind of attitude that so many have today. We fear man more than we fear God. But surely God is to be feared more. Feared in the right sense of a fear that leads us to worship.
That leads us to bowing before and pleading with him to have mercy on us. us. That is what Malachi was looking at for the people here.
To draw near to God in a right worship. 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.
[29:57] There will be a restoration in this worship. Is that our desire, that relationship with God restored? the one that sin has broken.

The one that we can come before God and if God says you're a sinner, we don't say, but how, what have I done? We say, Lord, you're right. I am a sinner before you and what I need to see is a wonderful saviour that you have given.
We look at the world in which we live and it would be easy to say it's a day of little blessing of barren times and all of these things. And it was in the days of Malachi too, but why?
Why? It wasn't because of God. It was because of their attitude towards God. And so it calls on us as the Lord's people to humble ourselves before God and plead marshy with him to forgive us first and foremost.
that we might see his cause grow and his blessings increase. Malachi goes on or the Lord goes on to speak to them.
[31:23] In verse 10 it is, bring the full tithes into the storehouse that there may be food in my house and thereby put me to the test, says the Lord of hosts, if I will not open the windows of heaven for you and pour down for you a blessing until there is no more need.

What a wonderful promise the Lord gives there. He's saying bring your best, bring your all, bring your heart, bring your worship, bring everything to me in that right way and see if I do not open the window of heaven and pour down a blessing on you.
He calls us to himself. So what is our expectation in the Christian life? Are we living for ourselves or are we living for the Lord?
I'll leave you with an example of someone who gave their life to the Lord. His name was William Borden. In 1904, he was a very rich young man.
His family had a dairy estate that had made millions for the family. And young William graduated from Chicago High School a millionaire.
[32:42] The world was his oyster. And his parents decided to give him a trip around the world as a reward for doing so well. And he went and travelled around Asia, the Middle East, Europe, all these different places.

And he came back with a new burden in his heart. a burden for the lost. And he turned his back on his fortune.
He left it behind. He says, it's nothing to me. My desire is to serve the Lord. And he went and studied in Princeton and graduated from there.
And his burning desire was to go to China as a missionary to the Muslims there. And so he set off, left his fortune behind, and he travelled and he reached Egypt.

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And he was going to spend some months there just learning the language and different things about culture before going on to China. He hadn't been there too long though, when he fell ill. [33:48] And he was struck down by cerebral meningitis. And within a month he passed away. He'd left everything.

Left a fortune behind to go and serve God in China and never made it. And you say maybe, what a waste. Where did he go wrong?
He hadn't gone wrong. He may not have reached the destination he hoped for in this world. But what he did was give his life to Christ and put himself into his hands that he might use him in any way.
And the amazing thing is that his story is still told today. Not because he was successful in getting to China and seeing many conversions there, but the very fact that he was willing, that he gave his all to live for Christ.
Christ. And on his headstone, his tomb, so he was buried in Cairo. There's quite a number of different things written on his headstone. But one says this, apart from faith in Christ, there is no explanation for such a life.
[35:07] What does it mean? Well, it means basically that apart from faith in Christ, nothing would explain this. that here he lies in Egypt, in Cairo, where he passed away in illness, when he could have lived quite comfortably, quite luxuriously with his millions in America.

But that wasn't for him. His expectations in life were not for himself, but for his Lord, and that the Lord would have used him.
He used him, not in the ways he expected, but he used him in a way where his life was still fulfilled because it was lived for him.
What of you and me? We don't know how we might serve God or where we might serve God, but the main thing is to be a willing people, to have our hearts transformed from those who are holding back, not giving our best as they were in Malachi's day, but instead listening to God, listening to his word, and seeking to live for his glory, giving our all, giving our lives, giving our hearts to him, and all glory to be his.
If God is willing to bless, are we willing to serve? Let us pray. Lord, our gracious God, we thank you that you do bless us in amazing ways, ways that we cannot even see, ways that sometimes we do not understand, and yet we look back and reflect and see.
[36:53] Thanks be to God for his wisdom and for his grace. We thank you that you give to us as we need, not as we want. We thank you that you keep us in so many ways, in so many situations, and we plead with you, Lord, to have mercy over us, to heal us, to help us, to go before us, Lord, as we seek to give our utmost for you, the one who has given all for us.

Hear our prayers and continue with us, pardoning our sin, in Jesus' name. Amen. We're going to conclude by singing to God's praise in the Scottish Psalter version of Psalm 123.
Psalm 123, we'll sing the whole of this psalm, page 417. O thou that dwellest in the heavens, I lift mine eyes to thee. Behold, as servants' eyes to look, their master's hand to see.
As handmaid's eyes, her mistress' hand, so do her eyes attend upon the Lord our God until to us he mercy send. We'll sing the whole of this psalm to God's praise.
Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. draw my song's hymn song Is set on phil his song He Can her handmaid's Or his mil eyes He made his After He makes his company love his eu heart Heür much He ever Z Thank you his fall He made his fathers fathers made Can tell fathers' How He Is made fathers' fathers' With May His dead Things' vessels' Typ fathers'ateurs' ZANG EN MUZIEK
[39:17] ZANG EN MUZIEK ZANG EN MUZIEK ZANG EN MUZIEK ZANG EN MUZIEK ZANG EN MUZIEK ZANG EN MUZIEK ZANG EN MUZIEK

ZANG EN MUZIEK ZANG EN MUZIEK ZANG EN MUZIEK ZANG EN MUZIEK ZANG EN MUZIEK ZANG EN MUZIEK upon and abide with you all now and forevermore amen you

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