

# We doubt, God loves

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Preacher: Andrew Wingfield

[ 0 : 00 ] We believe, we believe, our God also gives the energy raise with power and authority.  
In heaven, on earth, His praise will be heard in Him, in Him, in Him, in Him. In heaven, on earth, His  
praise will be heard in Him, in Him, in Him, in Him, in Him.  
In heaven, on earth, His praise will be heard in Him, in Him, in Him, in Him, in Him.  
In heaven, on earth, His praise will be heard in Him, in Him, in Him, in Him, in Him. In heaven, on  
earth, His praise will be heard in Him, in Him, in Him, in Him, in Him, in Him, in Him, in Him. Thank  
you.

Thank you.

[ 2 : 39 ] Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

[ 5 : 09 ] Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

[ 7 : 39 ] Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

[ 10 : 09 ] Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

[ 12 : 39 ] Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

[ 15 : 39 ] Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

[ 18 : 09 ] Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

[ 20 : 39 ] Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

Amen.

Thank you.

[ 23 : 09 ] Thank you.

We'll talk about what you're, Ash made you.

And in this one.

We're on the right, I love you.

We're doing that.

[ 26 : 39 ] It's your fault.

It doesn't go.

In the midst of the world.

Amen.

We ask that you would join us for that and invite your friends as well if you feel that they might benefit from that time. Not next week, but the week after that. So you can jump ahead to Sunday's time in the evening, the youth-led service.

[ 28 : 53 ] O'Brien is going to be preaching God's word to us and the youth band will be leading us in worship. But I really encourage you to come. It's going to be a wonderful time and I pray that many of us will be able to be here to receive God's word and that service.

That's Tuesday's time in the evening. Let's pray for the children and young people as they go out to their groups. Father God, we thank you for these children. We thank you for their joy.

We thank you for the words of truth that they speak. We thank you that you can speak through them and we thank you that you draw them to you.

We pray for this morning's time that the leaders would be able to open up your word to them, that there would be a deeper understanding of you this morning, that they would know your love.

Amen. Amen. Right. Good. They're off. Thank you. Thank you.

[ 29 : 51 ] Thank you. Thank you.

Thank you. Thank you. Faithfulness to us in the next song.

Please stand and sing. Faithful one, so unchanging. Thank you.

So I'm changing Ageless one You're my home For me Lord of all I depend on you I call up to you Again and again I call up to you Again and again You are my Lord In times of trouble

You lift me up When I fall down Oh good Lord I've sold Your love Is the anchor My hope Is in you alone Faithful one So unchanging Ageless one You're my home I walk Of peace

[ 33 : 25 ] Lord of all I depend on you I call up to you Again and again I call up to you I call up to you Again and again Again and again You are my road In times of trouble To you I call up to you I call up to you You lift me up When I fall down When I fall down When I fall down When I fall down All through the storm

Your love is the anchor My hope My hope Is in you alone Amen Please take a seat I believe Sam is going to bring us our prayers of intercessions Let us come before our heavenly father this morning in prayer Lord you are the one we depend on

The faithful one The ageless one Our rock of peace We call out to you Again and again And we come now again before you in prayer Lord while so much seems hopeless Help us to know that our hope is in you Revitalize our hope And reignite our passion for your name we pray Father we weep over the devastating situation in Israel In Israel and Gaza We cry out to you for mercy We pray to the Prince of Peace That the conflict may cease We ask that you will show us how to pray And how to respond at such a time as this And father we are grateful for the guidance of our church leadership team And for Christian organizations who have helped us find some words we can use when it is so hard to know what to say

And we come before you now falling on our knees before the one who is sovereign above all When all seems hopeless We know that hope is found in you And so Lord we do pray for peace And we pray for the world leaders who have influence that they may make wise decisions We pray for safety Pray for the civilians that they will be protected from harm We pray for the most vulnerable Children, older people, people with disabilities Please preserve their lives, protect them from the dangers they are facing on a daily basis We pray for all the humanitarian workers who are seeking to provide assistance and medical supplies Please work a miracle for safe access to food, water,

medical supplies, everything that they need to continue living while such destruction is all around We pray for strength For church leaders seeking to lead their people through fear and uncertainty We pray for the Christian communities and faith leaders across the region That you will bring them to a place of unity, connection and mutual understanding That kindness will characterize their actions We pray for hope There will be so much terror and fear And so we pray that you will show them that you are the God of hope Save them Lord from the trauma and violence that they are experiencing We pray for healing We pray for those that have been traumatized or injured We ask that you may heal both their physical and their emotional wounds And bring them deep lasting comfort We pray for the hospitals and medical workers struggling with limited resources and overwhelming needs Lord, please provide all that is needed to treat the most needy

[ 38 : 51 ] And so we bring this prayer for Israel and Gaza before you Dear God, we cry out to you on behalf of the people seriously affected by the conflict in Gaza and Israel Our hearts break at the devastation and suffering that we see And we know it breaks yours too We ask that you would stretch out your mighty hand to bring an end to this war We cry out for people who have been injured or traumatized Who have lost loved ones or their homes Please provide everything they need And be their comfort, their hope, their healer and their safe refuge We pray for your peace to reign We look to you as our saviour and the hope of the world Amen Lord, we also remember those that are suffering in Nepal from the earthquake The natural disaster that has left more than 150 people dead Though it's so easy when the news focuses on the human conflict

To forget the other suffering going on around the world Please be there for those, comfort them, provide them with what they need to cope with this deadliest earthquake since 2015 As we're thinking of those that are suffering, we lift before you the Remembrance Sunday next weekend How timely it is to be remembering those that have paid such an incredible sacrifice that we might be free Please help us to know how to remember and what to dwell on And how to ultimately remember you The God who has given us the ultimate sacrifice to set us free We thank you for the recent light party at Halloween that directed people to the light of the world May they hunger for more light May they follow the star at Christmas to the saviour And we thank you, Lord, that your love is so great for us That we don't find our hope and our happiness on the inside But that you can transform us from the inside out And our happiness is to be found in you

And may you lead us to respond wholeheartedly to worshipping you with our whole lives Our God is faithful He is the unchanging one He is our living hope The rock on which we stand As we come to God's word this morning May we see afresh how much he loves us Amen Thank you so much, Sam, for bringing those prayers Right, Andrew So, we're coming today to start a new sermon series on the book of Malachi Now, I don't know about many of you, but Malachi isn't a book I visit particularly often However, I can pronounce this one If anyone here a few weeks back he saw me struggle over a different name Book of the Bible Yeah, of course So, we thought it might be good to introduce to you the book of Malachi

And ask some questions of Andrew because I'm hoping he knows some of you answers That's a good answer That's a good answer So, if you look at the order of the books of the Bible Malachi sort of fits in towards the end of the Old Testament In amongst a whole bunch of other minor prophets And it can be quite tricky to work out where does it fit in the whole timeline of the Bible Because the temptation is to think, well Malachi is this right at the very end But where does it fit in?

What's going on in Israel at the time? Yeah, so it was written People think it was written about 450 BC So, 450 years before Jesus was born But there's about plus or minus about 20-30 years of uncertainty in that timeline What we do know in terms of where God's people were at This happens after they've been exiled into Babylon They've come back into the Promised Land They've already rebuilt the temple at this time It happens around about the time of Ezra and Nehemiah Although they're not mentioned But it probably comes around about that time or just a little bit after But it's a bit...

[ 43 : 09 ] In this time, the Babylonian Empire is no longer a thing But the Persian Empire is the big thing That's the dominant kind of political force of the time And where the people are at, they're not in a really bad situation It's not like a crisis situation But things aren't that great either So they're kind of in this kind of in-between kind of time Okay, sure, thank you Now, Malachi, who is he?

As far as I'm aware, I don't recognise his name from popping up in other places in the Bible So what do you know about him? Yeah, I can't say a whole lot about that Because as you say, his name doesn't pop up in other books of the Bible His name actually means God's messenger It means my

messenger, a God's messenger So he was a messenger of God Verse 1 of Malachi actually gives us a really helpful It's like what you read on the back cover of a book To explain what the book is all about Maybe turn with me to Malachi chapter 1 So to find Malachi, it is the last book of the Old Testament So you find Matthew and then turn left It's the last book there of the Old Testament I think it's on page 960 My Bible is a slightly older version But I think it's page 960 I think it's 960 Let me just read Malachi chapter 1 Verse 1 It says a prophecy Or in some versions of the Bible it says an oracle The word of the Lord to Israel through Malachi So where it says a prophecy or an oracle That's actually from the Hebrew word

Which means a heavy weight So it's got this actual sense that this is a weighty message This is something really powerful This is something really important That's certainly the sense I get I do encourage you to read the whole of Malachi, it won't take you long There is a sense that there's something really powerful here And it's the word of the Lord It's God's message through Malachi's messenger to Israel So some of the prophecies of the time were to the surrounding nations Not this one This is all about God's people, Israel And how they're behaving So is there any particular focus for Malachi's message to his people?

Does he bring a range of messages, I know some prophets do Or has he got a particular focus? Yeah, well the starting point as we'll see later today in today's sermon If we look onto verse 2, it's a message of God's love I have loved you, that's the starting point And that's really profound, I'll unpack that a bit more What we see is that's the starting point God loves the people The reality is that people have rejected his love They haven't responded to that love And that has led to a kind of downward spiral of sin And that's addressed in the rest of the book But despite all this, despite the people's behaviour There's a remarkable promise If you turn to chapter 3 verse 7 It says, return to me and I will return to you Says the Lord Almighty This amazing promise That God invites people back to turn back to him Even despite their failing and their sin And he goes on to point towards what he's going to do For this rebellious people To be able to have a restored relationship with him And he talks about sending messengers, there's two messengers The first messenger is, he says It's a messenger who will prepare the way Before me And that's referring to John the Baptist And then the second messenger he refers to Is the messenger of the covenant And it's actually talking about the new covenant And the messenger of that new covenant Is Jesus So it points very much forward to the coming of Jesus As one who will restore people in that covenant relationship Exciting It is, it really is Now, my understanding of some of the minor prophets is, I'd say, limited But from what I understand, quite a lot of the prophets They have like a narrative structure Almost like a poetic structure In which they present their message to the people As I read through it, there seemed to be something going on there Could you tell us something about how Malachi is arranged And how that impacts the message?

[ 47 : 02 ] Yeah, there's a really unique structure in Malachi Which is that there's this repeated pattern That first Malachi says what God says This is a statement of truth about God in relation to his people And then it says what the people say in response to that Which is actually like disputing that And like questioning that Did you really say that?

How is that? And then God brings evidence to show that what he said is true So it's actually a bit like a teenager arguing with their parents So we could actually do a role play You up for role play to illustrate this?

Love it, yeah So if one of us is the parent, one of us will be the teenager Which one do you want to be? I feel like I'll be the teenager I thought you might say that Okay, so you'll be the teenager So it goes like that So imagine the scene is like the teenager hasn't tidied their bedroom right So I say, Oli, you haven't done what I've asked you to do What do you mean?

How? You haven't tidied your room What do you mean? It's fine! Look at it! What do you mean I haven't done... It's not fine It's very dirty What do you mean it's really dirty?

I'm quite happy with that You've left clothes all over the floor And there's sweet wrappers and drinks cans all over the floor But... That's where I keep it You get the idea, right?

[ 48 : 18 ] A statement of fact is made And there's just this ongoing kind of argumentative spirit that's dispute And that goes on through the whole story So watch out for that as we go through in the next few weeks Super! I enjoyed that I thought you would So, obviously Malachi coming at the end of the Old Testament And like I said, the message comes from God saying I love you and turn back to me And then pointing forward to John the Baptist and Christ himself This is in some ways a message directly to the people of Israel of that time But how is it relevant to us today?

Yeah, it's really relevant when we look at the situation that the people were in And where are they at? So, as I said, they've come out of the exile Like, they're past the crisis But the reality is that things haven't lived up to their expectations Of coming back into the promised land and rebuilding the temple And all the things that they thought would happen And there's also some financial stuff going on They're financially oppressed, things are difficult financially There's really high taxes imposed by the Persian Empire That are dominating them Repossession of property is a big issue We know that from Nehemiah So, they've got these struggles And there are also massive issues with institutions that govern them Not just politically, but in terms of spiritually, the priests as well These governments, institutions and the kind of religious institutions Were either inept or corrupt or both So, there's this massive sense of disappointment Which leads to scepticism and apathy So, if we think about our situation I think we can see how a lot of that rings true

We've kind of, we've been through the Covid pandemic, that crisis And we're kind of back, but are we really back? And there's just kind of this prevailing sense of disappointment in our culture I don't know if you sense that Disappoint with the government Maybe disappoint with the institutional church as well And this kind of sense of apathy that we're living in at the moment And what Manichai's message to the people is that they were living in kind of patterns of being Like, not actively rebelling against God Like, in a really active way But a kind of passive Just not committing And not applying themselves in worship to God And not doing that wholeheartedly Being uncommitted And in this kind of setting of spiritual and moral apathy That's the message in which God calls His people back into covenant relationship with them To turn back to Him And that means to worship Him wholeheartedly To stop giving Him their leftovers, which they were doing And to handle their material possessions and their relationships In a way which is honouring to God and in response to His love

And I think that's the message which is so relevant for us today So I think it's going to be challenging for us So I hope you're ready to be challenged But it's a wonderful book And I think God is going to speak to us very powerfully through this I can't wait So I'm looking forward to it We're actually going to hear now from the book of Malachi I think Ed is going to come and bring us our reading I'm just going to bring back the podium so that he can Lean on something Thank you Paul The reading today is Malachi chapter 1 verses 1-5 Which as you know is on page 960 A prophecy The word of the Lord to Israel through Malachi I have loved you, says the Lord But you ask, how have you loved us?

Was not Esau Jacob's brother, declares the Lord? Yet I have loved Jacob, but Esau I have hated And I have turned his hill country into a wasteland And left his inheritance to the desert jackals Edom may say, though we have been crushed We will rebuild the ruins But this is what the Lord Almighty says They may build, but I will demolish They will be called the wicked land A people always under the wrath of the Lord You will see it with your own eyes And say, great is the Lord Even beyond the borders of Israel The Lord Almighty Thank you very much, Ed Let's pray As we come to God's word Father God, we thank you so much for your word to us

[ 53 : 05 ] We're just expectant We come to you being expectant Of what you're going to do to us And how you're going to speak to us As we study this book over the next few weeks So I pray now that you would take my words And use them to communicate what you have to say to your people We thank you for your powerful word And I pray that you would allow it to be heard To receive, to be understood in our minds And to transform us from the inside out this morning We pray that in Jesus' name Amen Good, so we're going to unpack the first five verses Of Malachi chapter 1 That was read to us And I've already mentioned verse 1 In the question time A prophecy The word of the Lord to Israel through Malachi It's a powerful message It's God's message to his covenant people Through his messenger Malachi And verse 2, if that kind of gives you what's on the back cover of the book Verse 2 gives you the headline It's the starting point from which everything else flows

Verse 2, I have loved you, says the Lord Now this is an amazing starting point We are loved by God The creator of the cosmos The author of time We are loved by him Now in the translation that we read in our Bibles We read it as past tense But the actual verb in Hebrew implies A past as well as present ongoing action of God So we can read, I have loved you I love you now I will continue to love you This is where it starts This is where it always starts With God He doesn't say, here's what you need to do To get out of this situation Out of this mess It starts I have loved you I love you still I will always love you forever You know, God never asks anything of you Before he lays his love on you And we see this throughout the history of God's people in the Bible We see this in the most

Probably the most significant event in their history up to this point The Exodus God's people, you may know the story, were trapped in slavery in Egypt They were trapped in slavery in Egypt It's written in the book of Exodus God rescued them He sent the plagues, if you remember the story He miraculously led them out of Egypt Now, did he show up in Egypt and give them some commands Give them some laws and say, do this and then you'll get out of here No, the people were completely delivered Before they got a single command And he gave them the Ten Commandments when they came out of Egypt in the desert And he reminded them, I am the God who brought you out of Egypt God has loved us He loves us And that statement is so profound That there needs to be a response to it There's a so what To the statement that God loves us And the rest of the book of Malachi Really is the so what To this sentence That we are loved by God But let's see how the people respond Remember, it's got this structure God says something The people respond And then God gives them evidence So God has said something Let's see how the people respond The second part of verse 2 But you ask, how have you loved us?

How have you loved us? Their shocking response Expresses their doubt of God's love Now there was a game that people used to play with the petals of a flower Now it seems like this is the sort of thing that would appear in a Jane Austen novel Or a period drama where there's a young lady who fancies a dashing gentleman And she picks up a little flower And she pulls out the petals one by one And she says, he loves me He loves me not Anyone seen that, done that in the school playground?

[ 56 : 58 ] He loves me, he loves me not You know, I think sometimes we have that view of God Something good happens and we think, he loves me And then something not so good happens and we say, he loves me not But the Bible wants us to hear these words God loves me, God loves me lots Yes, God loves me, he loves me lots And if you remember nothing else from this morning Please just hold on to this message That God loves you You are loved by God You know, despite all that God had done for them They questioned God's love How have you loved us? They said Now there are seasons in our life For most of us when that is how we respond We may be dealing with disappointment or pain And when we read that God says I love you We say, huh? Yeah? Really?

Show me how? How can my life be so hard? How can my heart be broken like this? How can I be dealing with this stuff? And you say, I have loved you Well, let's just think, how else could they have responded?

You know, they could have looked back at all God had done for them And given thanks for his goodness Like the writer of Psalm 136 Give thanks to the Lord for he is good His love endures forever Many other psalms like that The psalms are full of remembering what God has done And praising him for his love But what the people hear What they say is like an anti-psalm It's like the opposite of a psalm They've forgotten what God has done for them And they deny his love by asking this question Now I just want to pause for a moment here and clarify something I'm not saying that we can never ask difficult questions of God And cry out to him when things are difficult in our life That is, there's a word for that and it's called lament And the psalms and other parts of the Bible are full of that Look at Psalm 13 later on for a good example of lament These psalms encourage us to cry out to God And to ask him, you've loved us in the past Where is your love today?

But they encourage us to wait on God And to search the scriptures for his response But what the people are actually doing when they said But how have you loved us? What they were doing was actually sulking Now kids are very good at sulking Have you ever seen a young child sulk? Because they couldn't get the toy they wanted Or they didn't get their way in the game they were playing You know, they make a big fuss, maybe a tantrum And then they sit down And then after the tantrum you get this kind of look on their face And we might leave them for a while As parents or adults kind of looking after them And then later on we might try to distract them out of the sulk With a positive gesture We might try to invite them to join in with a different game That we've started to play with other children But that child, if they're sulking If they're still in a sulk They will shun you They will keep that look on their face And they will give you an unreasonably negative response Like, that's a rubbish game I always lose that game If you invite them to play the game Even though they know deep down that that game will be so fun And that will be really good for them Little kids are good at sulking Teenagers, I've noticed, are also good at sulking It turns out that 45-year-old

men are also very good at sulking Anybody here ever sulk?

[ 60 : 27 ] Now, before not putting your hand up You need to look at the person who lives with you Anyone sulk? Anyone ever sulk? Okay, I'm glad I'm not the only one I'm glad I'm not the only one That encourages me You know, we do sulk When we sulk When we sulk, it's because we feel wronged And we hold someone else responsible for that And we withhold our affection from that other person And we withhold our engagement and commitment from that other person How did the people that Malachi was talking to end up sulking?

Well, this started in disappointment So I mentioned this when Oli was asking me about the message You know, life was a little bit tough For the people that Malachi was talking to They'd rebuilt the temple, but kind of things hadn't happened How they expected They didn't have the life they expected after going back to the promised land And rebuilding the temple Life was hard, financially it was hard It was a cost of living crisis There were high taxes Other people, when they looked at other nations around them They were being way more successful Their disappointment led to sulking And their sulking led to doubting God's love And their doubting God's love led to other sins Which is what the rest of the book is about As we'll see over the next few weeks So the people questioned God's statement of love And God responds then Remember the structure God says something, the people respond, they question it And then God gives evidence to back up what he said in the first place So God gives some evidence of his love In the second part of verse 2 and into verse 4

Now we will find some of this evidence quite surprising Just to warn you So the first thing that God is saying about his love Is that it's a choosing kind of love A choosing love Some people who have written about this have referred to this as an electing love But electing means choosing So it says In verse 2 Was not Esau Jacob's brother, declares the Lord Yet I have loved Jacob But Esau I have hated Let's unpack this a little bit Because it's not easy for us to understand God chose Abraham Out of the chaos of the ancient world To make through him a chosen people God's chosen people who would bless all nations Abraham's son Isaac Had two sons, twin boys Esau and Jacob And one of them would carry forward That promise of being a nation Specifically chosen by God to be a special people And to bless all nations Now, everyone expected that it would be Esau Because he was the older of the two sons They were twins, so he came out first That's how the world worked in those times

But God had already chosen The younger one, Jacob The younger one, Jacob To inherit the promise He told the twins' mother, Rebekah In Genesis 25, verse 23 Two nations are in your womb Two peoples from within you will be separated One people will be stronger than the other And the elder will serve the younger So Jacob, the younger son Was the one who God had chosen to inherit the promise Which goes against how people expected it would happen Now, something in our human nature Makes it difficult for us to understand this idea Of choosing one rather than the other Because we love to think that we earn the blessings that we get So let me give you an example If I was to say, let's play a game You know I love to play games here in church So I might say, we're going to play a game And it's going to be this side, my left of the church Down this side of the hall You're on one team And this side, you're on another team And we're going to play a game Now suppose I then say, actually, you know what We don't have time to play the game So I'm just going to pick a winner

So I'm going to choose this side You're the winners And everyone on this side gets a chocolate bar as your prize Okay, I'm sorry I didn't actually bring chocolate bars You just have to imagine So imagine I've given you a chocolate bar on this side How do you feel about that?

[ 64 : 26 ] Well, you're probably thinking Well, I'm glad I sat on this side of the hall But you can't say, oh yeah, didn't I do great? Wasn't I really great? Because you haven't done anything to earn that chocolate bar, have you? We didn't even play the game, I just gave it to you Do you see? It was just a matter of choosing Neither team deserved the chocolate bar Because neither team did anything Neither team completed the game Now Jacob didn't get chosen over Esau Because he was a better person We spent some time studying Jacob In our sermon series, I think it was about a year ago By all accounts, Jacob was a scumbag Is what we discovered during that time You wouldn't want him to work for you If you did hire him, you'd fire him pretty soon He wasn't honest Esau was equally as bad, he was a scumbag too Neither of them deserved any blessing But in his grace, God chose one of them to receive it And this helps us to understand verse 3 Which is hard to understand Because it says I have loved Jacob, but Esau I have hated What do we make of that?

Now we need to understand this as a comparative statement God pours out so much blessing on Jacob Not because he deserves it What he deserves is punishment But because God has chosen to bless him and his descendants He's chosen to do it that way By contrast, God has given Esau over to what Esau deserves Which is punishment and rejection And the two actions by God are so different That the outcome to Esau looks like hate in comparison to love It looks like hate in comparison to love because it's so different It's about God's actions and not about God's emotions It's a hyperbolic statement He's making an exaggeration to emphasise the point Jesus talks about hating your parents Later on in Luke's Gospel If anyone comes to me and does not hate their father and mother Wife and children, brothers and sisters Yes, even their own life Such a person cannot be my disciple Jesus didn't hate his parents He wasn't calling us to hate his parents But he was making a comparative statement The extent to which we love Jesus

Must be so much more Than the extent to which we love our parents That by comparison it looks like love and hate Do you see? It's a comparison Now when we think about Jacob and Esau What's amazing is not that God hated Esau That he cast out Esau What's amazing is that he didn't do that to Jacob And that he chose Jacob Because Jacob was a scumbag And he deserved to be cast out too So in Malachi 1, verse 3 As we read on This was the fate of Esau and his descendants I have turned his hill country into a wasteland And left his inheritance to the desert jackals Verse 4 Edom may say Though we have been crushed We will rebuild the ruins But this is what the Lord Almighty says They may build but I will demolish They will be called the wicked land The people always under the wrath of God How do you show your love to your beloved?

Taking them out for dinner perhaps? Buying them roses, chocolates? I feel like there used to be an advert I think it was for chocolates That said something like Nothing says I love you like Terry's All Gold Or whatever it was I tried to Google this I couldn't find it So maybe I'm mistaken But I feel like there was an advert It says nothing says I love you like You know, we don't tend to say Nothing says I love you like Casting people into the desert And demolishing cities It just doesn't really work, does it?

But the difficult truth for us today Is that God Is a God of justice And he acts against that which is evil And that which is opposed To his good and loving character Now you may be disappointed If you came here to meet with the warm cuddly God Not one who burns territories to the ground But this is an aspect of God That we have to try to grasp If we're to fully grasp His love So Esau's descendants The nation of Edom Grew and they faced struggles Edom was oppressed by Babylon In the same way as the nation of Judah As God's people However, Edom was not the object of God's Electing, choosing love Unlike the descendants of Jacob So the people listening to Malachi Knew that unlike Edom God had helped them to rebuild their city Despite their sin God didn't remove his long-term plan To bless his people And to bless all nations Through their nation So the answer to the question How have you loved us?

[ 68 : 51 ] We could summarise that by saying With patience And with mercy And with grace That is how God had loved his people With patience, with mercy And with grace God was patient with his chosen people Even though they were rebellious and disobedient God was pointing out God was pointing out that they were guilty Of the same thing as Edom But He has not abandoned them Even though that's exactly what they actually deserve And as they remember the covenant promise As He says in verse 5 You will see it with your own eyes and say Great is the Lord Even beyond the borders of Israel So how do we respond To God's message today When He says to us I have loved you How has He loved you?

Well firstly, He's chosen you If you're here today No matter what your stage of the journey That you're at with God It's because He has done something in your heart And He did that first Before you did anything towards Him Whether you're recognising it or not He has done something in your heart It always starts with God He loves you with a choosing love But the second aspect of God's love That we'll see revealed As we progress through the book of Malachi Is that He loves us with a saving love He loves us with a saving love Romans chapter 5 verse 8 Says this But God demonstrates His own love for us in this While we were still sinners Christ died for us While we were still sinners Christ died for us God sent Jesus, His precious Son To die for us so that we could inherit the promise So that we could be His people So that we could be called His children He did that before we turned to Him Just as He chose Jacob before Jacob had done anything This is the answer for us today

To the question, how has God loved us? He gave up the one that was most precious to Him He allowed Him to die a horrific and cruel death So that He could welcome you into His family So that you can call Him Father So that you can have your eternal future secured And so you can live this life free from disappointment Free from guilt Free from the power of your own sin And your own rebellious heart You know, often we doubt God's love Because we have a false sense of entitlement We often doubt His love because we have a false sense of entitlement We say, I worked hard to get where I am today To have the home I have To have the car I have I'm a hard worker, I've earned this Well, you know, there are other people who worked harder than you Who don't have what you have You ever think about that?

You have what you have by the grace of God You might say, I've worked hard at my marriage, my family I've made good decisions, I deserve to be happy It's not because you're good at it Other people have done the same And they're not in the situation that you are It's by the grace of God But we live like that Thinking that we're entitled to stuff Until something goes wrong Until the bank account runs dry Or someone close to us gets sick Or our relationships break down And then we say Who's to blame for this?

Well, I can't blame me I'm great, I'm awesome I'm a hard worker I make good decisions So we blame God We deserve something better than this So God must have done something wrong He loves me?

[ 72 : 23 ] Yeah, right Why isn't He giving me what I deserve right now? Well, friends God isn't giving you what you deserve Because you deserve to be destroyed And so do I And we start to realise how amazing that saving love is When we realise what we actually deserve We deserve to be destroyed You know, a lot of time we actually treat God like a Like a genie in a lamp or a fairy Who we can just ask for what we think we need And then blame Him if we don't get it And then what happens is we live in disappointment Just like the people that Malachi was talking to We live in disappointment, we sulk, we doubt And instead of engaging with our doubts and wrestling with them As the Psalms encourage us to do We turn our back on God Not in an overly rebellious way But in a really passive way Which is really dangerous It's a shift in our hearts Which affects everything else And we stop committing

And we disengage And it's poisonous It affects us and it affects those around us Is that us? When God says, I have loved you Does God love you?

Often we try to answer that question in terms of How do I feel? Or in the way that God has met our needs Or in terms of comparing ourselves with others If we do that, we will likely doubt God's love But God says, I have loved you And He says, this is how I have loved you Look at my son hanging on the cross This is how God demonstrates His love for us in this That while we were still sinners Christ died for us Do we question that?

We don't question that by our words We wouldn't be brave enough to But by our inaction By our passivity By our lack of commitment To God and His people And His purposes We insult the God who loves us With an unrelenting and eternal love Today, are we questioning this love?

Or are we turning towards God And saying, great is the Lord Thank you, Jesus I am so sorry I have to realise that what I deserve Is to be cast out To be punished To be destroyed The overwhelming and convincing proof Of God's love Is that He has not dealt with us As our sins deserve But has had mercy on us In Christ Jesus By sending Him to die for us We are going to have a bit of time To respond to this message now I am just going to invite Paul And the musicians To come up And as we start playing The next song We are going to have a bit of time And space for us to Respond to God's message To us Because God Says to us today I love you How do you respond to that love?

[ 75 : 29 ] If you are honest Do you question that love in your heart? Do you hold back from Fully committing to God? To fully worshipping with your whole life? To fully worshipping with your whole life? Because somewhere deep down You feel let down by God?

We don't deserve anything good from God What we actually deserve is death and punishment But God says I have loved you Look at my son He took what you deserved He died for you Because I love you I love you I love you more than you can imagine So don't doubt me When things are difficult Or you don't get what you want God says to us He says Turn to me I love you I will carry you We are going to sing As the musicians lead us After this song We are going to have a time of prayer ministry There will be an opportunity To be prayed for By one of our elders Or deacons Or life group leaders If those people who are going to be praying Could come forward during this song And just pray for one another That would be great So we are prepared for that Let's respond to God

as we sing How great the chasm Let's sing together Please stand if you are able To be continued If you are able

To be continued To be continued Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen.

[ 79 : 46 ] Amen. Amen.

Jesus Christ, my living hope. Hallelujah. Praise the one who set me free.

Hallelujah. Death has lost its grip on me. You have broken every chain.

There's salvation in your name. Jesus Christ, my living hope. Jesus Christ, my living hope.

Oh God, you are my living hope. Let's just remain standing if you're able as we respond to God.

[ 81 : 45 ] Thank you to those of us who've joined us on the live stream this morning. We're going to stop the live stream at this point, but thank you so much for joining us. We do hope we'll see you soon. Stephen's just going to play some music and I'm just going to lead us in a prayer.

God, we do thank you for the way that you've been speaking to us.

I just sense that you've got business to do with us today. I thank you for the very simple message that you've given us, that you love us, and that you call us to turn back to you.

Or for some of us, you might be calling us to turn to you for the first time. And Lord, we just want to say to you today that we are sorry for not responding to your love.

We're sorry that we've doubted your love. We're sorry that we've looked too much at our personal circumstances instead of what you've done for us. And sometimes we've tried to earn your love.

[ 82 : 58 ] Sometimes we've tried to achieve and to earn. Because for many of us, it's easier to believe that I'm useful than I'm loved. And we think we have to try to make ourselves lovable.

But we recognise, God, that is not where you start. And you've told us today, I have loved you. And we want to step into your love.

You've reminded us that you are holy. And you are opposed to sin and to evil. And you are opposed to the rebellion in our lives.

And we have ongoing sin that we tolerate and that we think it's no big deal. But we recognise that that's not what you say.

And the sin in our lives hurts you. And it hurts us. It is rotting our soul. But we thank you that Romans 5 tells us that it was while we were still sinners that you sent your precious son to die for us.

[ 84 : 05 ] Thank you that Jesus did that for us. And thank you that he knew what he was buying on the cross. He knew us. He knows us. And thank you that you always start, I love you.

That you are so committed to us. And some of us will say, I'm in a season where it's really difficult to believe that God sees all of me and that he still loves me.

I pray that your Holy Spirit would show us deep down that we are so loved by you. And some of us need to repent. And that's not a nasty word.

That's an invitation to fuller life with you. So give us power to do that, we pray. Thank you for your invitation to us. We don't deserve it, but we're so happy to receive it.

Help us to respond. We pray. Come Holy Spirit. I just pray that that you would come and minister among us now to turn our hearts towards you, to help us respond rightly to you.

[ 85 : 07 ] That we would know that we're welcomed back by your unchanging, eternal love. Come Holy Spirit, we pray. Amen.

Could it be that the thing God wanted you to hear this morning is that? Him saying, I have loved you. And I just sense that for someone here, or maybe this applies for more than one of you, God is saying, stop wasting your life sulking.

And there's just a picture, maybe the toddler I described earlier, having that sulk, but there's a time when, yeah, after all the shunning and the rejection, the questioning, the toddler just accepts the love of the parent and is just embraced by the parent.

And the sulk ends and they just receive that love. And I think that's a picture that is for some of us today, that God calls us just to receive his love, to receive that embrace.

So, we'd like to invite you to take the opportunity to come to the front and one of our brothers and sisters would pray for you. If you're not able to come up to the front, maybe you can just wave or send someone and we'll come to you if you're not able physically to come to the front.

[ 86 : 29 ] Ollie, where's Ollie? Just explain the logistics of how we're going to do this. Thank you. So, we want to keep this as open as possible. As you can, come to the front.

We've got people over here, people over here who will be delighted to pray for you. You might be in a position where you know exactly what you want prayer for. You might be in a position where there's just too much and you have no idea where to start and just come forward and someone will, God is speaking to you today and they will pray for you.

Some of you, it might have absolutely no idea, but God wants you to know that he loves you and just come up to the front. So, there's spaces down the sides here, there's down the middle. If we try and keep the avenue free so people can come forward as they feel able to and, yeah, remain seated, you may stand.

There's songs playing, meditate on those words as they play in the melody. But, invite everyone to come and receive prayer this morning. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

[ 87 : 45 ] Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen.

Amen. Christ will hold me fast When the tempter would prevail He will hold me fast I could never keep my hope Through life's fearful path For my love is soft and cold He must hold me fast He will hold me fast He will hold me fast For my Savior loves me so He will hold me fast Those He saves are His delight Christ will hold me fast Precious in His holy sight He will hold me fast He'll not let my soul be lost His promises shall last Bought by Him at such a cost

[ 91 : 59 ] He will hold me fast He will hold me fast He will hold me fast For my Savior loves me so He will hold me fast For my Savior loves me so For my life He bled and died Christ will hold me fast Justice has been satisfied He will hold me fast He will hold me fast He will hold me fast He will hold me fast He will hold me fast Raised with Him to end His life He will hold me fast Till the faith is turned to sight

When he comes at last He will hold me fast He will hold me fast For my Savior loves me so He will hold me fast He will hold me fast He will hold me fast For my Savior loves me so He will hold me fast For my Savior loves me so

If you do happen to have children They might want you If you have children and you haven't had prayer yet Maybe come and receive some prayer now Before you get your children We are going to continue in time of prayer And ministry for quite a while yet So if you haven't had the opportunity to come forward There's still plenty of time to do so I've been having a little bit From the moment that I wake up Until I lay my head Oh, I will see Of the goodness of God Because all my life You have been faithful And all my life

You have been so, so good With every breath that I am able Oh, I will see Oh, I will see Of the goodness of God I love your voice You have led me through the fire And in darkest night You were close like no other I've known you as a father I've known you as a friend And I have lived In the goodness of God Yeah And all my life You have been faithful And all my life

You have been so, so good With every breath that I am able Oh, I will see Of the goodness of God Yeah Your goodness is running out It's running out to me Your goodness is running out It's running out to me With my life fade down I'm surrendering now I give you everything Everything I don't see I don't believe

[ 97 : 19 ] I don't believe My life fade down I surrender now. I give you everything. Cause you're good.

Cause you're running. And you keep running after me. And all my life you have been faithful.

And all my life you have been so, so good. With every breath that I am able.

Oh, I'm gonna sing of the goodness of God. I'm gonna sing. I'm gonna sing. Oh, God.

Cause all my life you have been faithful. And all my life you have been so, so good.

[ 98 : 32 ] With every breath that I am able. Oh, I'm gonna sing. Oh, I'm gonna sing. Oh, the goodness of God.

Oh, I'm gonna sing. Oh, the goodness of God. Oh, the goodness of God.

Oh, the goodness of God. Oh, the goodness of God. Oh, the goodness of God. Oh, the goodness of God. Oh, the goodness of God. Oh, the goodness of God. Oh, the goodness of God.

Oh, thank God. Oh, I'm gonna sing by pine. Oh, the goodness of God. Father, we thank you and praise you.

We thank you that you know the hearts and needers of each and every one of us. We pray this week that you would remind us of your promises, of your love for us and how deeply you hold us.

[ 99 : 34 ] Hold us fast, we pray. Praise you that you never let us go. Give us boldness in the knowledge of your saving grace to be your witnesses this week.

Amen. But please do stay if you need to. Amen.