



CENTER FOR STEWARDSHIP

The Book of Malachi

————— *a sermon series* —————

The Book of Malachi

TABLE OF CONTENTS

05 / **OVERVIEW OF GOALS:** Sunday Morning Bible Study

07 / **WEEK ONE:** Overview of Malachi

Historical Issues	07
Genre	08
Outline	08
Chapter Review	10
Sermon Series	10
Sermon Notes	13
Sermon Text	15

23 / **WEEK TWO:** Election and Covenants

Covenants	23
Election	24
Sermon Series	25
Sermon Notes	26
Sermon Text	29

35 / **WEEK THREE:** The Day of the Lord

Sermon Series	37
Sermon Notes	38
Sermon Text	41

47 / **WEEK FOUR:** Turning our Hearts Toward Home

Our Fascination with Self	48
Sermon Series	49
Sermon Notes	50
Sermon Text	53

Overview of Goals

SUNDAY MORNING BIBLE STUDY

1 INTEGRATE PREACHING & TEACHING

- Year 1 / The Year of Isaiah - Catechism (Ten Commandments)
- Year 2 / The Year of Paul - Catechism (Apostles Creed)
- Year 3 / The Year of Moses - Catechism (Lord's Prayer)
- Year 4 / The Year of Psalms - Catechism (Holy Baptism)
- Year 5 / The Year of John - Catechism (Holy Supper)
- Year 6 / The Year of Luke - Catechism (Office of the Keys)
- Year 7 / The Year of Wisdom - Catechism (Ten Commandments)
- Year 8 / The Year of Jeremiah - Catechism (Apostles Creed)

2 ENCOURAGE STUDY & REFLECTION DURING THE WEEK

3 MOVE FROM INFORMATION TO TRANSFORMATION

4 CREATE A WARM AND LOVING LEARNING ENVIRONMENT

5 INVITE FRIENDS



Week One

OVERVIEW OF MALACHI

The term “apathy” literally means “without passion.” What is a household duty that, try as you might, you never find yourself passionate about?

HISTORICAL ISSUES

Malachi’s superscription is extremely brief. No information is stated, such as the prophet’s ancestry, location of preaching, or historical context. The book does not mention Judahite officials, high priests, or foreign rulers. However the issues in Malachi—such as the need for a purified priesthood, the importance of paying tithes, and concern for the Levites—are very similar to those addressed in the fifth century by Ezra and Nehemiah. In light of these connections, the book of Malachi probably has its origins at this time in Persian Yehud.

While little is known about the life and times of Malachi, the prophet gives us some clues. In Malachi 1:8 he employs the Persian term governor. The temple has been rebuilt (Mal 1:10; 3:1, 10) and has been up and running for some time, as evidenced by the people’s disillusionment as well as the priest’s weariness and apathy. Edomites have suffered a major setback (Mal 1:3–4) and, though this invasion is difficult to date, it seems likely to have taken place in the middle of the fifth century. Malachi has a lot in common with the book of Nehemiah. Both address the following issues: tithing (Mal 3:7–10; Neh 10:37–39); divorce and mixed marriages (Mal 2:10–17; Neh 10:30; 13:23–29); the Sabbath (Mal 2:8–9; 4:4; Neh 13:15–22); corrupt priests (Mal 1:6–2:9; Neh 13:7–9); and social

ills (Mal 3:5; Neh 5:1–13). Nehemiah served as governor of Persian Yehud from 445–433 BC and returned to institute further reforms in late 429 or early 428 (Neh 13:6–31).

GENRE

Just like Nahum and Habakkuk, the book of Malachi identifies itself as an oracle or an explanation of how Yahweh is going to intervene in human affairs. Within this genre, Malachi employs twenty-two rhetorical questions in fifty-five verses. Some have therefore called the prophet's style catechetical, Socratic, or didactic. Malachi presents an idea that seeks to correct an aberrant belief or behavior (thesis). This is followed by the people's rationale for their sin (antithesis). The prophet concludes with evidence showing the people their sin (defense). The outline below therefore follows the majority of scholars who describe Malachi in terms of six arguments by Yahweh, structured in terms of an introduction, question, and answer. The prophet's concern, though, is pastoral: Malachi wants people to repent and embrace Yahweh's mercy and love.

OUTLINE OF MALACHI

Title (Mal 1:1)

I. God's Love (Mal 1:2–5)

- A. God loves Jacob (Mal 1:2)
- B. Yahweh defeats Judah's enemies, especially Edom (Mal 1:3–5)

II. Condemnation Of The Priests (Mal 1:6–2:9)

- A. Yahweh is Father and Master of all (Mal 1:6a)
- B. "How have we despised your name?" (Mal 1:6b)
- C. Condemnation
 - 1. Priests have placed defiled food on the altar (Mal 1:7–14)
 - 2. Priests "have caused many to stumble by your instruction" (Mal 2:1–9)

III. The People Must Be Faithful Through Proper Marriage Practices (Mal 2:10–16)

- A. Yahweh is the Father and Creator of all (Mal 2:10a)
- B. “Why then are we faithless to one another?” (Mal 2:10b)
- C. The men have “married the daughter of a foreign god” (Mal 2:11-16)

IV. Yahweh Will Establish Justice Through His Messenger (Mal 2:17–3:5)

- A. “You have wearied Yahweh with your words” (Mal 2:17a)
- B. “How have we wearied him?” (Mal 2:17b)
- C. The people claim that Yahweh delights in wickedness (Mal 2:18)
- D. God will send his messenger to establish justice (Mal 3:1–3:5)

V. Repentance (Mal 3:6–12)

- A. “For I Yahweh do not change” (Mal 3:6)
- B. “How shall we return?” (Mal 3:7)
- C. “Bring full tithes to the storehouse” (Mal 3:8–12)

VI. The Command To Observe Yahweh’s Word (Mal 3:13–4:6)

- A. “Your words have been hard against me” (Mal 3:13a)
- B. “How have we spoken against you?” (Mal 3:13b)
- C. The people have said, “It is vain to serve God” (Mal 3:14–15)
- D. The ones who fear Yahweh are remembered by him (Mal 3:16–4:3)
- E. Final words (Mal 4:4–6)
 - 1. A call to observe the Torah of Moses (Mal 4:4)
 - 2. “Behold, I will send you Elijah” (Mal 4:5–6)

CHAPTER REVIEW

Each group is to answer the following for their chapter:

- List all of the proper nouns (i.e. Malachi, Jacob, etc.) and define –
- List the key words (normally located through repetition) –
- State the comparisons and contrasts –
- State the chapter’s theme –
- What is the book of Malachi about?
- Based upon his book, if Malachi was addressing your apathy what would he say?

SERMON SERIES: MONEY MANAGEMENT ACCORDING TO MALACHI

WEEK ONE: Looking in the right places makes faithful stewards.

OT: Malachi 1:6–14

EP: Ephesians 1:15–23

GO: Luke 12:13–21

TODAY'S THEME:

We find ourselves caught between competing loyalties all the time. It is a gut-wrenching position, torn between two people, two causes, and two goals. Yet we also deceive ourselves into thinking that we can bridge the gap, reconcile the divergent paths, and give our heart to the world while reserving a part of it for the Lord. When the conflict is between money and the Kingdom of God, there is more than painful choice at stake. If we choose the kingdom of the moment with its fleeting pleasures and momentary glories, we forsake what is God's eternal gift. Today, as we begin a new series in Malachi, we see that looking in the right places makes us faithful stewards and focused singularly upon Christ our Lord.

CALL TO WORSHIP

(Selected verses from 2 Corinthians 8–9) [NOTE: please use this in all four worship services]

P: For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sake he became poor, so that we by his poverty might become rich.

C: The point is this: whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows bountifully will also reap bountifully.

P: Each one must give as he has decided in his heart, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver.

C: And God is able to make all grace abound to you, so that having all sufficiency in all things at all times, you may abound in every good work.

P: So that you will be enriched in every way to be generous in every way.

C: For the ministry of this service is not only supplying the needs of the saints but is also overflowing in many thanksgivings to God.

ALL: Thanks be to God for his inexpressible gift!

CONFESSION AND ABSOLUTION

P: Holy God, merciful Father,

C: We poor sinners confess our sins before You and plead guilty for all the evil we have said, thought, and done.

P: We have lived as if You did not matter and we mattered most.

C: We have not honored Your name nor have we been faithful in giving our best for your kingdom.

P: We have resisted the impulse of Your love and become miserly and stingy.

C: We have not loved You above all things nor have we loved our neighbors as ourselves.

P: We are sorry for all our sins.

C: We seek Your mercy through Jesus Christ to forgive our sins and lead us to amend our sinful lives.

P: Almighty God in His mercy has given His Son to die for you and for His sake forgives you all your sins. As a called and ordained servant of Christ, and by His authority, I therefore forgive you all your sins in the name of the Father and of the + Son and of the Holy Spirit.

ALL: Amen.

P: May He who began this good work within You bring it to completion on the day of our Lord Jesus Christ. His peace be with you.

PRAYER OF THE DAY

P: The Lord be with you.

C: And also with you.

P: Let us pray. Almighty God our heavenly Father, You love us and call us away from our fascination with material gain, You redeem us through the sacrificial death of Your Son, and You set us apart by Baptism to live holy lives to Your glory. Make genuine our repentance, increase within

us generous stewardship, and enable us to live to the praise of Your glory in all that we say and do; through whom You live and reign with the Father and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

ALL: Amen.

SERMON HYMN – 702

SERMON NOTES

“Money Management According to Malachi: Part 1” Malachi 1:6-14

MALACHI'S MAIN MESSAGE:

We have an all- powerful yet all- loving father

THE EYES OF STEWARDSHIP –

1. LOOK UPWARD

“A son honors his father, and a servant his master. If then I am a father, where is my honor? And if I am a master, where is my fear? says the LORD of hosts.” (Malachi 1:6)

2. LOOK OUTWARD

“When you offer blind animals in sacrifice, is that not evil? And when you offer those that are lame or sick, is that not evil? Present that to your governor; will he accept you or show you favor? says the LORD of hosts.” (Mal 1:8; cf. Ex 22:31; Lv 1:3, 10; Dt 15:21).

3. LOOK FORWARD

“For from the rising of the sun to its setting my name will be great among the nations, and in every place incense will be offered to my name, and a pure offering. For my name will be great

among the nations, says the LORD of hosts.” (Mal 1:11)

“For I am a great King, says the LORD of hosts, and my name will be feared among the nations.” (Mal 1:14)

4. LOOK INWARD

“But you say, ‘What a weariness this is,’ and you snort at it.” (Mal 1:13a)

“I do not cease to give thanks for you, remembering you in my prayers, that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give you a spirit of wisdom and of revelation in the knowledge of him, having the eyes of your hearts enlightened, that you may know what is the hope to which he has called you, what are the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints.” (Eph 1:16-18)

FOR NEXT WEEK:

Read Malachi 3:1–4 and answer these questions:

1. How does John the Baptist fulfill the description of the messenger?
2. How does God’s refining work strengthen your stewardship?
3. What do “offerings of righteousness” look like in your life?

PRAYERS OF THE CHURCH

Pastor: Let us pray. O Lord, Your anger burns against sin and we poor sinners stand before You ashamed and exposed. Bring us to sorrow over our sins, lead us to confession and repentance, and fill us with Your Holy Spirit and faith that we may rejoice in the mercy of Your Son, where redemption may be found; through Jesus Christ, our Lord.

C: Open the eyes of our heart, Lord.

P: Blessed Lord, You have given us many and great blessings. Keep us from being consumed by the things of this life. Rather, teach us to be wise stewards using all gifts in this life for Your glory and for the work of Your kingdom.

C: Open the eyes of our heart, Lord.

P: Blessed Lord, give to Your Church faithful pastors and leaders who will speak Your Word in its fullness and call to repentance all who sin. Bless this congregation and all our members that we may faithfully support Your work among us with our financial resources, talents, and resources that come from Your bounty.

C: Open the eyes of our heart, Lord.

P: Blessed Lord, bring an end to war and violence. Raise up in this nation and in all nations good and wise leaders who will pursue justice, preserve freedom, and protect the weak and the unborn. Bless those in our armed forces who protect us here and throughout the world. **C:** Open the eyes of our heart, Lord.

P: Blessed Lord, You have placed us in homes, vocations, and communities that we may show forth Your Gospel in words and in works. Give us every aid of Your Spirit that our witness may be faithful and our works fruitful.

C: Open the eyes of our heart, Lord.

P: All things are Yours, blessed Lord, but You have granted us these things to use and manage for Your glory. Receive now also our prayers for we trust in Your mercy and have confidence that You will grant us all things needful, through Jesus Christ, our Lord.

ALL: Amen.

SILENT PRAYER: LSB 702, stanza 1

SERMON TEXT

“Money Management According to Malachi: Part 1” Malachi 1:6-14

When our three children were much smaller I remember a time when we were at McDonalds. And this wasn't any ol' McDonalds; this was the big one, the golden arches in St. Louis on the Mississippi River. Our daughter Lori ordered french fries. I didn't. That was a big mistake!

McDonald's french fries have a way of getting the best of me. The aroma overcomes me until I think that I will die if I don't have one.

So I reached over and grabbed one of Lori's french fries. And when I did she grabbed my hand and said, "Mine!"

Two thoughts immediately came to mind. First, this child doesn't know that I have control over those fries. I could take them all away from her in a flash. And, I must confess that in a moment of weakness, I continued to think, "I could buy twenty orders of jumbo french fries and bury Lori Beth Lessing in fries!"

Second this child doesn't know where these french fries came from. I ordered them. I bought them. I carried them to the table. Lori has all of these delicious McDonald's french fries because of her kind and caring father!

Malachi and postexilic Persian Yehud . . .

WE HAVE AN ALL-POWERFUL YET ALL-LOVING FATHER

And this Father, through Malachi, addresses our obsession with one word, mine! These fries, this investment, this house, this car; they are all mine! The words of Billy Joel sum up where we are: "I don't care what you say, this is my life!"

THE EYES OF STEWARDSHIP –

1. LOOK UPWARD

"A son honors his father, and a servant his master. If then I am a father, where is my honor? And if I am a master, where is my fear? says the LORD of hosts." (Mal 1:6)

God is called Father twelve times in the OT. In the NT he is called Father over five hundred times. Jesus came to show us that our God is our Father. He loves, listens, corrects, rebukes, forgives, provides, and sacrifices for us. Our heavenly Father has hopes and desires for his children, as well as the authority to redirect our lives when we do not conform to his will. Nothing happens without

our Father knowing about it (Mt 6:4, 6, 8, 19; Lk 16:15). Paul asserts that through the Holy Spirit we join Jesus in calling God “Abba Father” (Rom 8:15; Gal 4:6).

A father comes to the aid of his children.

My dad did this for me over and over again. Once, when we were skiing in Winter Park, Colorado I convinced my dad into going down a Black slope. Green was for wimps; Blue was for girls; Red was for men; Black slopes were for real men!

I started skiing down the Black slope like Jean Claude Lessing. Problem. I hit a patch of ice and at that precise moment my lower ski slipped out from under me and I tumbled head over heels and slid more than three hundred feet down the mountain. As I fell, I created what we called a “garage sale”—scattered skis, poles, hat, gloves, goggles. I was convinced that the end of the world had arrived!

And my dad? He had every right to chew me out, lecture me, and let me have it. But no. He patiently began picking up the pieces and then helped put me back together.

Exodus 4:22. Gospel for Israel because Yahweh is their Father. Hosea 11:1. All the more for us. **אֱלֹהֵינוּ**, master (Mal 1:6) is a plural form connoting that Yahweh is the sovereign of heaven and earth. However, the priesthood of Malachi’s time no longer revered this Lord. Instead, they offered impure sacrifices and led the people astray with their teachings. Because the priests dishonored Yahweh, Judahites also fell into sin. They broke the spiritual unity of their national family and severed the bonds of their own families. These sins became manifest when Israelite men married unbelieving Gentiles (Mal 2:11). This was a strictly forbidden practice (Ex 34:16) and the downfall of King Solomon (1 Kgs 11:1–8; Neh 13:23–27).

This Father is also our Master; plural of majesty = Master of Masters; Lord of Lords; King of Kings; Father of all Fathers. He is the ultimate authority and he commands all things for the sake of us, his children.

2. LOOK OUTWARD

“When you offer blind animals in sacrifice, is that not evil? And when you offer those that are lame or sick, is that not evil? Present that to your governor; will he accept you or show you favor? says the LORD of hosts.” (Mal 1:8; cf. Lv 1:3, 10; Dt 15:21).

Exodus 22:31 – mauled animals were unfit for human consumption and were to be thrown to the dogs!

I remember when I used to give offerings like this. I was in college and the offering plate would come down my row. I’d do a quick inventory of my financial empire. Let’s see; a twenty, two fives and a one. I’d tell that twenty, “You’re safe pal. Don’t sweat it.” And the fives, “Guys, you’re in good hands.” But the one, “See ya later pal, you’re out of here!”

There is little doubt that my attitude permeates our country. I just read where the Barna Research Group reports that the average American wants \$10,000 more per year to rest easily. Someone once asked Howard Hughes, “How much money is enough?” And his answer? “Just a little bit more.”

At some wedding perhaps the more accurate words should be, “Until debt do us part.”
If we don’t manage money, money will manage us.

Jesus talks about money in sixteen of his thirty-eight parables; one out of ten verses in the gospels addresses money and possessions; the Bible devotes some five hundred verses to prayer; about five hundred verses to faith and over two thousand on money and possessions.

I once heard someone say that it takes three books to worship Jesus: God’s book, the hymnbook, and the checkbook.

Luther famously once said that the last part of our lives that gets baptized is our pocketbook.
We love our french fries!

3. LOOK FORWARD

“For from the rising of the sun to its setting my name will be great among the nations, and in every place incense will be offered to my name, and a pure offering. For my name will be great among the nations, says the LORD of hosts.” (Mal 1:11)

“For I am a great King, says the LORD of hosts, and my name will be feared among the nations.” (Mal 1:14)

This is Israel’s ongoing prayer. Because Yahweh is so vast in his universality Israel is called upon to “proclaim among the nations what he has done” (Ps 9:12), indeed, “sing of him among the nations” (Ps 108:4). Israel is to sing of his abundant goodness and joyfully celebrate his righteousness (Ps 145:1-7), with the goal that “all people are to extol him” (Ps 117:1).

Several psalms accent Israel’s centrifugal missional emphasis. “I will make confession about you, O Yahweh, I will sing to you among the nations” (Ps 57:9). “Our mouths were filled with laughter, our tongues with songs of joy. Then it was said among the nations, ‘Yahweh has done great things for them’” (Ps 126:2-3). “They will tell of the glory of your kingdom and speak of your might, so that all people may know of your mighty acts and the splendor of your kingdom” (Ps 145:11-12). “My mouth will speak in praise of Yahweh, let every creature praise his holy name for ever and ever” (Ps 145:21).

Over and over again the psalmists call on all people of all lands and nations to praise Yahweh (Pss 47:1; 67:3, 5; 100:1; 117:1). Even more directly, these ancient singers of Israel urge their people to tell, proclaim, and make known the mighty deeds of Yahweh (Pss 9:11; 105:1) and to join in singing praises to Yahweh from all the nations (Pss 57:9; 108:3). The expected result is that all the ends of the earth will turn to Yahweh and all the families of the earth will bow down in worship to him (Pss 22:27; 66:4; 86:9).

Years ago, a Sunday school in Philadelphia was overcrowded and a little girl was turned away. She began to save her pennies to help the Sunday school have more room. Two years later she died. People found a pocketbook by her bed with fifty-seven pennies and a little scrap of paper with a note saying that she wanted to help the church build a bigger Sunday school.

The local newspaper picked up the story and people began to give; and give they did. You can see the results today at First Presbyterian Church in Philly. The church seats 3,300 people; the Sunday school is huge; Temple University and Good Samaritan Hospital also stand as a result of this little girl's fifty-seven pennies.

4. LOOK INWARD

“But you say, ‘What a weariness this is,’ and you snort at it.” (Mal 1:13a)

Literally, “you turn up your nose at me.”

A recent survey indicates that more than seventy percent of all New Year's resolutions are broken during the first week in January. We don't have trouble making commitments but we sure have trouble keeping them!

Judeans who returned from Babylon in the late sixth century BC were all in. Rebuild the temple? Count on us! Restart the sacrificial system? Count on us! Rebuild the walls of Jerusalem? Count on us!

But then time passes. It becomes so hard to keep serving.

Remember that song Top Gun reintroduced to us? “You've lost that lovin' feeling”?

Let's wrap this up. What is Malachi saying? He wants us to see, to look, to open our eyes Paul puts it this way. He prays that our hearts may be enlightened (Eph 1:18).

“I do not cease to give thanks for you, remembering you in my prayers, that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give you a spirit of wisdom and of revelation in the knowledge of him, having the eyes of your hearts enlightened, that you may know what is the hope to which he has called you, what are the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints.”

(Eph 1:16–18)

Finally we looked heavenward, for God's grace in Jesus is what propels us to manage our money for his glory and the benefit of many people. Amen.



Week Two

ELECTION AND COVENANTS

Describe a time when you were chosen.
Describe a time when you were not.

COVENANTS

Malachi's central motif is Yahweh's gift of his covenantal promises to the patriarchs (Mal 1:2–3), the tribe of Levi (Mal 2:4, 8; cf. Nm 3:5–13), and the men and women who enter into marriage (Mal 2:10–16).

There are two types of covenants in the Old Testament. The first is unconditional and the second is conditional. God's covenants with Noah (Genesis 9), Abraham (Genesis 15, 17) and David (2 Samuel 7=1 Chronicles 17) are unconditional. His covenant with Israel through Moses is conditional (Exodus 19:5).

There are six parts to the covenant at Sinai: (1) a preamble introducing the treaty as well as its participants, (2) a historical prologue reviewing prior highlights of the relationship, (3) stipulations setting out covenant expectations (frequently with general and specific commands), (4) preservation and rereading, (5) a listing of witnesses to the covenant, and (6) blessings and curses.

How does Christ's "new covenant" (e.g., Luke 22:20) fit into this scheme?

ELECTION

The opening section of Malachi establishes its major premise. God says, “I have loved Jacob yet Esau I have hated” (Mal 1:2–3). These are startling words. They seem to indicate that God arbitrarily hated Esau. But the verb hate should not be understood this way. Instead here it connotes that a relationship does not exist between Yahweh and Esau. Confirming this understanding is that in Malachi 1:2 love connotes Yahweh’s covenant that he established with Israel. Jacob and Esau stand for Israelites and Edomites, respectively, since they are the ancestors of each of these nations (Gn 36:15–19, 35–39). As part of this deep love for Jacob/Israel, Yahweh comes to rescue his people and defeat their enemies. And the Edomites were public enemy number one. They were a constant threat and nuisance to Israel (e.g., 1 Sm 14:47; 2 Kgs 16:6; 2 Chr 28:7; Ps 137:7; Ob 10–11).

The primary accent in Malachi 1:2–3 is Yahweh’s choice to protect and defend a community living in the distant, out-of-the-way Persian province of Yehud. This is in keeping with his election of the patriarchs who were “perishing Arameans” (Dt 26:5), the matriarchs who were all barren at one point (Gn 11:30; 25:21; 29:31), and Israel who “was the least of all the people” (Dt 7:7). The fall of Jerusalem in 587 BC did not cancel Yahweh’s election nor did it mean that he had permanently rejected his people. The Sinaitic covenant was broken, the patriarchal covenant which is “everlasting” still stood (e.g., Gn 17:7). Yahweh’s promise to the patriarchs is the decisive guarantee that he has bound himself to Israel forever (cf. Gal 3:29; 6:16).

Confirming this idea is the fact that Yahweh calls these people his treasured possession (Mal 3:17). This title originally applied to all Israel (e.g. Ex 19:5; Dt 7:6; 26:18). Now the little group of Judahites in the insignificant Persian province of Yehud receives this designation that demonstrates Yahweh’s great faithfulness and love for them. The result of this covenant commitment is that the faithful will be spared from the judgment on the Day of Yahweh (Mal 4:1–3).

Malachi does not teach a doctrine of rejection to parallel a doctrine of election. In light of his call of Abraham (Gn 12:1–3), Yahweh’s initially exclusive choice was for the sake of a maximally inclusive end (cf. Jn 14:6). He chose Israel to restore all people to himself. Election is not for the purpose of leaving some out but the means of bringing all in. There is only one blessing (cf. Gn 27:38) so that

all may be blessed (Mal 1:11)—including Esau and Edom (cf. Am 9:12; Acts 15:13–19).

How do we know that we have been elected? What difference does it make?

SERMON SERIES: MONEY MANAGEMENT ACCORDING TO MALACHI

WEEK TWO: God gets our attention so we bring him righteous offerings.

OT: Malachi 3:1–4

EP: Ephesians 2:14–22

GO: Luke 12:22–34

TODAY'S THEME:

What gets your attention? A screaming child? A police car in your rear-view mirror? Your monthly Visa bill? To jar us, wake us, and get our attention God sends us the prophet Malachi with a message to help us manage our money. When we know and truly believe that, as Luther said, “we are beggars” before the Lord and cannot free ourselves from our sin, then we become faithful and joyful stewards of God’s marvelous gifts.

CONFESSION AND ABSOLUTION

P: Who can endure the day of the LORD’s coming? Who can stand when he appears? Let us confess our sins to God, asking him in mercy to free us from the prison of our sin.

C: Almighty Lord, we are lost in the darkness of sin and the shadow of death rests on us. P: We turn away from the light of your love and live in the darkness of our own sins.

C: We do not walk in love

P: We selfishly serve our own needs instead of the needs of others.

C: Let the light of your grace and love shine on us for the sake of Jesus our Savior. Have mercy on us and forgive our sins.

P: Jesus died on the cross to free us from the dark prison of our sins. He rose from the dead to shatter the doors of death. For his sake and by his command I announce to you that your sins are forgiven in the name of the Father and of the + Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

C: Refine and purify us, O God. Refine us like silver and gold. Then we will bring offerings in righteousness and glorify your name forever and ever!

PRAYER OF THE DAY

P: The Lord be with you.

C: And also with you.

P: Let us pray. O God, our almighty Father, You have shown to the world Your love in the most glorious sacrifice of Your beloved Son. Fill us with Your same sacrificial love that we may offer all we have for the sake of your kingdom and the salvation of many; through Jesus Christ, Your Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

ALL: Amen.

SERMON HYMN – 783

SERMON NOTES

“Money Management According to Malachi: Part 2” Malachi 3:1–4

“For the lips of a priest should guard knowledge, and people should seek instruction from his mouth, for he is the messenger of the LORD of hosts. But you have turned aside from the way. You have caused many to stumble by your instruction. You have corrupted the covenant of Levi, says the LORD of hosts.” (Mal 2:7–8)

“Have we not all one Father? Has not one God created us? Why then are we faithless to one another, profaning the covenant of our fathers?” (Mal 2:10)

*“Because the LORD was witness between you and the wife of your youth, to whom you have been faithless, though she is your companion and your wife by covenant.”
(Malachi 2:14)*

“You have wearied the LORD with your words. But you say, ‘How have we wearied him?’ 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?’” (Mal 2:17)

- Giving today as a percentage of income is less than at the depth of the great depression.
- Baby boomers give 20% less per year than their parents.
- Out of the top twenty protestant churches in america the LCMS ranks 16th in per capita giving.

TO GET MY ATTENTION THE LORD –

- RESCUES ME

*“Behold, I send my messenger, and he will prepare the way before me.”
(Mal 3:1; cf. Mal 4:6)*

“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.” (Mal 3:1)

- REFINES ME

“But who can endure the day of his coming, and who can stand when he appears? For he is like a refiner’s fire and like fullers’ 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, 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 and as in former years.” (Mal 3:2–4)

FOR NEXT WEEK:

Read Malachi 3:6–10 and answer these questions:

1. How does John the Baptist fulfill the description of the messenger?
2. How does God’s refining work strengthen your stewardship?
3. What do “offerings of righteousness” look like in your life?

PRAYERS OF THE CHURCH

P: Christ, our Passover Lamb, you were sacrificed on the cross for our salvation. We remember and celebrate your love, giving thanks for our salvation.

C: We are made clean, our sins washed away in your blood and our lives marked for service in your name.

P: Christ, our Passover Lamb, we pray for those in need of help and healing, especially... and all those we name in our hearts.

C: Let your grace flow through our lives into the lives of those in need.

P: Christ, our Passover Lamb, fill us with your Holy Spirit to serve as good stewards of your varied grace.

C: For Jesus, our priceless treasure, we give thanks.

P: We entrust all whom we name and the unspoken prayers of hearts to You, trusting in Your enduring mercy.

C: In gifts of speech, teach us to speak the good news of salvation.

P: In gifts of service, make us willing servants.

C: You bless your people with the riches of Your Word, Baptism, and Holy Communion.

P: Help us to treasure these gifts more than possessions and money, so that we may take hold of that which is truly life.

ALL: In all things, in our thoughts, our words and our actions, help us to give to you all thanks and praise. In Jesus's name we pray. Amen.

SERMON TEXT

“Money Management According to Malachi: Part 2” Malachi 3:1-4

A Lou Harris survey commissioned by United Airlines found that thirty-eight percent of passengers never use the lavatory during a flight; sixty percent do and another two percent aren't sure. Hello? I'm fascinated by that two percent but I hope I never sit next to one of them on a flight!

Did you read about Julie Sharik in Utah? She gave birth to a seven pound, five ounce son, just twelve hours after learning she was pregnant. In her own words, “Looking back, I remember times when he was moving around, but I thought it was just gas.” Hello?

A prison inmate in New Mexico escaped on the eighty-ninth day of a ninety-day sentence; he was captured and had to then serve one and a half more years. Hello?

A brick-throwing, smash-and-grab thief in Detroit knocked himself out, later discovering that the shop owner had installed Plexiglas windows. So that's why the brick bounced off the glass! Hello?

Hello? Is one way we respond when we see or hear about someone who just doesn't get it. It's a shorthand response that calls a person to check in and reload. Its “Earth to Harold, are you there?”

Hello? Is a way to let people know that the lights are on but no one is home; that they aren't working with a full deck; that at a particular moment they probably aren't the sharpest knife in the drawer.

You may recall that Malachi's post-exilic community just didn't get it. They needed to check in, reload, and get with the program.

“For the lips of a priest should guard knowledge, and people should seek instruction from his mouth, for he is the messenger of the LORD of hosts. But you have turned aside from the way. You have caused many to stumble by your instruction. You have corrupted the covenant of Levi, says the LORD of hosts.” (Mal 2:7–8)

“Have we not all one Father? Has not one God created us? Why then are we faithless to one another, profaning the covenant of our fathers?” (Mal 2:10)

“Because the LORD was witness between you and the wife of your youth, to whom you have been faithless, though she is your companion and your wife by covenant.” (Mal 2:14)

“You have wearied the LORD with your words. But you say, ‘How have we wearied him?’ 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?’” (Mal 2:17)

Chapter two is held together by the word “faithless.” (BEGED) It appears in verses 10, 11, 14, 15, and 16. The word appears frequently in contexts where people break a covenant. Hello?

- Giving today as a percentage of income is less than at the depth of the great depression
 - Baby boomers give 20% less per year than their parents
- Out of the top twenty protestant churches in america the LCMS ranks (“there’s no synod like mo synod …”) 16th in per capita giving

TO GET MY ATTENTION THE LORD -

- RESCUES ME

“Behold, I …” (Malachi 3:1) God must get the attention of his people; so, as the old adage goes, “If you want something done right, do it yourself.” “Behold, I …”

“Behold, I send my messenger, and he will prepare the way before me.” (Mal 3:1)

The messenger of the covenant is Elijah (Mal 4:6).

John prepares the way (Mal 3:1a; cf. Mark 1:2) for Jesus who is the Messenger of the new covenant (Mal 3:1b; cf. Jer 31:31–34; Luke 22:20; 1 Cor 11:25; Heb 12:24).

Detail Elijah – 1 Kings 17, 18, 19; 2 Kings 2 – that should get their attention!

A young Scottish boy named Alexander Fleming grew up in poverty. He wanted to be a doctor but knew the cost was out of reach. One day, while Alexander was swimming, another boy, the son of a nobleman, suddenly suffered excruciating leg cramps. He struggled to get back to shore, but he couldn't. Eventually he went under. Alexander Fleming jumped in and saved the son of the nobleman. The nobleman was so grateful that he promised to send Alexander to medical school. So Alexander Fleming became a doctor.

Years later, during WWII, Prime Minister Winston Churchill became sick. Alexander Fleming was called upon to administer his new wonder drug called penicillin. Churchill made a remarkable recovery and went on to lead England to defeat Nazi Germany.

The remarkable thing about this story is that Alexander Fleming didn't save Winston Churchill once, he saved him twice. Winston Churchill was the nobleman's son that Fleming pulled to safety when both were young boys.

Churchill commented that Fleming saved his life again!

God did it through Elijah in the OT and he does it again through Elijah in the NT!

This Elijah is John the Baptist; cf. Matthew 11:10; Mark 1:2; Luke 1:76; 7:27.

“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.” (Mal 3:1)

Christ is the Lord who comes to his temple; as an infant (Simeon and Anna); as a twelve year old boy (Home Alone); as a rabbi or rabbis (during his ministry); on Monday of Holy Week (to cleanse the temple).

He is the messenger of the covenant. Jeremiah 33:31; 32:40; Upper Room; Hebrews 13:20.

- REFINES ME

“But who can endure the day of his coming, and who can stand when he appears? For he is like a refiner’s fire and like fullers’ 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, 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 and as in former years.” (Mal 3:2-4)

A metal smith takes a hammer, turns up the heat, and rids the metal of dross. When is he done? When he can see his face in the silver or the gold.

Romans 5:3–5; James 1:2–4; 1 Peter 1:6–7

The Double Eagle II was going to be the first balloon to cross the Atlantic Ocean. The men waved good-bye and started on their journey. Soaring by day and drifting downward at night, the crew made it to the coast of Ireland when weather changed suddenly and ice-crystals began to form on the balloon. Soon, sheets of ice weighing thousands of pounds forced the giant balloon downward.

Panic replaced peace as the crew watched the altimeter tell the sad story; 24,000 feet; 20,000 feet; 16,000 feet; 12,000 feet. With no solar rays to melt the ice, the crew believed that they were heading for an unwelcome baptism. All excess weight needed to be eliminated. Books, canned food, and other equipment were thrown overboard. The ice was still pushing them down; 8,000 feet, 6,000 feet.

The three frightened men gave up all hope when they reached 4,000 feet and heard the rolling Atlantic Ocean beneath them. But within the next few minutes the sun rose and began melting the sheets of ice. In time, the Double Eagle II rested in a cornfield a few miles from Paris, France and the airport where Charles Lindbergh had landed.

The crew of the Double Eagle II went through a refining process; they lost everything. The only thing they ultimately needed was the balloon!

The Lord places us in these situations . . . some of us have lost so much. It is a refining process in order for us, time and time again, to find out what we ultimately need . . . Jesus.

What gets your attention? A screaming child? A police car in your rear-view mirror? Your monthly Visa bill? The St. Louis Cardinals ...?

To jar us, wake us, motivate us . . . God does more than just “Hello?” He sends Malachi with a message to help us properly manage our money.

And our response?

“We are at your service, Lord. Rescued and refined to bring offerings that are acceptable to you!”

Amen.

3

Week Three

THE DAY OF THE LORD

Describe a day that you anticipated with great dread.

Describe another day that you anticipated with great delight.

Malachi 1:11 is one of the most important passages in the book and functions as the central theme of its section. “From the rising of the sun to the place where it sets” is used to show that Yahweh’s name will be honored over an area that includes the known and the unknown world. “Will be great” describes the honor given to Yahweh while “among the nations” means that his name will be glorified in a future time by non-Israelites. These promises are fulfilled in Christ Jesus. Following his death and resurrection the Savior holds all authority in heaven and on earth (Mt 28:18). While Christians now grasp this promise by faith, Paul maintains that the day is coming when we will experience it with our eyes and with our ears. “Every tongue will confess Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father” (Phil 2:11). Universal acclaim for Christ will happen when he returns as the “Sun of Righteousness” who will come with perfect healing in his wings (Mal 4:2).

As the book of Malachi comes to a close it promises that Yahweh will judge these sins of the apostates but will pardon the transgressions of those who turn to him. In his final section (Mal 3:13–4:6) the prophet describes the two groups. The first one consists of those who speak harshly against Yahweh while the second includes those who honor and respect him. Throughout this passage, Yahweh contrasts the actions and destinies of these two groups. He promises that people will see this distinction (Mal 3:18) but the prophet also offers grace and mercy. Yahweh will respond

in love those who fear him. Their names will be written in the book of remembrance and God will spare them from judgment (Mal 3:16; cf. Ex 32:33; Dn 12:1; Rv 3:5).

The destinies of these two groups come into even sharper focus in Malachi 4:1–3. This section contains images frequently connected with the day of Yahweh. Malachi employs this motif to announce God’s just wrath against those who do not believe. Yet the passage goes on to state that those who honor Yahweh will not face his wrath. The Sun of Righteousness will arise with healing in his wings and will enable believers to skip for joy like cattle just released from the stall.

“The Day of Yahweh” is a term that Amos uses three times within the three verses of 5:18–20. Closely related expressions include “the day of vengeance,” “the day of Yahweh’s anger,” “the day of rage,” and “the day belonging to Yahweh.” “In that day” in some contexts denotes “the Day of Yahweh.”

“The Day of Yahweh encompasses a battle against his enemies that ends in victory.” This day is much like “the day of Jezreel” (Hos 2:2), “the day of Midian” (Isa 9:3), “the day of Egypt” (Ezek 30:9), and “the day of Jerusalem” (Ps 137:7). All of these refer to military action; hence “the Day of Yahweh” is another way to say “the battle of Yahweh.”

The first “day” appears in Exodus 14.

The “Day of Yahweh” has certain characteristics. It is a day of darkness (Is 13:10; cf. Am 5:18, 20). On this day (Yahweh will come in person to fight and his enemies will lose heart and their courage will fail (e.g., Ex 15:14–16; Jo 2:9, 24). This day also exhibits cosmic changes; the stars will darken (e.g., Is 13:10) and the earth will shake (Is 13:13).

Our response is described in Ex 14:14; Ps 46:10.

How does the Day of the LORD appear in the New Testament? How does this day impact your days?

SERMON SERIES: MONEY MANAGEMENT ACCORDING TO MALACHI

WEEK THREE: The Lord promises to calm our financial fears.

OT: Malachi 3:6–10

EP: Ephesians 3:1–13

GO: Luke 16:19–31

TODAY'S THEME:

On the outside we can look so confident. We flash our Visa Gold Card, make those electronic transfers, talk to those investment specialists; but on the inside we know that when it comes to money and savings and bills and retirement and cars and student loans, at one time or another we've all been overcome with worry over our money. How can we live in a financial world and not have financial fears overwhelm us? How can we get rid of our mouse-like hearts and face financial challenges with the heart of a lion? Malachi, the last prophet in the Old Testament, provides answers for us. Let's listen!

CONFESSION AND ABSOLUTION

P: Lord God, we come into Your presence this day with rejoicing. Yet our hearts are also heavy with the burden of our sin. We confess our sin to You and to one another, trusting in Your promise to forgive us and to guide us by Your Holy Spirit to change our sinful ways. Our arrogance and self-deception. We confess to You, Lord.

C: Our discontent with your gracious provision,

P: We confess to You, Lord.

C: Our meager generosity,

P: We confess to You, Lord.

C: Our giving in to the temptation to store up treasures on earth,

P: We confess to You, Lord.

C: Our unwillingness to trust Christ as life's most valued relationship.

P: As a called and ordained servant of Christ and by His authority, I announce to you that your sins are forgiven through the cross of Jesus. Peace and mercy be upon you now and forever!

ALL: Amen and Amen!

PRAYER OF THE DAY

P: The Lord be with you.

C: And also with you.

P: Let us pray. Gracious God, You lavish on us the riches of Your mercy in Your Word, in Holy Baptism, and in the Lord's Supper. Help us so to give thanks for Your abundant mercy to us, that the riches of Your mercy overflow from us to the world around us; through Jesus Christ, Your Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

ALL: Amen.

SERMON NOTES

“Money Management According to Malachi: Part 3” Malachi 3:6-10

FINANCIAL FEARS ARE -

- UNREASONABLE

“For I the LORD do not change; therefore you, O children of Jacob, are not consumed.”

(Mal 3:6)

- UNHELPFUL

“From the days of your fathers you have turned aside from my statutes and have not kept them. Return to me, and I will return to you, says the LORD of hosts.” (Mal 3:7)

- UNNATURAL

“Will man rob God? Yet you are robbing me. But you say, ‘How have we robbed you?’ In your tithes and contributions.” (Mal 3:8)

- UNBELIEVING

“You are cursed with a curse, for you are robbing me, the whole nation of you.” (Mal 3:9)

HOW TO OVERCOME FINANCIAL FEARS –

- TITHE YOUR INCOME

“Bring the full tithe into the storehouse, that there may be food in my house.” (Mal 3:10)

- TEST THE LORD

“Put me to the test, says the LORD of hosts.” (Mal 3:10)

- TRUST GOD’S CARE

“I will open the windows of heaven for you and pour down for you a blessing until there is no more need.” (Mal 3:10)

FOR NEXT WEEK:

Read Malachi 3:13–4:3 and answer these questions:

1. Describe these two groups.
2. What are their destinies?
3. When Christ returns, how will these verses be fulfilled for you?

SERMON HYMN – 729 – also use 730 at some place in the service and 735 as the closing hymn

PRAYERS OF THE CHURCH

P: With lives redeemed by Christ and in His love let us entrust to Him our prayers. Gracious God, send Your Holy Spirit on Your whole Church so that your people overcome financial fears, trusting you when you say,

C: “I will open the windows of heaven for you and pour down for you a blessing until there is no more need.” (Mal 3:10)

P: Send Your Holy Spirit on each of us. Forgive us when we place possessions before you. Convict us when we seek only the things of this life instead of the gifts of the life to come. Give us the faith and humility to trust you when you say,

C: “I will open the windows of heaven for you and pour down for you a blessing until there is no more need.” (Mal3:10)

Pastor: Send Your Holy Spirit on all church leaders, all pastors, and servants of Your Church. Help us to be of aid and encouragement to them that we may extend the blessings of Your kingdom to all and so that all the more your church believes you when you say,

C: “I will open the windows of heaven for you and pour down for you a blessing until there is no more need.” (Mal 3:10)

P: You are the Father of orphans and friend of the poor. To those who weep, pour out the wine of joy; to those who hunger, give the bread of love. Make us a generous church that extends our resources to those in need, even as we dare to believe your promise,

C: “I will open the windows of heaven for you and pour down for you a blessing until there is no more need.” (Mal 3:10)

P: Hear our prayers, heal our sorrows, and bring us at last to everlasting life where you reign, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, one God forever and ever.

ALL: Amen.

SERMON TEXT

“Money Management According to Malachi: Part 3” Malachi 3:6-10

There is a legend from India that tells about a mouse who was terrified of cats until he met a magician who agreed to turn him into a cat. That resolved his fear until he met a dog, so the magician changed him into a dog. The mouse-turned-cat-turned-dog was content until he met a lion. So, once again, the magician changed him into what he feared most; now he was a lean, mean, fighting machine, a lion! But when the lion came complaining that he had met a hunter, the magician refused to help. “I will make you into a mouse again, for though you have the body of a lion, you still have the heart of a mouse.”

Sound familiar? So often you and I build an impressive exterior. We have the body of a lion, but inside we have the heart of a mouse. And frequently our mouse-like fears overtake us when it comes to . . . money. And I speak from personal experience!

On the outside, we look so confident. We flash our Visa Gold Card, make those electronic transfers, talk to those investment specialists; but on the inside we know that when it comes to money and savings and bills and retirement and cars and student loans, at one time or another we’ve all had the heart of a mouse.

Time magazine came out with a cover title last year, How Safe is Your Job? A new wind is blowing that says, “Maybe I’d better tighten my belt.” A job loss, a lawsuit, a disease, one or two kids in college at the same time, and BOOM, we are broke!

How can we live in a financial world and not have financial fears overwhelm us? How can we get rid of our mouse-like hearts and face financial challenges with the heart of a lion?

Malachi, the last prophet in the OT, provides answers for us. This evening (morning) we find ourselves in the third installment of the series I’m calling, “Money Management According to Malachi.”

FINANCIAL FEARS ARE –

- UNREASONABLE

“For I the LORD do not change; therefore you, O children of Jacob, are not consumed.”

(Mal 3:6)

I know, this is tough to swallow in a society that believes in “Life, Liberty and the Purchase of Happiness.” Let me summarize the last 350,000 commercials you have seen and heard. I can do it in four words; “You can buy happiness.”

- UNHELPFUL

“From the days of your fathers you have turned aside from my statutes and have not kept them. Return to me, and I will return to you, says the LORD of hosts.” (Mal 3:7)

Martin Luther writes in his Large Catechism, “That to which your heart clings and entrusts itself is, I say, really your god.”

- UNNATURAL

“Will man rob God? Yet you are robbing me. But you say, ‘How have we robbed you?’ In your tithes and contributions.” (Mal 3:8)

We buy things we don’t need; with money we don’t have; to impress people that we don’t even like!

- UNBELIEVING

“You are cursed with a curse, for you are robbing me, the whole nation of you.” (Mal 3:9)

HOW TO OVERCOME FINANCIAL FEARS –

- TITHE YOUR INCOME

“Bring the full tithe into the storehouse, that there may be food in my house.” (Mal 3:10)

I know, someone is saying, “Tithing! No way! That’s in the OT, I’m living in the NT.” And you are right. Romans 10:4; 15:4. In Christ, we are free to give 5%, 10%, 15%. Finally, it’s not your assets that matter, it is your attitude. 2 Cor 9:7 – hilarious.

Seventy-three year old Iowa resident Aldin Straight needed to go see her ailing brother, who lived on the other side of the state. Aldin didn’t feel as though he could drive himself; he can’t read road signs when he drives faster than twenty miles per hour. And there was no one who could drive him to his brother’s house. So Aldin Straight did what he could. He rode his lawn mower 240 miles across the state of Iowa to be with his brother.

What am I saying? I’m saying, do what you can. Give a portion of your income back to God. Every time I write out a check to St. Michael Lutheran Church, I do it as a reminder that money is not my god. I do it to remind myself that life is greater than money. I do it as an act of faith, trusting that our God will take care of me. I refuse to be possessed by my possessions!

- TEST THE LORD

“Put me to the test, says the LORD of hosts.” (Mal 3:10)

This is the only time in the Bible when God tells us to test him.

Now, this is risky! “What if ... What if ... What if?”

When the Declaration of Independence was signed by fifty-six men, they knew that they were putting their lives on the line. It was an awesome risk! They knew that if the revolutionary forces didn’t win, everything they owned was at stake. They pledged their lives, their land, their fortune, and their sacred honor.

They didn't know the outcome of the war. We do!

Question. How many of you have seen a hearse followed by . . . Allied Van Lines? You can't take it with you. But you can send it on ahead. You can invest in Christian ministries that preach the gospel and transform lives for eternity.

"Faith is a living, daring confidence in God's grace, so sure and certain that the believer would stake life itself on it a thousand times." Martin Luther in his commentary on Romans.

- TRUST GOD'S CARE

"I will open the windows of heaven for you and pour down for you a blessing until there is no more need." (Mal 3:10)

I'm not talking about God being some slot-machine; put in a twenty and get out two hundred. But listen to this. There is a direct relationship in the Bible between what I do with my money and the spiritual depth in my life. That is clear in passage after passage in Scripture. How I use my money; how I spend it; how I save it; how I give it . . . directly effects the amount of spiritual blessing that the Lord can trust me with. "Give and it will be given to you. Good measure, pressed down, shaken together, running over, will be put into your lap. For with the measure you use it will be measured back to you." (Lk 6:38)

Did you hear about the guy who was just a wreck when it came to his finances? One day he came to the office and his colleagues were amazed. The man was the perfect picture of peace. "What's going on?" they asked him. He responded, "I hired a guy to do my worrying for me!" "What?" they asked, "how much does that cost?" He responded, "\$2,000 a week!" His co-workers were stunned. "How can you afford that?" The guy responded, "That's his worry!"

That's it. Bingo. Jackpot. The Lord is telling us, through Malachi, your financial worries are my worries. Matthew 6:33

Now, I can refuse to believe this and live in fear. The German word for fear is wurgen; it means to strangle. You want to live that way? Strangled all the time? Always gasping for air? I'll give you a little exacto-knife and you can go home and cut out the book of Malachi from your Bible.

Instead, let's listen to this wise prophet of yesteryear.

Review and end.



Week Four

TURNING OUR HEARTS TOWARD HOME

What is the messiest and most unorganized part of your home?

Malachi points his readers toward home. Some of his last words promise that Yahweh's plan includes turning "the hearts of the fathers to their children, and the hearts of the children to their fathers" (Mal 4:6). A strong sense of community pervades the prophet's understanding of Israelite households. Fulfillment in life, to use a modern expression, would not be achieved individualistically, as for example, through personal adventure or professional achievement. Nor was it found in the context of some larger community overriding the familial structures, such as citizenship in a state. It meant, instead, to be embedded in the texture of the generations and to participate harmoniously as a member of a family. This was life with a promise and a future.

Archaeology has revealed a common pattern of family life in ancient Israel consisting of two or three families related by kinship and marriage, living in a residential complex of two or three houses connected together. This solidarity continued as deceased members were commemorated as an essential component of the organic whole. This is noted by means of the frequent expression "to be gathered to one's fathers" (e.g., Gn 25:8, 17; 35:29; 49:29, 33; Jgs 2:10). Malachi states the same idea when he promises a "book of remembrance" for the faithful (Mal 3:16). The family endures.

People are created, redeemed, and sanctified to be in relationship with others, beginning with the family. This is why Malachi quotes Yahweh as judging those who take marriage lightly (Mal 2:14–15). God hates divorce, which always includes "breaking faith" (Mal 2:16), and rejects God's

design for the two to be one flesh (Gn 2:24). Indeed, to be alone in Israel meant something unusual or threatening was happening. Psalm 25:15 states, “My eyes are always toward Yahweh, for he is the one bringing my feet out of the net. Turn to me, and be gracious to me, for I am alone and afflicted.” Being alone as a longed-for benefit that gives pleasure is an alien concept in the OT. The sense of identity and self-awareness of the individual living in a network of social relations was significantly different from those of the typical privatized individual of Western post-industrial, urban society. Yahweh’s plan for life centers upon the family. “God is the one who causes lonely people to dwell in a household” (Ps 68:6 [Heb 68:7]). Malachi testifies to this design throughout his book. In fact, those who spurn it are promised a curse (Mal 4:6).

OUR FASCINATION WITH SELF

Historically, the fascination with self that we see in Malachi began in the West with Renee Descartes who proposed a method by which the human self establishes the existence of itself and of reality by its own process of thinking: cogito ergo sum (“I think, therefore I am”). This Cartesian method isolates the self from the world beyond the self, and presupposes that the self can be a self by itself, apart from a relationship with anyone else. The writings of American Romantic thinkers like Ralph Waldo Emerson, Henry David Thoreau and Walt Whitman express this Enlightenment preoccupation with individualism. Note their words:

“The individual is the world; every man for himself.”

“If a man does not keep pace with his companions, perhaps it is because he hears a different drummer.”

“Nothing, not God, is greater to one than one’s self is.”

“I celebrate myself, and sing myself.”

“I need no assurances. I am a man who is preoccupied of his own soul.”

A slogan on a T-shirt sums up where we are: “Galileo was wrong. The universe does revolve around me.”

The confession made by the farmer in Deuteronomy 26:5–10 is instructive. It changes from “I” to “we” and back again to “I,” thus demonstrating that the history of the individual coincides with the history of Israel. Already in the ancestral narratives, the covenant is to include the descendants of the ancestors (Gn 15:13–16, 18–21; 17:7–14, 19–21).

If Descartes’s dictum was “turn to self” then the Old Testament’s is “turn toward others.” “I” am constituted as a person only in reference to “you.” This is a decisive break from the extreme individualism of the Cartesian framework as egocentrism is replaced by heterocentrism. The focus is the other, not the self. According to the Old Testament a person is a heterocentric, relational agent. Others are not a means to an end; they are the end themselves. For even at the end, “they were buried with their fathers . . .” (e.g., Jdg 2:10).

How is the Lord turning your heart toward home?

SERMON SERIES: MONEY MANAGEMENT ACCORDING TO MALACHI

WEEK FOUR: Pledge Weekend

Christ’s return empowers joyful stewardship.

OT: Malachi 3:13–4:3

EP: Ephesians 3:14–21

GO: Luke 21:25–36

TODAY’S THEME:

Sometimes the journey gets long, doesn’t it? The hike gets tough. The going gets really, really, really rough. And so we stop walking. We sit down and refuse to budge; especially when it comes to managing our money for Christ and his Church. Malachi directs us to remember who we are and where we are going. We are God’s priceless possessions and our future includes the Second Coming of Christ whose appearance will bring perfect and eternal healing so that we “leap like calves released from the stall.” (Mal 4:2)

CONFESSION AND ABSOLUTION

P: The sun of righteousness will rise with healing in its wings. And we will go out and leap like calves released from the stall. (Mal 4:2). Let us therefore confess our sins, asking him to grant us forgiveness for the sake of Jesus.

C: Almighty God, we have sinned against you in our thoughts, words and actions.

P: Although you bless us, we are often selfish and withhold those blessings from others.

C: We receive your forgiveness, yet we often refuse to forgive others.

P: We turn from your Word and will and follow our own desires.

C: Have mercy on us and forgive us for the sake of Jesus our Savior.

P: The sun of righteousness will rise with healing in its wings.

C: And we will go out and leap like calves released from the stall.

P: This sure and certain promise is ours because God sent his Son to bear our sin and be our Savior. For the sake of Jesus and by his command, I announce to you that your sins are forgiven in the name of the Father and of the + Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

PRAYER OF THE DAY

P: The Lord be with you.

C: And also with you.

P: Let us pray. [Collect for the Last Sunday of the Church Year].

C: Amen.

SERMON NOTES

“Money Management According to Malachi: Part 4” Malachi 3:13–4:3

“The LORD’s table is contemptible.” (Mal 1:7)

“What a burden.” (Mal 1:13)

“Where is the God of justice?” (Mal2:17)

“It is vain to serve God.” (Malachi 3:14)

“Evildoers not only prosper but they put God to the test and they escape.”

(Mal 3:15)

- THE FOUNDATION OF THE BOOK IS ELECTION

“Jacob I loved, Esau I hated.” (Mal 1:2–3)

“They shall be mine, says the LORD of hosts, in the day when I make up my treasured possession, and I will spare them as a man spares his son who serves him.” (Mal 3:17)

- THE FUTURE FOR THE ELECT IS GLORIOUS

“But for you who fear my name, the sun of righteousness shall rise with healing in its wings. You shall go forth leaping like calves released from the stall.” (Mal 4:2a)

“You shall go out leaping like calves released from the stall.” (Mal4:2b)

FOR NEXT WEEK:

Read Isaiah 40:1–11 and answer these questions:

1. What part of your life cries out for comfort?
2. What characteristics of God in these verses speak loudest to you?
3. How does the coming of Jesus place make these promises more vivid and real for you?

SERMON HYMN – 515 – also use 781 as the closing hymn

P: Jesus, Sun of righteousness, by your poverty we have become rich. By your act of grace we are filled.

C: C: You laid aside your glory. You emptied yourself and become obedient unto death for us.

P: Jesus, Sun of righteousness, help us to be a blessing to people who suffer in sadness, guilt or need.

C: Help us to be generous toward them in our thoughts, our words and our actions.

P: Jesus, Sun of righteousness, you have filled our lives with your love and forgiveness. As your love overflowed into our lives, help us to overflow in generosity.

C: Teach us to testify to your love by our forgiveness toward others, by our love and by our giving. Help us to excel in this act of grace.

P: Jesus, Sun of righteousness, we pray for those who live in fear or need. Bless them through our works of mercy.

C: Help us in our words and actions to share with them your abundant grace and love.

P: Jesus, Sun of righteousness, make us generous stewards of your gifts. Help us to give freely to others the love and forgiveness that you have freely given to us.

C: Teach us to share with joy the treasures of your all-sufficient grace.

P: For the day is most certainly coming when you will come, Jesus, as the Sun of Righteousness with healing in your wings.

C: Then we will go out and leap like calves released from the stall.

ALL: And so we live to your glory and honor. Amen.

SILENT PRAYER – LSB 515, stanza 4

SERMON TEXT

“Money Management According to Malachi: Part 4” Malachi 3:13–4:3.

During the summer of 1997, I spent a week as camp pastor at Camp Lutherhoma near Tahlequah, Oklahoma. On Wednesday of that week, I took my three children on a hike along the Illinois River to a place affectionately called “Bamboo Bungalow.” The path along the river was wide, well-marked, devoid of rocks, and mostly flat. Having reached Bamboo Bungalow without breaking a sweat, I suggested that we live life a little more dangerously and make our way back to camp off trail. The kids were in. I felt confident. Move over Daniel Boone and Davy Crockett, here we come!

But after ten minutes of dodging poison ivy, poison oak, and all kinds of rocks big and small, little Lori Beth Lessing, who was four at the time, had had enough. It didn’t help that she fell and skinned her knee when her older brother Jonathan failed to help her over a creek. And Lori didn’t feel any better when her older sister Abi acted more like a drill sergeant instead of a sensitive and sympathetic sibling.

Lori wanted to ride, first on my back, then in her older sister’s arms, then on my back, then in Abi’s arms, then on my back . . . well, you get the picture.

Sometimes the journey gets long, doesn’t it? The hike gets tough. The going gets really, really, really rough. And so we stop walking. We sit down and refuse to budge; especially when it comes to managing our money for Christ and his church.

It’s been a long, uphill hike for Judahites in the post-exilic Persian province of Yehud. We can hear Malachi’s fellow travelers throughout the book, “Yahweh’s table is contemptible” (Mal 1:7). “What a burden” (Mal 1:13). “Where is the God of justice?” (Mal 2:17). At the root of the problem is the complaint that the righteous are not cared for while the wicked are not punished.

In his sixth and final speech, therefore, the prophet asserts that Yahweh is just. He will surely deliver believers and act to punish unbelievers. We are back to the theme of the book in Malachi 1:2–3, “Jacob I loved, Esau I hated.”

In Malachi 3:13 Yahweh calls his people out because they have spoken hard words against him.

These were antagonistic and aggressive hikers! They had had enough and were blaming Yahweh for the whole thing.

Then they said, “It is vain to serve God.”

The noun shav, translated “vain,” denotes what is worthless and without result. In some contexts it is synonymous with deceit and treachery. Shav lies in the same semantic field as hevel which means “nothing” or “empty.” This hike is going nowhere, fast. “It is vain to serve God.”

You and I know the feeling. Too often we set up camp by the trail and sit down to moan and groan about how worthless the whole thing seems to be. (Tough experiences at church . . .). What am I doing here in the first place? Overcome with cynicism and sarcasm, our prayers don’t deepen, our devotion doesn’t increase, our zeal doesn’t grow, and our financial giving remains stagnant. Why? “It is vain to serve God.”

And woe to the traveler who challenges us to resume the journey. Woe to the prophet who dares to point out our justifications and rationalizations. Woe to the hiker who reminds us that we haven’t budgeted for months, even years. We would rather sit around the campfire singing, “Evildoers not only prosper but they put God to the test and they escape” (Mal 3:15).

Please, don’t be fooled. On the outside I keep up my normal routine, but on the inside it’s easy for me to stop hiking. I often settle for sameness, safety, and the status quo. Comfort, complacency, and convenience are my watchwords.

Lori Beth certainly knew the feeling. So I began to tell her that she was my special little girl; that she was priceless, invaluable, loved beyond imagination. I cranked up the all the charm I had!

WHO WE ARE –

So did Yahweh. In Malachi 3:17 he reminds the Judahites that they are his segulah, his treasured possession, his prized priceless people. Used six times by Yahweh in the Old Testament, segulah is the most endearing word he has for his Israel. A segulah is loved not because it is valuable. No, a segulah is valuable because it is loved.

Lori needed more. So I began to describe where we were going. “Honey, when we get to camp we’ll go swimming.” “Sweetie, when we get to camp I’ll get you a Mountain Dew and a Snickers candy bar.” Then, pulling out the big guns, “Lori Beth, when we get back to camp I’ll let you stay up really late tonight with all the big kids.”

When you and I are stuck, we need someone to direct us away from our present pain and help us to see our future deliverance.

WHERE WE ARE GOING -

That’s why Yahweh pulls out his big guns. Malachi 4:2, “But for you who fear my name, the sun of righteousness shall rise with healing in its wings. You shall go forth leaping like calves released from the stall.” The Sun of Righteousness will bring with him a new day when every hint of darkness will be scattered, all gloom will be gone, and the night of terror and dread will be forever banished. On that day our righteous standing, by faith, will become clear, just like the shining sun in all its brightness and beauty.

But there is more. The Sun of Righteousness will bring healing in his wings! He will restore everything we have lost. All the years of pain will be erased; every tear of disappointment will be wiped away; and the symphonies we missed and sunsets we didn’t see will be beautifully played over again and again!

The child snatched by disease will run into your arms. The health that eluded you in the winter of your life will return a thousand-fold. The friends and family members who died in the faith will sit next to you, singing in the heavenly choir, forever!

All of this will be ours on that day, and so much more, because when the Son of Righteousness arose in the eastern sky, he continued steadfast in his journey all the way to the end. The Son finished, in spite of his disciple’s kiss of betrayal, his friends running for cover, and his countrymen clamoring for his death.

Look. The sky is dark. Two criminals are slowly dying, one on his right and one on his left. Jesus is in the middle, taking a deep breath and speaking his last word. John records it, *tete,lestai* (“It is

finished.” tete,lestai. The veil rent. The blood poured. The curse removed. The sacrifice complete. Death is defeated. And paradise is restored, forevermore! Was tete,lestai a cry of defeat? By no means! Had it not been for the nails, I dare say that Christ’s triumphant fist would have lifted toward the sky. And it is because this Son of Righteousness rose on the third day that he will come again with healing in his wings.

By the way, Lori Beth finally made it back to Camp Lutherhoma. I can still remember her proudly exclaiming, “I did it! I did it dad!”

I laughed out loud, but I kept my thoughts to myself. “No you didn’t dear daughter,” I thought. “I carried you, counseled you, and encouraged you. Abi held you. And at least Jonathan got out of the way!”

Do you know why I didn’t say anything? Because I’m getting the same treatment, and so are you. When we are paralyzed by discouragement and every bone in our body wants to quit, Jesus finds us on the trail, picks us up, and carries us close to his heart.

When Christ comes again we won’t collapse; we won’t need rest to recuperate; and we certainly won’t need any long-term health care. No. Malachi says that we will go forth “leaping like calves released from the stall.”

Why does the prophet write all of this?

So we pick up the pace, bring others with us, manage our money to the glory of God and begin our leaping freedom now. Amen.

