

**Hurst Green**  
**25<sup>th</sup> Aug 19**  
**Malachi – The three facets of love**  
**Malachi 1:1-5**

Last week we introduced ourselves to Malachi, the messenger of God, and I was torn between calling him “The Prophet of Love” and “The Prophet of the Coming Age”. Today he is very definitely the prophet of love as verse 2 starts:

***Malachi 1:2 (ANIV)***

*<sup>2</sup> "I have loved you," says the LORD. "But you ask, 'How have you loved us?' "Was not Esau Jacob's brother?" the LORD says. "Yet I have loved Jacob,*

Now Israel is a minor vassal state in the large Persian Empire but, as we have seen, under Gods benevolent love they have been recreated as a State from being a desolate land. But, despite that solemn covenant from a few weeks ago they have had their own case of spiritual amnesia.

If you scan Malachi you will find this people, within one generation, arguing with God and expressing incredulity and disbelief. They knew of the great returns, of Gods provision of millions of pounds and the rebuilding of the land. Some will have seen it and others will have heard of it from their parents. Do you talk of the great things God has done for you to your children? You should!

Malachi’s generation talk back to God in an attempt to justify their position, feigning ignorance, expressing unbelief, justifying themselves for ignoring God. This sounds like our generation doesn’t it?

The people love to claim that God doesn’t exist, that this whole world is but an accident, that they are self-made, that they are responsible for all that they are.

They are responsible and one day will answer to God for it! While in this nation we live on the blessings God has given us for the faithfulness of past generations.

But Malachi does not deliver just the well-deserved rebuke to the people but as we find throughout the bible God also sends the message of his love and the gospel hope that is coming.

In Malachi we will find the same collision that is happening in our land. The collision between the God of Love and Grace and the apathetic and spiritual waywardness of the people – God’s people for now all are called to his name.

And in the very first verse, actually, the word that’s used for this book, “an oracle,” suggests something of that confrontation. There’s the weight of divine authority attached to the message of Malachi as it comes to confront his people and us, in our apathy and in our sin.

And so as we hear it, we need to understand God wants to confront us. There’s a collision that in our lives between His call and His Word and the way we are living now. But if we will hear it in faith, the Holy Spirit helping us, the message of the book of Malachi will change us forever.

So we need to shake off the Spiritual Amnesia and remember the word of God as he speaks to us each week.

That start of verse 2 we read earlier

***Malachi 1:2 (ANIV)***

<sup>2</sup> ~~"I have loved you," says the LORD. "But you ask, 'How have you loved us?' "Was not Esau Jacob's brother?" the LORD says. "Yet I have loved Jacob,~~

That sums up the whole of the bible. People won't accept it but we know it is the truth.

God has loved us; he has shown it in so many ways that we should be so very grateful for.

God is unchanging and so if he has loved us, then he still loves us and will go on loving us. And that love is for all. 2 Peter 3:9 says it all:

***2 Peter 3:9 (ANIV)***

<sup>9</sup> ~~The Lord is not slow in keeping his promise, as some understand slowness. He is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance.~~

God's whole message is one of love; it produces in people a response, an awareness of sin, a grief for that sin and true repentance of the heart as we respond in love. What a great day that is when we truly believe because we understand that God loves us.

Too many people, and perhaps you are one of them, try the wrong response. They try resolutions and turning over new leaves. They must try harder. While all of that has a very valid place and we should all be trying harder such as making sure that we overcome spiritual amnesia this is not the treatment for our basic problem.

The only thing that can strengthen our obedience, mature our faith and seed us through the struggles of this world is that God loves us. We are His beloved!

That is the message the world needs to hear and that is the message we need to hear. God's first summons to us is not in a call to what we should do. There are many things we should do but that is in the response to the first call of God.

We need to hear the Word of God to us. The word that says God has loved us since the dawn of time, that he loves us now and will love us for eternity.

Isn't that a fabulous message? One the world needs to hear!

But how does Israel answer?

***Malachi 1:2 (ANIV)***

<sup>2</sup> ~~"I have loved you," says the LORD. "But you ask, 'How have you loved us?' "Was not Esau Jacob's brother?" the LORD says. "Yet I have loved Jacob,~~

Israel has lost sight of all that God has done and instead looks to their circumstances. They have been defeated, spent 70 years in exile, returned to a barren land that they are still trying to rebuild and remain under the rule of Babylon.

They did not feel loved.

And people in our land feel the same. They look at all that seems wrong; the crime rate, lack of housing, the price of everything, immigration, whatever their pet peeve is and they say "How has God loved us?"

They ignore the amazing wealth of this nation, the growth in our economy, the fall in unemployment, the security we take for granted. We are still loved by God which is why so many people want to come here. People should consider the afflictions so many nations are going through and realise how much God loves us.

Back in Malachi God could have just removed his love and let Israel see what it is like to have to live without God's love but He does not do that. Instead he reveals the facets of his love.

### **God's love is unconditional**

God does not love based on what we do or what we are. His love is unconditional; he loves us despite what we do or what we are. We live in God's favour because we have responded to that love.

We do not earn God's love by responding to him. His love is already present as we saw in 2 Peter 3.

God loves you because he loves you – there is no other explanation for it. It is not based on favour or on random selection. He loves you as he loves all mankind. Unconditionally!

Jeremiah says in his prophecies

#### ***Jeremiah 31:3 (ANIV)***

<sup>3</sup> *The LORD appeared to us in the past, saying: "I have loved you with an everlasting love; I have drawn you with loving-kindness.*

And as Paul says in his letter to the Romans

#### ***Romans 8:38-39 (ANIV)***

<sup>38</sup> *For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, <sup>39</sup> neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.*

God's love is truly **unconditional**

### **God's love is asymmetrical**

That is how God loves us is not based on how much we love him. It is not a mirror image as so much human love is.

We also need to consider the last part of verse 2 and verse 3

#### ***Malachi 1:2-3 (ANIV)***

<sup>2</sup> *"I have loved you," says the LORD. "But you ask, 'How have you loved us?' "Was not Esau Jacob's brother?" the LORD says. "Yet I have loved Jacob, <sup>3</sup> but Esau I have hated, and I have turned his mountains into a wasteland and left his inheritance to the desert jackals."*

Now this is one of those theology points that people dance around or try and explain away. In many places we hear of God's hatred and how we are to hate sin and we tend to think of this in terms of the way many people hate; a spiteful, vindictive and unreasoned prejudice.

This is the sort of hatred that loves to destroy, to tear down and to belittle and holds no love.

We have already seen that God's love is unconditional and he loves all mankind so what are we talking about when we find God's hatred?

This hatred is a judicial one meaning that it is based on the state of man. His hatred is for the sin and falls on those who do not respond to his extravagant love. Esau was capricious ranting and raving about God while Jacob responded to God's love in offerings of a thankful heart.

And when we think of God's hatred of sin and his desire for us to be holy we should see this as his extravagant love for us for he loved us when we were in sin and called out to us just as his call of love goes out across the nations today seeking those who will respond.

That love is greater than anything else and greater than our thankful love could ever be and so God's love has to be asymmetrical.

Why us is a sensible question and is why Jesus gave us the parable of the wedding banquet in Matthew 22. We all know the story. The King prepared a wedding banquet and sent his servants to those who had already been invited but they all refused to come and so he left them to the fate their actions deserved and sent his servants to invite any they could find.

**Matthew 22:10 (ANIV)**

<sup>10</sup> *So the servants went out into the streets and gathered all the people they could find, both good and bad, and the wedding hall was filled with guests.*

Both good and bad – the invitation was unconditional but as the parable ends

**Matthew 22:14 (ANIV)**

<sup>14</sup> *"For many are invited, but few are chosen."*

It is us because we have responded to the amazing unconditional asymmetrical love of God

And finally **God's love is Universal**

All that God was doing was not just some favouritism for a select band of people called Israel. It was so that his Glory would be seen throughout the world.

**Malachi 1:5 (ANIV)**

<sup>5</sup> *You will see it with your own eyes and say, 'Great is the LORD—even beyond the borders of Israel!'*

And this is again a theme throughout the Bible but sticking to Malachi you find it again in verse 11.

**Malachi 1:11 (ANIV)**

<sup>11</sup> *My name will be great among the nations, from the rising to the setting of the sun. In every place incense and pure offerings will be brought to my name, because my name will be great among the nations," says the LORD Almighty.*

What the message of Malachi is trying to do is awaken a people from their spiritual apathy and their focus on their condition and day to day struggles and remind them of their mission. To proclaim God's glory to the world around them and demonstrate it in their lives.

Oh look – that's the same mission we have today!

Jesus said to his disciples in John 15:16

**John 15:16 (ANIV)**

*<sup>16</sup> You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you to go and bear fruit—~~fruit that will last. Then the Father will give you whatever you ask in my name.~~*

Which echoes the Great Commission

**Matthew 28:19-20 (ANIV)**

*<sup>19</sup> Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptising them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, <sup>20</sup> and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age."*

We need to take God's love to the world even as we are doing so through our support of Kefelonia and our recent gift to Operation Mobilisation to buy fuel for their ship.

We proclaim God's universal love in obey his command to love each other and in displaying his love to the world making disciples of **all** nations on a mission that **cannot** fail because Christ has said that he will build his Church and that even includes our fat and comfortable land.

So God has declared his unconditional, asymmetric, universal love and we who see and acknowledge it ought to bow down in humility, rise up in adoration and praise and go forth with boldness to proclaim the glory of God in a mission that cannot fail.

