

TAKE TIME OUT – *Pastoral Retreat*

Half Acre, Horton Heath, Wimborne, Dorset, BH21 7JS
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Sunday Scriptures: 11th July 2021

Malachi 3:6-7 *Return to Me*

⁶“For I the Lord do not change; therefore you, O children of Jacob, have not perished. ⁷Ever since the days of your ancestors 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.

Malachi 3:10-12 *Return to Me*

¹⁰Bring the full tithe into the storehouse, so that there may be food in My house, and thus put Me to the test, says the Lord of hosts; see if I will not open the windows of heaven for you and pour down for you an overflowing blessing. ¹¹I will rebuke the locust for you, so that it will not destroy the produce of your soil; and your vine in the field shall not be barren, says the Lord of hosts. ¹²Then all nations will count you happy, for you will be a land of delight, says the Lord of hosts.

Malachi 3:14-18 *Those who revere the Lord*

¹⁴You have said it is vain to serve God. What do we profit by keeping His command or by going about as mourners before the Lord of hosts? ¹⁵Now we count the arrogant happy; evildoers not only prosper, but when they put God to the test they escape.” ¹⁶Then those who revered the Lord spoke with one another. The Lord took note and listened, and a book of remembrance was written before him of those who revered the Lord and thought on His name. ¹⁷They shall be Mine, says the Lord of hosts, My special possession on the day when I act, and I will spare them as parents spare their children who serve them. ¹⁸Then once more you shall see the difference between the righteous and the wicked, between one who serves God and one who does not serve Him.

Malachi 4:1-2 *The day of judgement and of healing*

¹See the day is coming, burning like an oven, when all the arrogant and all evildoers will be stubble; the day that comes shall burn them up, says the Lord of hosts, so that it will leave them neither root nor branch. ²But for you who revere My name the Son of Righteousness shall rise, with healing in its wings. You shall go out leaping like calves from the stall.

Acts 3:17-21 *Peter Speaks in Solomon’s Portico*

¹⁷And now, friends, I know that you acted in ignorance, as did also your rulers. ¹⁸In this way God fulfilled what He had foretold through all the prophets, that His Messiah would suffer. ¹⁹Repent therefore, and turn to God so that your sins may be wiped out, ²⁰so that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord, and that He may send the Messiah appointed for you, that is, Jesus, ²¹who must remain in heaven until the time of universal restoration that God announced long ago through His holy prophets.

Reflection:

There is not space here to include the entire message of God’s Word given through the prophet Malachi and Peter in the book of Acts. However, I encourage you to read them in their context when you have time. Both messengers of God speak plainly, challenging wrongdoing and conveying God’s promise of healing through repentance. Malachi speaks of God’s judgement as refining fire and asks, ‘Who can stand?’ He knows that no-one is perfect and no-one is without sin and wonders how we can be cleansed and who has the authority to cleanse us? Malachi is preparing the way for two messengers of God: the first is John the Baptist and the second is Jesus. God’s Son will act like refiners fire that heats raw material in a furnace until it melts. This process separates the impurities, which rise to the surface and are then skimmed off so that only the pure metal remains. In similar fashion, Jesus will also act like fullers soap, which is a clay-like substance capable of absorbing oil and grease from soiled material. You might compare it with a modern-day stain remover! Refiners’ fire sounds a

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painful process when applied to the cleansing of our hearts and minds. Fullers soap seems a more gentle process when applied to removing the stains of our bad habits and hurtful behaviour. However, we cannot get away from the message of purification and cleansing contained in these passages, without which our souls are in danger of being lost! As Jesus explained to Nicodemus, to be 'born again' means, the transfiguration from something raw and imperfect into something refined and pure that is fit for the Kingdom of God ([John 3:5](#)). Jesus will purify the faithful remnant and their offering will be pleasing as in former years. If we allow ourselves to be re-made in God's likeness we will please our maker in all we say and do. *Are we satisfied that all we say and do reflects Jesus and pleases God?*

Malachi also directs God's people to the day of the Lord, or the day of judgement; the day when we see the four horsemen of the apocalypse. What a day that will be! He describes it as burning like an oven! Any baker will tell you that the surge of heat from an oven at maximum temperature, when you open the door, is strong enough to take your breath away, along with your eyebrows if you are not careful! Malachi is delivering God's warning to those who are arrogant and stubborn in wrongdoing. This includes pride, jealousy, power seeking, controlling manipulation, gossiping and those vengeful in spirit. Such as these will be as stubble, burnt up by the purifying presence of the Lord, leaving no trace of root or branch! Wow! That's harsh! However, there is no need for those who revere God and abide by His Word to despair, praise the Lord! Repent and believe, ask and receive; to such as these God promises that, "the Son of Righteousness shall rise, with healing in its wings. You shall go out leaping like calves from the stall." It all sounds a bit like good cop, bad cop! But the people of Malachi's day were not ignorant; they knew about God and were even doing what He asked of them, but only if it agreed with what they wanted. They had their own agenda and mistakenly neglected the commands of their Creator. They considered themselves to be God's chosen people, complacently believing that was enough. Becoming a member of God's family involves a commitment to 'go and do' as His Son Jesus came and did. To do nothing when we see or hear things contrary to the Word of God is to give the devil a foothold. *Have we given much thought to the day of the Lord when we meet our Maker?*

So far we have reflected on the message of an Old Testament prophet. But in the book of Acts, Peter speaks to the crowd in Solomon's Portico of the temple in much the same way. He reminds them that, in spite of their sin, they still have a choice to receive Jesus as their Messiah and their Lord. The opportunity to repent and be saved is the same choice now as it ever was. We all make mistakes, but thank the Lord, the opportunity to resolve not to repeat them, and go forward from them with changed attitudes and behaviour is always on offer. God's mercy and grace, like the healing of the crippled beggar or the healing Word of God to someone in distress are 'God moments' and opportunities for fulfilling our calling of mission with Jesus. Repentance is both uncomfortable and unpopular because it requires admitting we are at fault and asking forgiveness from the one we have wronged. Some believe that being identified with Christ will gain all the benefits of God's promises without having to address any defects in the way they live and behave. Sadly, this is a false belief. It is not a sin to make a mistake; the sin occurs when we refuse to put our mistakes right or when our wrongdoing is pre-meditated. If we do not accept the necessity for repentance, both personally and corporately, we should not expect to be blessed with revival. *Is this something we are praying for in expectation?*

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Peter reminds his listeners that they are God's chosen people, descendants of the prophets and inheritors of God's covenant. When we reject the ways of evil and return to God, all the promised blessings of His Word will be poured out upon us in abundance. Jesus has gifted us with the Holy Spirit that we are not left alone in the war against Satan. The will and purpose of God is conveyed through the inspiration of the Holy Spirit that we might discern the right path and walk in it. As *Hosea* promised: 'Let us press on to know Him, and He will respond to us as surely as the coming of dawn or the rain of early spring' (*Hosea 6:3*). The Word of God is our plumb-line and the example of Jesus is the foundation on which we build His Kingdom. When we stand in faith as the Body of Christ following His example, revival such as we have never seen and could not dream of will sweep in like a tsunami. Perhaps we would do well to ponder the question of Jesus to the man at the side of the pool: "Do you want to be made well?" (*John 5:6*). Malachi prepared the way for the most important message of all. John the Baptist prepared the way for Jesus Christ, the Messiah. Jesus prepared the way for us to follow the path He took. It is now the responsibility of Christ's Church to prepare the people for His return. We may be talking the talk, but are we walking the walk? May we tread in the footsteps of Jesus and gain the blessing of God. **Amen!**

Hymn/Song: Lord We Long For You (*Heal our nation*) *Songs of Fellowship 365*

By Trish Morgan/Ray Goudie/Ian Townend/Dave Bankhead

Lord we long for You to heal our nation
There's a hunger deep within our hearts
To see healing in our nation
Send Your Spirit to revive us:

Heal our nation! Heal our nation! Heal our nation!

Pour out Your Spirit on this land!

Lord we hear Your Spirit coming closer,
A mighty wave to break upon our land,
Bringing justice, and forgiveness,
God we cry to You, "Revive us!":

Heal our nation! Heal our nation! Heal our nation!

Pour out Your Spirit on this land!

Poem: FATHER KEEP ME ©Janice Morgan-1991

Father keep me day by day
Walking in Your perfect way
Lift me up and keep me safe
Ever stronger in my faith

Your Word is like a two edged sword
And Your ways are not my ways Lord
When trials and tribulations call
I, at Your feet, will humbly fall

Dear Lord Jesus ever wise
Guiding me with watchful eyes
You send Your Word and wisdom too
You show me what I have to do

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On Christ the solid rock I'll stand
When all around is sinking sand
Trust and obey is what I'll do
I'll take a step of faith for You

And when the battle lays me bare
You send Your love beyond compare
A warming glow within my heart
I know we'll never be apart

When burdens get too much to bare
You give me rest, I know You care
Your peace is like a healing balm
It soothes and brings an inner calm

You placed Your Holy Spirit in me
A light to shine for all to see
It fills me up and overflows
Touching hearts where ever it goes

Oh Father You gave Your only Son
To die for me a sinful one
In humble prayer, I come to You
Oh Father how I do love You.

Prayer: Dear God in heaven, help us to return to You; give us a heart that reveres the Lord Jesus Christ, Your Son; bless our minds with the inspiration of the Holy Spirit to guide us on the right path. Father, Son and Holy Spirit, protect us from all evil and expose the temptations of Satan; lead us into Truth and repentance to live in righteousness and receive Your blessings. This we ask for Your Kingdom and Your glory. **Amen!**