

## Malachi 3:1-4

<sup>1</sup> *“See, I will send my messenger, who will prepare the way before me. Then suddenly the Lord you are seeking will come to his temple; the messenger of the covenant, whom you desire, will come,” says the LORD Almighty.*

<sup>2</sup> *But who can endure the day of his coming? Who can stand when he appears? For he will be like a refiner’s fire or a launderer’s soap.* <sup>3</sup> *He will sit as a refiner and purifier of silver; he will purify the Levites and refine them like gold and silver. Then the LORD will have men who will bring offerings in righteousness,* <sup>4</sup> *and the offerings of Judah and Jerusalem will be acceptable to the LORD, as in days gone by, as in former years.* (NIV<sup>84</sup>)

### ADVENT MESSENGERS

1. Some Came to Prepare the Way
2. One Came to Be the Way
3. We Come to Share the Way

“Don’t get mad at me! I’m just the messenger!” Have you ever said that to someone? Maybe you’ve bit your tongue and kept quiet even though you wanted to say it. “This bad news is not my fault. And you getting mad at me won’t fix it. I’ve just been sent to deliver the news.” If you’ve ever been put in that uncomfortable position of having to deliver bad news to someone, you know the feeling. You know the difficulties of being a messenger.

In God’s Word today, we hear about God’s messengers. God chose people to deliver his Word. We’re going meet today some **Advent Messengers**. We’ll see how 1) Some Came to Prepare the Way, 2) One Came to be the Way, and 3) We Come to Share the Way.

#### 1) Some Came to Prepare the Way

It’s very interesting that these words, this message from God comes from a man named Malachi. Malachi the prophet had a very prophetic name. His name means “my messenger” in Hebrew. Malachi was a prophet of God, a messenger of God, sent to deliver an important message.

Malachi was the last of God’s Old Testament prophets. He lived around the year 400 BC. He was the last messenger that God sent to his Old Testament people. It is like God was saying with Malachi’s message “This is enough. You have heard enough to recognize Jesus when he comes.” With Malachi, God was closing another chapter in the history of his people.

Malachi’s message was one of repentance. “Repent of your sins, confess your faults and remember that God is your only hope.” Malachi came to prepare the way for the Messiah in the hearts of God’s people. He showed them that if they rejected the Lord and thought too highly of themselves, then they would certainly miss the Messiah when he came. If they didn’t acknowledge their own sins and their need for a Savior, then they would be looking for someone else when the Savior came. He called on them to repent of their sins and to fix their eyes on the coming Savior, who would take their sins away.

God’s messenger was called to speak to more than just people who lived 2400 years ago. Malachi is a messenger to us. And we need to hear his message. We need to turn from our wicked ways as well. We need to repent that we have allowed the things of this world to distract us and haven’t always fixed our eyes firmly

## Malachi 3:1-4

on God. He promises to provide, yet we tell him we'll believe it when we see it. We doubt his sincerity and question his judgment. We don't always have hearts that are ready to receive Jesus. We have some road construction to do as well. We have some mountain sized obstacles to remove and some preparation of our hearts to accomplish. "My messenger" proclaims a much needed message of repentance to me and to you.

God was going to close a chapter of history with Malachi - but before God would close that chapter, he pointed the people to the opening of the next chapter. ***"See, I will send my messenger, who will prepare the way before me.*** Just like Isaiah had foretold in our Gospel lesson, the Messiah would have a forerunner. He would be the voice of one calling in the desert. Malachi's message was to look for the coming of another messenger – John the Baptist was the fulfillment. John would be God's messenger too. He, too, would call the people to repentance. He would prepare the way for Jesus.

### 2) One Came to be the Way

Malachi spoke the Lord's message, ***See, I will send my messenger, who will prepare the way before me. Then suddenly the Lord you are seeking will come to his temple; the messenger of the covenant, whom you desire, will come," says the LORD Almighty.*** Prophets foretold his coming, but Jesus was a messenger as well. He was a ***messenger of the covenant.*** He came to deliver a message to the people of forgiveness and hope. His message was one of fulfillment. All those rituals and sacrifices, festivals and Sabbath days were of the old covenant. Jesus came with a message of new hope. He came with a message of forgiveness and everlasting peace. Jesus came not just with words, but with actions to back them up.

He backed up his message with his perfect life. He lived a life of perfection and gave it freely to us. He obeyed God's laws because we so often disobeyed. He lived a righteous life, so that he could share that righteousness with us. Jesus backed up his message with a perfect life, and he backed it up with a willing death. He laid his life down to pay for our sins. He endured the capital punishment that our crimes deserved. He suffered our hell and endured our pain. He did it so that our sins could be taken away and our lives restored.

The messenger of the covenant changed our future forever. Without Jesus, we'd cower all our days at the thought of our impending judgment. The fact that we would one day face the judge and be sentenced to an eternity away from him would be a weight too great to bear. But that's not our fate. When Malachi asks the questions, ***But who can endure the day of his coming? Who can stand when he appears?*** we now can say "I can!" We can stand up on the last Day and endure Judgment Day, because he has made us ready. He has prepared us for that day. ***For he will be like a refiner's fire or a launderer's soap. <sup>3</sup> He will sit as a refiner and purifier of silver; he will purify the Levites and refine them like gold and silver.*** Jesus has refined us. When a metal smith is looking to get a pure metal like silver or gold, he burns it. It's really called refining. In the process of refining, all the impurities, all the less-valuable, throw away materials are removed, and what you have left is pure gold or silver.

Jesus takes all the less-valuable, undesirable, throw away sinful parts of us and burns them up. He burns them out of us as he pays the price with his own life. It's like John said to those who received his first epistle, ***the blood of Jesus (God's) Son, purifies us from every sin. (1 John 1:7b)*** Jesus' life and his death and his resurrection takes all the impurities out and leaves us holy and righteous, saints in God's holy eyes. ***Then the LORD will have men who will bring offerings in righteousness, and the offerings of Judah and Jerusalem will be acceptable to the LORD, as in days gone by, as in former years.*** Because of what Jesus has done and who he has made us to be, now we are acceptable in his eyes. Now we who were created by him, can please

## Malachi 3:1-4

him with our lives of righteousness. Now we can follow his laws and obey his commands. They aren't a burden to us anymore, but now a list of ways that we can please our God. His law is now a blanket of opportunities to offer him our worship and praise. He's taken our filthy rags and washed us in launderers soap. He's taken our sticky lives and made us clean and holy and presentable in God's sight. And more than us acceptable, he's made us pleasing and attracted and God's delight.

Jesus is the only way for our hearts to be prepared. He's the only way for our impurities to be removed. He's the only way for us to be clean and the only way for us to please God. He's the only way that we could enter heaven. He won us the ticket. He gave us the pass to and eternity celebration, to the wedding feast of the Lamb. There we will rejoice that his victory is ours. There we will forever celebrate the relationship that he had made possible and the joy that we will have that no one and no thing can take away.

### 3) We Come to Share the Way

And God has made us more than righteous. He's done more than refine and clean us. He's give us some work to do while we await his return. But it's a joyful task to carry out. God has made **us** to be his messengers, too.

Malachi was a messenger, John the Baptist was a messenger, even Jesus was the *messenger of the covenant*. And now God makes you his messenger, too. He calls you not to hear his message and bottle it up inside you. Rather he calls you to repeat his message, to share his message.

You are his messenger when you raise your children in the way of the Lord. You are his messenger, when you are there to comfort a loved one in their time of trouble. You are his messenger when you are always ready to give a reason for the hope that you have. You are his messenger when you look for opportunities to proclaim Jesus as the Savior of the World. When you announce a message of peace to a hurting friend, when you tell of forgiveness in Jesus name, when you declare that the gates of heaven are open wide for those who believe in him, you are his messenger. You are doing the same thing that the prophets did, the same thing the Isaiah, and Malachi did. You are God's messenger like John as you help those around you to see their need for a savior, and then point them to the One who is the Way and the Truth and the Life.

When there's bad news to be shared, it's not the most pleasant thing to be a messenger. But when there's good news to proclaim, when there's *the good news* to proclaim, I can't think of a greater joy than to be God's messenger in the world. Lord Jesus, make us willing and capable, bold and eager messengers of your love – this Advent season and always. Amen.