

Healing Love: Malachi // Minor Prophets #5

Open to Malachi, the great Italian prophet – never gets old

This is the last week in our series through the MP...

- (I was hoping for a little sadder of a reaction...
- Some of you are probably like, “I sure hope we do something a little more touchy-feely next—a series like “Precious Moments with Boyfriend Jesus” or something like that. Yep, that’s coming next week.)

But, as a church we want to respond to what God is teaching us. The messages given by all these MP have been powerful, but I was especially impacted by the one from Joel, and one of the things we learned from it: “How desperate we are for God is measured by how seriously we take sin in our lives and how often we fast and pray.”

- ~~Fasting, contrary to popular belief, is not a way of punishing ourselves~~, “Oh now, God is obligated to bless us!” but a recognition of how much God loves us and how desperate we are for the outbreak of that love in our lives.”
- ~~When we fast, we say, “God, I want your presence and power in my life more than I want FOOD.”~~
- “God, I’m not ok with what’s going on in our family...”
- We hadn’t originally planned this on the calendar, but we feel like we need to fast as a church this Wednesday.

Works Consulted:

“The Sin of Man and the Silence of God,” David Platt

“The Gospel and Your Wealth,” Tim Keller

“The Message of Malachi: Does It Matter How I Worship God?,” Mark Dever

“The Refining Love of God,” Matt Chandler

Burning Desire: Malachi, Jensen and Pulley

Old Testament Theology: Malachi, Paul House

- If you’re *not ok* with the level of God’s activity in your family or in our church and community, I want you to join us in crying out to God that day—God, we want your presence and power in our lives more than we want food.”
- If you are satisfied... fast and pray for those of us who aren’t.
- Your campus pastors will tell you more...

Well, I hope you had a great Memorial Day. One of our family’s Memorial Day traditions is that we get together with my **wife’s side of the family at Lake Gaston**. My brother-in-law is pretty big into the tech world, and one of his goals is to point me to at least one new App that will improve my quality of life, and this time he pointed me to an app that provides really well-done 15-minute audio highlights of popular books.

- (And I’ll post the name of the App on Twitter later so you can find it because even if I say it now a bunch of you will still email the office later and say, “What was that App?”)
- **Already I love it, because I love to read**, but I also love efficiency (which drives my wife crazy, because she reads for sheer pleasure. That woman can get deeply engrossed to the point of tears by what’s written on the back of a cereal box. **Which I admire, I frequently get to the end of a book** and feel like, “I could have gotten most of that information in about 15 minutes.”
- In fact, as a guy who has written a few books, I have a theory on publishing (3-chapter theory—figure out those 3 chapters).
- **Anyway, this App helps you do that has been great.**

I say all that because you might think of Malachi as the 15-minute summary of the entire Old Testament. I’m definitely not saying you

should read it and not the rest of the OT, but you'll find almost all of the primary OT themes in it.

Malachi 3:7 probably sums up the message whole book, if not the whole OT itself: "Since the days of your fathers, you have turned from my statutes; you have not kept them. Return to me, and I will return to you," says the Lord of Hosts. **(Malachi 3:7)**

Furthermore, **Malachi's book is the last thing** God says to Israel for 400 years. After this Israel enters a time historians call "the silent years," where they received no word from God. The **next time God speaks is when Jesus comes**, so what Malachi says in this book is going to reverberate in Israel's hearts for 400 years. This is what they are still thinking about it when Jesus shows up.

In this book, we're going to see **the charge against Israel**, **the problem of Israel's persistent unfaithfulness**, and then lastly, **God's solution**.

First, let's look at...

I. The Charge Against Israel

It's got **4 components** to it.

Let me give you the context: It's been about 170 years since the Israelites had been exiled into captivity in Babylon because of their sin. God had promised that this captivity would not be permanent, and so after 70 years he returned them home again to the Promised Land.

Well, when they came back, they underwent a national revival and made all these reforms under the leadership of Ezra and Nehemiah.

Within a generation, however, those promises of reform had worn off. What didn't wear off, however, was their external commitment to religiosity.

- Historians say that Israel would never again lose that—not even to today—they were so scarred by the exile, and so scared it would happen again, they became permanently and hyper-religious.
- This was the time period when groups like the Pharisees and Sadducees formed, with all their emphasis on external behaviors. These were the groups who caused Jesus so many problems, whom he called whitewashed tombs—pretty on the outside and full of dead men's bones.
- Malachi lived during the time these groups were forming...

These are 4 charges against **religiously-active** people, who **look great on the outside** but whose hearts are actually pretty cold toward God on the inside.

Warning: These might be a little painful, and most of them hit pretty close to him—they can even be a little offensive because Malachi gets all up in our business—he gets personal, like the "that's none of your business" places.

Just wait and see what I mean. I hope you make it all the way through this. I've been afraid you'd walk out...

- **One of our campus pastors asked this week**, "Have you actually had someone walk out in the middle of a sermon?" I said, "Yes, it happens all the time." (story of woman coming back for keys—Glad you're here, please don't feel compelled to give, just glad you're here).

So here they are... they were...

Religious, but...

A. Self-seeking (1:13)

- In chapter 1, Malachi **talks about their offerings** and he says, **secretly in your heart you say**, “You say, ‘What a burden!’ ...And you bring stolen, lame, or sick animals. You bring this as an offering! Am I to accept that from your hands? I am a great King,” says the Lord of Armies, (and I deserve great offerings) **“and my name will be feared among the nations.”** (1:13, NIV)
- Their **worship was half-hearted**. They gave the lame and sick from their flocks.
 - Things that didn’t really cost them.
 - Their left-overs
 - Out of their excess.
- I had a **missionary friend** who said, “When you are a missionary, you constantly have people give you the left-overs of their lives. They say, “I got a **new computer, here’s a 10-year-old one I thought you could have. Flip phone with a dialpad. Here’s some clothes I haven’t worn since the 90’s, I thought you’d like them.**” He said, “You always appreciated their generosity, of course, but you wondered what it said about their heart that they upgraded their houses and their lifestyles first and offered to God what had no value in their lives anymore.”
- **Let me ask you: What does God get from you—your first and your best**—or your left-overs? Does it cost you?
- **Does your giving to God inconvenience your lifestyle?** C.S. Lewis said that one of the only ways to know your giving was where it should be is that it changes your lifestyle. Until it gets to that point, you are not giving in faith and certainly no in worship.
- **If you come into some unexpected money**, what is the *first* thing it goes go?
 - **Upgrading your lifestyle, stocking your savings?**
 - Or does God get the first and best of it?
- Don’t just think money:
 - QT: I read Bible when I get up so he can have the first and **best part of my day**

- Your career: some of you have careers that could be used for strategic advance of the gospel
- **Our offerings toward God ought to make a statement to the nations** (other people) about God’s worth to us. People should say, “Wow, you honor God that much that you would make that kind of sacrifice?”
 - Who is this God and why do you feel this way about him?
- 2 Sam 24:24, “I will not give unto the Lord that which cost me nothing.” Not about fulfilling a need, but making a statement of God...

So, they were religious but self-seeking rather than God-honoring. Second, **they were religious but...**

B. Self-centered (2:13–16)

- ...**Rather than God-centered**. This was demonstrated by their **behavior in marriage**: “And this second thing you do. You cover the LORD’s altar with tears, with weeping and groaning because he no longer regards your offering... [14] And you say, “Why does he not?” 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. [15] Did he not make them *one*, with a portion of the Spirit in their union? And what was the *one* God seeking? Godly offspring.” [16] ‘The man who does not love his wife but divorces her, says the LORD, the God of Israel, covers his garment with injustice.’” (2:13–16, CSB)
- **Here’s what was happening**: If you read back a **few vv earlier** in chp 2, you’ll see that many of the Jewish men had taken a fancy to foreign women, found them attractive, who worshipped other gods, and they were marrying them instead of godly Hebrew women. Some were even divorcing their wives to marry one of these women.
- **God confronts them in two ways (vs. 15)**—
 - **First of all**, he says: *Your marriage was a covenant you made before me*, and it was supposed to reflect my love. (**See the**

repetition of one/one—your covenant should reflect my nature.

- Second, **he says, one of my primary intentions** in your marriage was to raise up godly children.
- But **you, he says, have started to look at marriage** as if it were all about you—your wants and desires.
- **Divorce is often the result of a life that has completely turned in the wrong direction.** Divorce is not usually the problem, but of the fruit of the problem—a life that is self-centered. The problem is that people go into marriage looking for someone to complete them or make them happy, and when that person quits doing that, or gets difficult to live with, or they meet someone they think might do it better for them, they get divorced.
- **Their self-centered approach to marriage even affects how they think about children.** They think of in terms of what they want, of what will add enjoyment to their lives.
- **A friend of mine says, “Most people don’t want a kid, they want an accessory.”** They ask questions like, “Should we have a kid or get a dog?” They are not the same thing or equals. Don’t call your dog your “fur baby.” It’s not a baby, and don’t send me a Christmas card with just your dog’s face on it, as if it is the center of your family (Look, I figured the cat people already hate me, so I figured it was the dog people’s turn.)
 - **You say, “Well, you just don’t like animals.”** That’s probably fair. (You better be glad I wasn’t Noah—it would pretty much just be me and you sitting there.)
 - Dogs are great, but don’t equate them with children as if they have the same value, children that Jesus gave his life to redeem that he wants to use to further his kingdom.
 - One of God’s primary purposes for family is children, and he gives children for the purpose of his kingdom.
- **One of God’s purposes in marriage** is to raise up a godly generation of people.
- Now, I want to be really careful here, because I don’t want to imply that the number of kids you have is in any way a

measure of your godliness, because there can be **multiple valid reasons** why you choose to have a small or large family, or even to have no children.

- **But I will say, generally speaking, as a society gets more self-centered, they tend to have less children.**
 - That’s happening bigtime in our generation. Because kids are inconvenient. They mess up your life.
 - Veronica and I refer to our kids by names like “Hawaii vacation” or “beach house” and “Corvette collection” because of how much they cost us each year.
- I can’t judge your heart, but I can ask those of you who are married or thinking about getting married you to consider:
 - **What is your motive for having kids? Is it to accessorize and add value to your life**, or is about God’s kingdom?
 - **How did you determine the number of kids you should have?**
 - In this area, I’d encourage you to be like me... **(my story)**
- The point is: **Even marriage and family are not about us, they are about God.**
- But when it is about you, divorce becomes a lot more common, and kids become a preference.
 - **When I know that it is about God**, I’ll stick it out in hard times, because I know God’s name, not my needs, is the ultimate thing of importance here.
 - **And I know that God can bring himself glory** in my marriage by giving me a peaceful, harmonious relationship, but he can also bring glory to himself by enabling me to love someone with grace even when she’s difficult, because that’s how he loves.
- **Just as in Malachi’s day, we have a divorce problem in the religious community;** we have one in this church. And it’s **by in large because we have adopted a self-centered**, rather than God-centered approach to life.
 - **I hear couples who get divorced because they “no longer love each other,”** or “we realized we never loved each other.”
 - **That kind of love is a choice.**

- **What you are saying is that you encountered things** that made them difficult to love. Do you think you are **always easy** for God to love?
- That it's all snuggles and rainbows with you?
- **God says (in Malachi) he hates divorce¹ because it tells the world a lie about his love.** When we divorce because we are no longer getting along or you are no longer making me happy, we tell the world that God's love is like that—that he loves us based on how sufficiently we meet his needs. *If that were true, we'd all be in hell.*
- **Marriage was supposed to be an earthly picture** of God's love—we become one like he is.
 - I hear of couples who get divorced **because of "irreconcilable differences."** Veronica and I have all kinds of irreconcilable differences.
 - **And so did Jesus with me. But Jesus loved me anyway,** and through his persistent grace he changed my heart. Now I get a chance to demonstrate that.
- **Couples don't fall out of love, they fall out of repentance.** They don't falter in their passion for each other; they falter in their worship of God. Their divorce is not usually caused by difficulties in the marriage as much as a self-centered, rather than God-centered, view of life.

Thirdly, they were religious but...

C. Unbelieving (2:17; 3:13–15)

- "You have wearied the Lord with your words. Yet you ask, "How have we wearied him?" When you say, 'Where is the God of justice?'" (2:17) "...You have spoken arrogantly against me," says the Lord... You have said, 'It is futile to serve God. The arrogant are blessed, and evildoers prosper.'" (3:13–15)

- **After all God had done for them,** they were still looking around at the world and saying, "God, it's not fair! God, how do we know that you really love us? Are you even up there?"
- **Keep in mind God had delivered them from a self-inflicted captivity now not once, but twice.** And God says, "Still you doubt my commitment to you? What more would I have to do?"
 - **I delivered you from Pharaoh's entire army** without a single casualty on your side.
 - I led you **through the wilderness** by a cloud and gave you miraculous provisions of food and clothing.
 - **I defeated enemies 3x your size right** in front of you.... And then I explained to you that that my ways were not your ways but you could always trust I was working, even when you couldn't see what I was doing."
 - **But still you say,** "Maybe you're not good, maybe you are not even there."
- **I often tell you that it's ok to ask questions, and it is...** but a persistent failure to trust God wearies him.
 - **Vietnam soldier story:** "He became like a brother to me... But I just can't help but think that the feeling wasn't reciprocated. That maybe he meant more to me than I did to him." Mom: "How could you insult my son this way? My son gave his life for you. How could you doubt his commitment toward you?"
 - **J.C. Ryle: In the light of the cross,** the greatest insult you can give to God is to doubt his love for you!
- **Maybe your doubt never drives you all the way to unbelief,** but your second-guessing of God dulls your joy and mutes your worship.
 - **That's how I have often been.** I have never gone all the way into unbelief, but I have often lacked the warmth of knowing and trusting him as a "Good, Good Father."
 - **I experience moments where I find it hard to release myself to him fully in worship,** or trust him in prayer, or witness to

¹ Some translations translate 2:16 to say God hates divorce, such as NIV, ISV, NASB.

him with passion—because I can't understand why he would do or not do something a certain way.

- **And I'll have these moments where I hear God say, 'What more would I have to do to prove myself to you? I rescued you from sin. I brought someone into your life to share the gospel with you. And you remember that dark valley so many months/years ago? Remember how I brought you through it? Or how I answered this prayer and that prayer? How could you possibly doubt me?'**
- **Why do you routinely put my character in question just because you can't understand something?**
- **Questions are OK, but there comes a point at which the doubting has to stop, and not trusting God becomes an insult.**

Lastly, they were religious but...

D. Untrusting (specifically with money) (3:8–10)

- **Here's God's fourth charge against them:** "Will man rob God? Yet you are robbing me. But you say, 'How have we robbed you?' In your tithes and contributions. [9] Therefore you are cursed with a curse... [10] Bring the full tenth (first 10% of what you get) into the storehouse, that there may be food in my house. And thereby put me to the test, says the LORD of hosts, if I will not open the windows of heaven for you and pour down for you a blessing until there is no more need." (3:8–10)
- **This is one of the clearest explanations in Scripture of how God feels about what Christians call the tithe**—the first 10% of all that God gives you, you give back to him.
 - Clearly, God doesn't ask for it because he needs it—he has the storehouses of heaven and actually wants to use those to meet your needs, but he commands us to give it as a way of declaring our trust in him.
- I often say this: **Tithing is one of the single best indicators of whether we really trust God** and whether we really are surrendered to him.

- You can see **here that God takes it very seriously**—he says when you don't do it is like breaking into his house robbing him.
- **(And please note:** I'm not bringing this up because we have financial needs in the church. I'm bringing this up because it's in the Bible, and it would be unfaithful for me not to bring it up! We're not doing a special offering. God brings it up because it is a barometer of our hearts)
- **Couple of bold statements: *If you haven't begun to tithe, you haven't yet to really begin the walk of faith.***
 - You might talk a big game of faith, but in this area, where the rubber meets the road, you don't actually trust God enough to do what he says.
 - One of my favorite tithing stories... David Jeremiah
 - Do you trust him enough to obey him in this?
- **Second statement: *Everybody tithes to something.*** Something gets your first and their best, and it's whatever gives you the most meaning or provides the greatest security in your life. Ask yourself the question: **What do I do first do with your money?**
 - For some, the **first thing they do is provide themselves with creature comforts.** And that's because you think what most brings happiness in life is an improved material station.
 - For others, you save. That's because you are not sure of what might happen in the future, and **extra money provides the greatest security.**
 - **Hear me:** There is nothing wrong with either of these things (nothing wrong with upgrading your lifestyle or saving for the future). **The problem is when you do these things first.**
 - God's people—the first thing they do with their money is tithe to God, who is their joy and security.
 - Again, **everybody tithes to something.** That thing is their "god."
- **So, what do you tithe to?** What gets the first and best of your paycheck? Or when you have big financial windfall—what do you do first with the money?

- **God says when you take what belongs to me**—your first and your best—you are robbing me, and I will not be robbed. Failing to give me your 1st and best puts you under the curse.
 - **Some of you may wonder why things never work out for you financially**—is it possible you are under a financial curse for failing to trust and prioritize God?
- **By contrast**, when you put me first, I'll multiply you beyond your wildest imaginations! ***And thereby put me to the test (TEST ME! One of few places he says that), says the LORD of hosts, if I will not open the windows of heaven for you and pour down for you a blessing until there is no more need.***
- **Test him!**

4 things religious people do that indicate that though they are hyper-religious, their heart still doesn't really belong to God: religious but self-seeking, self-centered disbelieving, untrusting...

Which brings us to...

II. The problem of persistent unfaithfulness

- So, what is the answer? Do they simply need **more** repentance? Someone else to yell them? **Another reform?**
- How many times do they need to go through this cycle?
- **I mentioned at the beginning that when Israel had first come back from captivity, about 100 years before Malachi, Ezra and Nehemiah led the nation in a national revival.** And the nation made a covenant with God. Nehemiah records it in chapter 9. The people said; ***"In view of all this, we are making a binding agreement, putting it in writing, and our leaders, our Levites and our priests (this was their notary publics) are affixing their seals to it."*** (Nehemiah* 9:38) This is as strong a covenant as they can make! "In writing, with their priests and leaders and Levites..."

This is like an 8th grader saying, "pinky swear." And here's what they promised:

- We will give God our first and our best (Nehemiah 10:35–36)
- We will put God's temple first (with our tithe) (Nehemiah 10:37–39)
- We will honor God with our marriages; we're not going to intermarry with unbelievers (Nehemiah 10:30).
- **Sound familiar?** Did you pay attention to the first half of this sermon? **But** within a few short years, they had totally gone back on all these promises. In fact, it happened during Nehemiah's lifetime. Nehemiah talks about it in the last chapter of his book (this **one of my favorite OT** verses) ***"[And] I confronted them and cursed them and beat some of the men and pulled out their hair" (13:25).*** **Be very glad Nehemiah is not your pastor.** No course on that is seminary. That's a legit accountability partner.
- And, of course, these are **the very things Malachi is confronting them on again** 100 years later!
- **We say, "Ahh... those fickle Israelites."** But haven't we all, at some point said, "I need to do better here. I need to be a better husband. Or, 'I need to be a better student.'" More courageous. Or 'better mom or dad.' 'I need to stop looking at those images on the Internet.' 'I need to pray more.' So, here's what I'm **going to do...** **And you come up with a plan**—sign a covenant and get an accountability partner. And that lasts for a little while, but then it wears off and you find yourself at a point worse off than where you were at the start!
- **What's the problem?** Is it that you were just not really sincere? Or that you should try harder? Need a better accountability partner, who will pull out your hair? No, it's latent sin in us that no promise or resolution on your part can eradicate.²
- Malachi says this is the problem Israel has had from the beginning: ***"Since the days of your fathers, you have turned from***

² David Platt, "The Sin of Man and the Silence of God."

my statutes; you have not kept them.” (3:7). You made big promises. But you never followed through.

- **Exodus**—Israel has just received the 10 Commandments and they **promised to obey it** with their whole lives. Then Moses was gone a few days longer than they had expected and they said, “God has abandoned us” and they made a Golden Calf and worshipped it.
- **2 Sam 7:** David gets the most stunning promise of the covenant ever given—and just a few days later he sins with Bathsheba.
- **You and I are the same way.** We don’t need someone who will come and give us new laws. We need someone who will come and give us new life. We don’t need someone to come onto the scene in history **with calls to reform**. We need a Savior who can come into our hearts **with the power of rebirth**.
- Malachi ends the OT with the word “curse,” which can also be translated as “destruction.” It’s sad, because the OT began with God and his perfect creation—life and beauty and brightness and now it’s all “curse.”
- And God could have written “the end” right there.

But he doesn’t. And so, we come to...

III. God’s Solution: The Sun of Righteousness (4:1–2)

- The book may end with the word “curse,” but tucked in the last chapter is one of the most beautiful and clear promises of the **Messiah** that is to come: **Malachi 4:1**, Surely the day is coming; it will burn like a furnace. All the arrogant and every evildoer will be stubble...” says the Lord Almighty. (that’s what we expect. This is what we don’t want) “But for you who fear my name, the sun of righteousness shall rise with healing in its wings. You shall go out leaping like calves from the stall.” (not sure what that means, but it sounds happy)
- **The human race has a dilemma:**

- **We want God to deliver us from evil, but** the evil we want him to deliver us from is also inside us. If I prayed, God remove all evil, you said “Amen,” and then God removed all evil from the world at 12:00 tonight, who would be here at 12:01?
 - **We want to go to heaven** with no more tears. But how many times have I caused tears? No more tear, no more JD Greear.
- **Second part of the dilemma: we believe that God should be a God of justice...** We don’t want an unjust God, and we know it: Think about how much we object when we see some guilty person get off free. Somebody shoots someone and the judge says, “no penalty” and we say “no, the victim’s life matters!” The Bible says, “God’s glory matters! Justice matters!”
 - The dilemma, we want a just God, but if God applies his justice to us, we’ll be destroyed.
- **Third part of the dilemma:** No matter how much we resolve to do better, it never lasts.

The Messiah Malachi talks to is the answer to all these dilemmas.

- **He came like a furnace**, but the fire of God’s wrath burned into him. (Which means he has satisfied God’s justice)
- So now, **he’s like the Sun (S-U-N) of Righteousness** rising with healing in his wings. Isn’t the sun also a furnace? Yet it gives you life. That’s what Jesus did.
- **400 years after Malachi** closed his book, Jesus stepped onto the scene of history and picked up right where Malachi left off. His first message was, “Repent...” **Mark 1:15** (Looking for verse to memorize?)
- **And then he went around reversing the curse** that Malachi ended the OT with: He healed diseases, calmed storms, cast out demons, and raised the dead.
- **And the reason he could do that was because he absorbed the curse.** He took the furnace of God’s wrath so he could be the healing Sun of Righteousness to us.

So now, you have to CHOOSE what the Messiah will be to you—furnace or sun: “See, I am going to send my messenger, and he will clear the way before me. (a prophecy about John the Baptist). Then the Lord you seek will suddenly come to his temple... ² *But who can endure the day of his coming? And who will be able to stand when he appears?* ³ (again, the change in tone...)...He will be like a refiner and purifier of silver; he will purify the sons of Levi and refine them like gold and silver. (not destroy, but purify) Then they will present offerings to the Lord in righteousness. ⁴ And the offerings of Judah and Jerusalem will please the Lord as in days of old.” Our hearts will again be in a condition where we will want to please God!

The Messiah will either destroy, or purify... furnace or sun. You choose.

Repentance is when you separate yourself from your sin and say, God, I hate this... will you help me destroy it?

Rebellion is when you say, “No, I’ll hold onto this.”

And then God destroys you along with it.

Either way, God will destroy sin. The question is whether you will be destroyed along with it, or saved.

BTW, believers, this shows you what Jesus is doing in your life, after you repent: Refining.

- **Refining is where they** bring the metal to a boil so the refiner can skim off impurities. Impurities are lighter, so that all that is left is pure silver or gold.
- **That’s what the Messiah does.** He lets life boil you until your **false confidences and false gods** have evaporated, so that his Spirit can rise in you with healing in his wings.
- **One good example:** Peter.

- **Peter** promised Jesus he’d never deny him, then did so 3x in the space of a night. Same old problem! Big promises, no execution.
- **But this same Peter would stand** before the defiant crowd in Acts 2 and boldly proclaim, “The Jesus you crucified God has raised from the dead!” He would never again deny Jesus, and be faithful unto death! In order to put that kind of strength in him, he had to assure Peter of his steadfast love, and put his Spirit into him. Before he could do that, he had to boil out the impurity of self-confidence. Painful.
- **That’s what he’s doing with you.** And it hurts. But it’s how God really puts power into your life.

[Let me say a couple of things in closing this series / MUSIC...](#)

The MP have pointed forward to clearly—miraculously—the Savior who would come. You have to choose whether you will receive him as the Sun of righteousness or face him as the furnace of judgment.

- And we can talk to you about how you can know that you are on the right side of Jesus *today*. Come see us after the service and we’ll talk thou through it.

Secondly the MP’s have showed us that in every area of our lives we desperately need something beyond ourselves and our strength.

- Many of you are stuck in the OT of powerless rituals and empty promises and it’s time for you get into the healing power of the NT. Where you start leaping like a staff from the stall.
 - Don’t know everything about that image, but if you tie one up and then untie they’ll bounce out like they are free. This is what the Messiah will do—he’ll **release you from the powerless shackles of empty religion** and put in you the power of new life and joy. Religion puts you in chains. The Sun of Righteousness makes you free!
- **The MP’s have showed us** how willing God is to pour out his blessing and power...

- **...if we will just return to him** with all our heart, and cry out to him for his help.

And SO that's how I want to end today—in a posture of repentance and desperation. Will you join me as I lead you?

