

He Gathers Up His Jewels

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[0 : 00] Reading again verses from the portion of scripture we've read in Malachi and chapter 3, focusing particularly on verses 16 and following.

Malachi chapter 3 and 16 then those who feared the Lord spoke with one another. The Lord paid attention and heard them, and a book of remembrance was written before him of those who feared the Lord and esteemed his name.

They shall be mine, says the Lord of hosts, in the day when I make up my jewels, my treasured possession, and I will spare them as a man's precious son who serves him.

One or two thoughts as the Lord enables us to focus on these verses. As you see Malachi is the last book of the Old Testament, and the word Malachi in the Hebrew means my messenger.

And the Lord is sending this man with a particular message to people in Judah and Jerusalem.

[1 : 28] People who had returned from the captivity of Babylon around a hundred years before that, the people had come from Babylon and resettled in Jerusalem and had been enabled to rebuild the temple that had been destroyed by the Babylonians.

And they had come back with the Lord's blessing. They came back with joy and optimism.

But after a hundred years a lot of their joy had evaporated, and they were going through the motions as it were of worshipping the Lord.

You see what it says in Malachi chapter 1 and verse 6, verses 6 to 8, it says, a son honours his father and a servant his master.

If then I am a father, where is my honour? And if I am a master, where is my fear? says the Lord of hosts. O priests, you despise my name.

[2 : 45] But you say, how have we despised your name? By offering polluted food upon my altar. And so on. They were going through the motions of offering their sacrifices.

But it wasn't a wholehearted commitment to the Lord. And then we see in Malachi 3 in verses 14 and 15 these words, and the Lord is saying to them, you have said it is vain to serve God.

What's the prophet about keeping his charge or of walking as in mourning before the Lord of hosts? Now we call the arrogant, blessed, evil doers not only possible, but they put God to the test and they escape.

So as if they are measuring themselves against the surrounding nations who don't acknowledge God as their Lord at all.

And what's more they started intermarrying with the nations round about them, intermarrying with those who did not fear the Lord Yahweh, Jehovah, and because they involved themselves with other nations at that level, their commitment to the Lord in heaven was really reduced greatly.

[4 : 05] Although they kept the outward pattern of worship going, their heart was not in it at all. But then in verse 16, this beginning of the verse says, then those who feared the Lord spoke with one another.

Then I think it's an important word because it brings in a contrast between what has been said about the masses and the predominant number of people in Jerusalem and a particular group who still focused upon the Lord.

Then when the great majority of people had drifted away from the Lord in their hearts and some of them in their practices, nevertheless there were those who still feared the Lord.

And there's a sense in which that is true in every age and generation. The masses may do their own thing, but there is a remnant, those who are truly God's people who continue to live for Him and look to Him whatever circumstances prevail, looking on to Jesus who is the author and finisher of faith.

And it's on these people, those who feared the Lord and so on, I want to say a few words this morning under three headings. First of all, I believe they are a special people.

[5 : 42] And secondly, they are worshipping a caring and an attentive God. And thirdly, they look forward to a day of glory.

A special people under three headings on this first heading, there are three things concerning them that we're going to discuss. First of all, that they feared the Lord.

What does that mean? And secondly, they spoke often one to another. What did they talk about in that kind of climate where mostly people are just drifted away from through godliness?

What were these people talking about? And thirdly, they meditate on the Lord's name. What's so special about the name of the Lord?

They feared Him and they meditate upon His name. These three things under the first heading. The second heading, the caring and attentive God.

[6 : 49] He listens, He hears and He remembers. And thirdly, the glorious day, the day of His second coming to make up His jewels and He will spare His people as a father spares His son who serves Him.

First point then, this special people. And it says about them here that they feared the Lord.

What does it mean really to fear the Lord? This is to cower in a corner afraid of Him when you read about His great power and might.

That's not what it means at all. The fear of the Lord, it says in another part of the scripture, is the beginning of wisdom. And those who truly fear the Lord, they fear Him because the Lord has come into their life in a way that has changed their attitude to God Himself.

They fear Him through grace. They respond to His word in faith. They are obedient to His word.

[8 : 08] They are people who seek to live according to the word of God, seeking to please God and serve Him in every department of their lives.

There are people who hate sin and who hate evil and who turn away from anything and everything that would offend God, whom they now love and whom they serve and whom they obey.

This is the beginning of wisdom. In the Ecclesiastes chapter 12, the man who's written that under the leading of the Spirit of God, he says, let us hear the whole matter.

Hear God and keep His commandments, for this is the whole of man. It says in the authorised version in the italics, this is the whole duty of man, but really the original says, this is the whole of man.

In other words, there is no wholeness in man and in human experience, apart from giving God His place first and foremost, to fear Him, worship Him, obey Him, love Him, serve Him.

[9 : 26] And in that very difficult climate, in the days of Malachi, when the majority of people had turned away from God, there were those who feared Him.

Do you fear Him in our present climate, in this country, in the world in which we live, where so many are turning away from the Bible, from the things that are really important, to other things, the people who fear God keep their focus and they fear God.

Come what may. That's the first thing under this first heading. They fear God. Secondly, it says here that they speak often to one another.

It's as if they're not living in isolation, like hermits, like some people used to do down through the Middle Ages, go into a cave and live by themselves so that they wouldn't be bothered with the world and the things of the world.

These people who are through believers in God, they associate with other believers. And it says here that they speak often, one to another.

[10 : 48] A couple of examples to prove this. The Old Testament says in 1 Samuel 23, and this was a very difficult time in the life of David.

This is then Jonathan Saul's son, arose and went to David in the woods and strengthened his hand in God.

I mean, the atmosphere in the palace where King Saul was waning, it was really deadly. You remember Saul had thrown a javelin and tried to pin David to the wall, and David knew that his time of acceptance in the palace was gone, and he went away.

But Jonathan, he was of a kindred spirit to David, a believer in God, a lover of God, a lover of what was right. He went to David who was hiding in the woods, and he strengthened his hand in God.

He spoke to him, just like these people spoke to one another. You see, another example from the New Testament, in relation to Mary, the mother of Jesus, and Elizabeth, the mother of John the Baptist.

[12:17] Elizabeth was pregnant, and Mary, having had the visit from the angel Gabriel, to tell her that she was going to have a baby as well, and his name was going to be called Jesus.

She left where she was and went all the way into the house of Zechariahs, and spent three months with Elizabeth.

I always wondered what they were talking about. They would have been talking about the baby one of them was bearing, right? He almost would be delivered, and the other one, the eternal Son of God bearing, born by Mary.

What were they talking about? And the world around them so much against anything that they held precious, they were talking about the Lord and His goodness to them.

And that's what we have to do in our day and generation, when everything around us seems to be disintegrating so far as a Christian framework in society is concerned.

[13:24] The people of God need to stay strong, continuing to fear God, and continuing also to speak often, one to another.

One thing about the people of God is they speak the language of Canaan as somebody said it. They have a language that's a spiritual language.

They understand each other in spiritual tales. They have a common focus, the word of God, the Christ of the word, the God of the word, and they're able to talk about their experiences with this God who speaks to them in His word.

The Psalmist in Psalm 66 says, come and hear all you who fear God, and I will declare what He has done for my soul.

I'll tell you what He's done for me. You tell me what He's done for you. Don't be afraid to tell. You encourage each other, sharing your heartaches, sharing your longings, sharing your experiences.

[14:34] You're able to follow your friend's experience in the gospel. Sometimes you're not, but you find your experience somewhere in the word of God, and that's what keeps us close to the word of God, looking for a word in season from Him as we continue to speak often, one to another.

And the third thing about these special people is this, that they meditate on the Lord's name. The esteem, His name, as it has it, as we have it in this particular translation.

In the original of the word esteem or meditate, as the translation I was using, it talks about something that is very tightly bound together, as if you would see a rope tightened very strongly to enable it to carry a heavy weight.

And this is what these people are doing. They esteem the name of the Lord. They meditate on His name. Well, in the Bible you come across many names that God gives Himself.

And if you focus on, for example, in Isaiah chapter 9, at verse 6, it says, His name, talking about Christ, His name shall be called wonderful, counsellor, the mighty God, the everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace.

[16:11] And that's a group of names that the people of God think about. I mean, when you think of Jesus, you think of Him, and His name is wonderful.

Have you ever heard of anything done by anyone, anywhere, that compares with what He has done?

And the name that He's got, He's the everlasting one. And He's the almighty one. And He is the God of all grace. And He is a merciful God.

He's wonderful in all of these different things. And if you think of Him as counsellor, sometimes we go and ask for advice or counsel from some other people.

You're not quite sure sometimes of what they're telling you. It's the best thing for you to do. But wherever you ask Him, and whenever you ask Him, His counsel is always right.

[17:10] The counsel is in His word. I'll hear what God, the Lord, has speak. That's what the psalmist said, to His folk, He'll speak peace. And to His saints, but let them not return to foolishness.

The mighty God, another name. I mean, you feel weak today. I feel weak. But I know that He is almighty, able to do great things in my experience as an individual and actually with the words that I'm speaking to you, they can be almighty in His hand.

I often think of the voice of Jesus at the tomb of the grave of John the Baptist. He spoke words, but accompanying His words was the power of the almighty, giving life where there had been death, giving fragrance where there had been dissolution and decomposition of the body.

Reversing these things, and that's what He still does in the experience of those who trust Him. He's the mighty God.

And having given your life to Him, and having stepped out as it were in obedience to Him, He's able to give you strength for every day and every situation.

[18 : 35] My grace is sufficient for you, He says. My strength is made perfect in weakness. The everlasting Father. That's another name that I say I give some in chapter 9.

In other words, He is a fatherly influence in my life. It's as if He takes care of me, protects me, feeds me, provides for me, just like a good father would do for his family, and the Prince of Peace.

Don't you think of Him as the Prince of Peace who is able to bring peace into your soul after a temptation, after a difficult experience in the wilderness journey.

He's able to give you a moment of peace as you consider His word, as you pray to Him. You feel the peace of God that passes all understanding, fill in your heart and soul.

A special people who fear God, who speak often one to another, and who meditate on the Lord's name with delight.

[19 : 52] Secondly, they don't live in isolation from their God because it goes on to say that this God whom they worship, it says here that they are listened to by Him.

They are listened to by Him. I mean, God in His nature sees everything and hears everything and knows everything throughout the whole universe.

But it's as if here we see Him as focusing particularly on these people who fear Him, who speak about Him and who speak often to each other.

He listens to them. We were talking this morning before we came across about a gentleman who I think he was an elder in Barba's long ago by the name of Taramatsana.

Many of you would have heard of him. And when Taramatsana used to go to pray, he would say, I'm going to the listening in.

[21 : 19] In other words, he was going to pray and then he would wait to hear what God would answer him, what word would come from heaven to teach him, to lead him, to guide him.

And this God is still the same. Not only does He listen and hear everything throughout the universe, but He knows those who fear Him and who listens to them.

I wonder what is hearing from your heart and life today? What is he hearing?

Like the thief said on the cross. I'm not quite sure how many people around the cross on Calvary that day would have heard the thief speaking.

But Jesus heard him. Lord remember me when you come into your kingdom. And you remember the marvellous answer that Jesus gave to him. Verily I say to you today, you shall be with me in paradise.

[22 : 32] He heard His voice. Among the marvellous and awful voices that surrounded the cross in Calvary, He heard this little voice.

Is your voice ascending to Him from this church pew this morning? Or wherever you are, His ear is open to the cry of His people.

He knows them and He regards them. It says here. His ears are open to their cry. And sometimes as it says in Romans chapter 8, we don't know exactly how to pray as we ought.

I mean, in a particular situation where things seem to be loaded against you and you don't know which way to go and what to say about it.

It says here in Romans chapter 8 and verse 26, the Spirit makes intercession for us with groanings that cannot be uttered.

[23 : 41] The Holy Spirit comes, the Holy Spirit comes to our help and gives expression in the presence of God to the longings and hopes and fears that we really cannot in any way at all describe ourselves.

Nevertheless, He knows them because He's able to interpret the language of our yearning hearts and He's able to answer.

Isn't that a great saviour and a mighty work of the Spirit? And the third thing about this is that the Lord remembers these people.

A book was written before Him for these people. A book of remembrance.

It says, once the Lord hears and identifies your prayer and your longing, it goes down in the record. [24 : 47] He has marked the first prayer that you ever made. He has marked the first longing that you ever had in your heart after Jesus.

He has marked the night you went home having heard our sermon and having been moved by it and you went and you said in your bedroom in the privacy of your own home, Lord, I want you to come into my life.

He has marked the difficulties and trials you've experienced as somebody who desires to follow the Lord Jesus and He has marked every circumstance.

A book of remembrance was written before Him. In one of the Psalms, the man of God, he says, I want you to put my tears in your bottle.

All the tears that I have shed over my sins, all the disappointments, all the heartaches, all the difficulties and trials that have caused me anguish as a believer in God and in Christ.

[26 : 07] Put them in your bottle. In other words, mark them in your book. The book of remembrance. And the Lord knows where you first sought Him, where you first prayed to Him.

He knows when you first rejoiced in Jesus, having said, Jesus, come into my life. He knows it all and it will not get thrown aside.

These people who fear God, they fear a caring and an attentive God. He knows them where they are and He knows them how they are and He is able to do for them far above what they're able to ask or even think.

That's the second thing. And the third thing it says in this context is that there is a day coming when He is going to make up His treasured possession.

He's going to make up His duos. What kind of day is this talking about? Well, I believe it's the day of Christ's second coming into the world.

[27 : 32] He is coming in glory, the glory of His Father with the holy angels at the end of time. And what does it say in relation to that day that He will send forth His angels and they will gather together His elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other.

Wherever they are, wherever they will be, they are to be gathered from there. We don't know where our mortal remains will be.

But our God knows because He's marked us in His book as believing people and He will give His angels charge on that day of His glory as coming to go and collect His people from the four corners of the earth, wherever they are.

And what does He call that day? The day when He is going to make up His treasured possession. In the authorised version it says His duos. His treasured possession. What does this mean? Well, culturally, it meant that a king who was obviously very rich so far as his kingdom was concerned and his own status was concerned.

[29 : 06] He had access to everything in the kingdom. But this is talking about particularly duos or treasures that belonged to the king as an individual.

You find it in 1 Chronicles 29 talking about David and his plans to build the temple. Moreover, it says, because I have set my affection on the house of my God, I have given to the house of my God over and above all that I have prepared for His holy house, my own special treasure of gold and silver.

In other words, David had been motivating people to gather to build the house of God and he had given himself a lot of stuff towards that.

And he says, I have given special treasure of gold and silver out of my own account as it were to build the house of God.

And when he is talking about that he is going to make up his treasured possession or his jewels on the last day when he comes.

[30 : 27] Who are his treasured possession? Who are Christ's jewels? Well, I believe they are the elect of God whom God the Father gave him in the eternal covenant before the world wars.

And he has them as it were as his own jewels, his own treasured possession. And it says here that he will make them up on that day.

It's going to be a day when all the people of God who have feared his name, who have spoken often to one another, who have meditated on the Lord's name with delight, who have prayed to him, who have committed themselves to him, who have lived for him and served him, they will be gathered together on the great day of Christ's second coming.

You will make up his jewels. Or maybe you don't feel like a Jew today. Maybe you feel that a lot of dirt has to be cleaned off you, a lot of angers have to be cut to make you reflect the glory of God better.

And that's a work in progress with all of God's people. He is the great diamond cutter. He is the great Jeweler who gets the rude material from the earth as it were and cuts it and cuts it again through the trials and difficulties and testings of life to bear his glory and to reflect his glory more and more.

[32 : 24] He will make them up. What will he say? He will say, behold me and the children that God has given me.

He will stand unashamed before the whole universe and say, these are the ones that are my jewels. They feared me. They believed in me. They lived for me. They trusted me. They looked to me. They prayed to me.

They praised me in their life. And I know how to make them perfect because at death the souls of believers are made perfect in holiness and to immediately pass into glory.

And at the resurrection their bodies shall be raised in glory, united to their souls and shall go into the presence of God forever. Jesus says, come, you blessed of my father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.

[33 : 29] It will go in and enjoy his fellowship unbroken throughout the endless ages of eternity.

I will spare them as a son, as a father spares his son, as the Lord spared the houses of the Israelites in Egypt when the angel of death came to destroy the firstborn.

No one was destroyed, those under the blood of the Passover Lamb. A glorious day, a day that's in the future for all of God's people, a day of rejoicing.

Eastreef points them as special people who fear him, who speak often to one another, who meditate on his name, a caring God who hearkens, who hears, who remembers.

And a glorious day of the second coming when he will make up his treasured possession, his jewels. Are you among them?

[34 : 43] Do you want to be among them? Do you seek the Lord while he is to be found? Do you call upon him while he is near? Or is it a promise to those who seek him early that they will find him?

He is worth seeking and he is a pleasure to find. May the Lord bless these thoughts to us. May the Lord bless those who seek him early that they will find him.