Refiner’s Fire March 31, 2019

*Malachi 2:17-3:5 Series: The God Who’s Worthy of our Best*

O may God put me into one furnace after another, that my soul may be transparent; that I may see God as he is. – George Whitefield

Intro: The problem of injustice.

1. We struggle with a world of injustice.
2. We can wear out an all-powerful God!

v. 17 *You have wearied the LORD with your words.*

1. We assume that a delay in justice is a miscarriage of justice.

v. 17 *By saying, “Everyone who does evil is good in the sight of the LORD, and he delights in them.”*

v. 17 *Or by asking, “Where is the God of justice?”*

1. God’s answer to injustice seems to take too long.

v. 1 *“Behold, I send my messenger, and he will prepare the way before me.”*

v. 1 *the messenger of the covenant in whom you delight, behold, he is coming, says the LORD of hosts*

* How much does injustice bother you? What injustice most troubles you?
* Has injustice in your own life or in the world ever created doubts or struggles in your faith?
* Why do you think the people’s complaints “wearied the LORD?” How could a person weary the Lord today?

1. God’s justice begins with the refining of His followers.
2. We want justice for our enemies, but God starts with us.

v. 1 *the Lord whom you seek will suddenly come to his temple*

v. 3 *he will purify the sons of Levi*

1 Peter 4:17 *For it is time for judgment to begin at the household of God; and if it begins with us, what will be the outcome for those who do not obey the gospel of God?*

1. Who else but Jesus could Malachi have been speaking of?

v. 1 *the Lord whom you seek will suddenly come to his temple*

v. 1 *the messenger of the covenant in whom you delight, behold, he is coming*

Luke 7:27 *This is he of whom it is written, “‘Behold, I send my messenger before your face, who will prepare your way before you.’*

John 2:14–15 *In the temple he found those who were selling oxen and sheep and pigeons, and the money-changers sitting there. And making a whip of cords, he drove them all out of the temple, with the sheep and oxen. And he poured out the coins of the money-changers and overturned their tables.*

1. A refiner’s fire is different than an arson’s fire.

v. 2 *For he is like a refiner's fire and like fullers' soap.*

v. 3 *he will purify the sons of Levi and refine them like gold and silver*

* Why do you think God starts by purifying His representatives before bringing judgment to the world?
* How is a refiner’s fire similar to an arson’s fire? How is it different?
* What are some of the ways that God refines His people?

1. God’s justice ends with the judgment of the world.
2. Jesus’ second coming will bring perfect justice.

v. 5 *Then I will draw near to you for judgment.*

Matthew 16:27 *For the Son of Man is going to come with his angels in the glory of his Father, and then he will repay each person according to what he has done.*

1. God’s judgment will be according to God’s standard.

v. 5 *I will be a swift witness against the sorcerers, against the adulterers, against those who swear falsely, against those who oppress the hired worker in his wages, the widow and the fatherless, against those who thrust aside the sojourner, and do not fear me, says the LORD of hosts.*

1. Jesus is our only hope to stand at the day of judgment.

v. 2 *But who can endure the day of his coming, and who can stand when he appears?*

1 Thessalonians 1:10 *wait for his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead, Jesus who delivers us from the wrath to come.*

* How can the promise of the final judgment bring comfort to a believer?
* How are the sins listed in v. 5 similar to what people recognize as injustice today? How are they different?
* Why does God judge people who don’t fear Him (v. 5)?
* How would you answer the question of v. 2?
* Where do you most need prayer in applying this passage?

Study ahead: Next week, we’ll study Malachi 3:6-12

Notes