



April 13, 2008
Study Guide & Daily Readings
(Second in Series: Milestones)

Finish What You Started

Malachi 3:10-12

The book of Malachi

Nothing is really known about the author of Malachi. The name literally means “messenger.” Written some time in the period between 500 and 450 B.C., the book addresses the community’s failure to follow their covenant with God. This was a struggling and poor community. The excitement of their return from exile and of construction of the temple had long since died away. As such, the people were losing their identity as followers of God. The worst ills were social. Family life was eroding, divorce was prevalent, the rich were oppressing the poor, the helpless were victimized, dishonesty was common in business, and the sacred rituals were being ignored.

The message of the prophet is: Return to God and God will return to you (3:7). More than this, if you keeps your responsibilities to God, the windows of heaven will be opened, and multiple blessings will come (3:10).

Abundance from Heaven

Malachi 3:8-10, 12

“Will a man rob God? Yet you are robbing Me! But you say, ‘How have we robbed You?’ In tithes and offerings.

“You are cursed with a curse, for you are robbing Me, the whole nation of you!

“Bring the whole tithe into the storehouse, so that there may be food in My house, and test Me now in this,” says the LORD of hosts, “if I will not open for you the windows of heaven and pour out for you a blessing until it overflows.

“All the nations will call you blessed, for you shall be a delightful land,” says the LORD of hosts.

In verses 10-12 God asks the people to test the divine promises in order that their obedience will be rewarded. God will open the windows of heaven by sending abundant blessing. The prosperity of the Jewish community will be a witness to all nations of the blessing of obedience to Yahweh.

The promises here, as usual in the Old Testament, will fall and benefit everyone, even those who still withhold their contribution. (*Matthew 5:45*)

While Malachi addresses the tithe as the primary cause for the divine – human breach, the entire book of Malachi address the whole range of the human commitment to God. When we examine Malachi’s prophecy in light of the words of Jesus (*Matthew 19:16-22*) who requires total sacrifice from his disciples, we see that true obedience is found in a life lived fully for God.

Verse 10 includes the invitation to test God. This is the only place where the Scripture invites us to test God. Malachi is reminding the reader that God wants to bless us beyond our wildest dreams. Often our selfish desires and need to control our situation stands in the way of God’s wish to pour out his lavish love on us.

Daily Readings

Please note: These readings allow you to study New Testament passages that deal with the divine call to be a disciple of Christ. The Study Guide readings allow you to dig deeper.

Monday, April 14 – Read Galatians 6:2

Paul is very clear about what makes the disciples of Jesus unique. These disciples care about each other. The law of Christ is love. To care for each other in the act of “bearing burdens” is the ultimate act of that love. Whose burden can you bear today?

Tuesday, April 15 – Read Matthew 9:35-38

We see the heart of Christ in this passage as preaching, teaching and healing. In what ways can you proclaim the good news of Christ, teach His message of love and offer a healing hand to someone in need?

Wednesday, April 16 – Read John 1:35-46

In this passage we find the words “come and see.” The gospel of Christ was not just words and preaching; it was action and deeds. What does your life show others about your faith? Would others say of you, “Come and see?”

Thursday, April 17 – Matthew 28:18-20

The French word for *encouragement* literally means, “to put the heart in,” while *to discourage* literally means, “to tear the heart out.” Jesus is putting the heart back in the disciples. They are scared, confused, anxious and unsure. Jesus is saying, “I believe in you. I’m counting on you. I know you can do this. Go spread the gospel. Go teach the faith. Go make disciples of all nations. I will be with you.” In what ways has Christ put the “heart” in you? What is He calling you to do?

Friday, April 18 – Read the chorus to Hymn #593, “Here I am Lord”

Here I am, Lord. Is it I Lord? I have heard you calling in the night. I will go, Lord, if you lead me. I will hold your people in my heart.

This hymn has become one of the favorites among Methodists. In what ways have you allowed the Lord to lead you this week? How have you held the people of God in your heart?