

The Child Jesus: Revealed as Our Saviour

Malachi 3:1-4; Luke 2:22-40; Romans 12:1-2

Sermon The Person and Work of Christ Not stated (Christmas)

Malachi 3:1 (quoted)

Malachi 3:2-3a (quoted)

Malachi 3:4 (quoted)

Luke 2:22-24 (quoted)

Luke 2:25-30 (quoted)

Luke 2:36-38 (quoted)

Luke 2:39-40 (quoted)

Romans 12:1 (quoted)

Romans 12:2 (quoted)

As we gather today, we reflect on the wonderful truth that the Child Jesus, whom we celebrate at Christmas, is revealed to us as our Saviour. In Malachi 3:1-4, the prophet speaks of a messenger preparing the way for the Lord, a promise ultimately fulfilled in the birth of Christ. Luke 2:22-40 reminds us of the humble beginnings of Jesus, His dedication at the Temple, and the fulfilment of God's promises that bring hope into our lives. Then, in Romans 12:1-2, we are called to respond to this revelation by presenting our lives as living sacrifices, embracing a transformed existence in the light of the salvation we have received. Together, these passages weave together expectation, humility, and the transforming power of our Saviour's birth, and invite us to live in reflection of His grace and love.

Malachi begins with a declaration:

Behold, I will send my messenger, and he shall prepare the way before me: and the Lord, whom ye seek, shall suddenly come to his temple, even the messenger of the covenant, whom ye delight in: behold, he shall come, saith the Lord of hosts. (Malachi 3:1, KJV)

The role of the messenger is crucial; he is a bridge, connecting the longing of the people for redemption with the coming of the Lord. Here we see the importance of preparation in our own spiritual journey. Just as the Israelites were called to prepare their hearts for the arrival of the Messiah, we too must engage in preparation for receiving Christ into our lives.

Application: In our modern context, preparation can take many forms: prayer, reflection, and the study of Scripture, but also acts of kindness and service that embody the heart of Jesus. As we celebrate His birth, let us consider how we might prepare our own hearts to receive Him anew. The Child Jesus calls us to be messengers in our own right, sharing the good news and showing His love to those around us.

Malachi continues:

But who may abide the day of his coming? and who shall stand when he appeareth? for he is like a refiner's fire, and like fullers' soap: and he shall sit as a refiner and purifier of silver. (Malachi 3:2-3a, KJV)

This promise carries great significance; God desires to dwell among His people. In the Child Jesus, we witness the fulfilment of this promise — the tangible reality of God stepping into our world, not as a mighty king, but as a vulnerable infant. The profound beauty of this cannot be lost on us. God chose to reveal Himself in the humblest of circumstances, showing us that His ways are often not our ways.

Application: In a world that values power and prestige, the birth of Jesus calls us to embrace humility. As we celebrate Christmas, let us remember that our Saviour came to us in the form of a child, teaching us that true strength lies not in dominance, but in servanthood and love. Refining, too, involves heat and pressure, and a process that can be uncomfortable — and the Child Jesus grows to become not only our Saviour, but the One who invites us into a transforming relationship. Encountering Jesus often calls us to look deep within and confront the impurities that hinder our walk with God. Are there areas in our lives that need refining? Are we ready to surrender them to Him? The promise of refinement is not an easy one, but it is rooted in love.

Malachi concludes this passage with a word about offerings and sacrifices:

Then shall the offering of Judah and Jerusalem be pleasant unto the Lord, as in the days of old, and as in former years. (Malachi 3:4, KJV)

Jesus, the Child born in Bethlehem, is Himself the ultimate offering — the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world. His birth signifies the beginning of a new covenant, one founded on grace rather than mere observance of the law. In Him, we are invited into a relationship defined by love and acceptance. This should fill us with hope and gratitude, and, as we consider His sacrificial love, let us also be encouraged to extend that grace to others.

We turn now to the passage from Luke. In the verses leading up to this moment, we see the context of Jewish expectation. The people of Israel had been waiting for their Messiah, a Saviour who would deliver them and restore their nation. Simeon and Anna, two faithful servants of God, represent that faithful remnant eagerly awaiting God's redemption.

And when the days of her purification according to the law of Moses were accomplished, they brought him to Jerusalem, to present him to the Lord; (As it is written in the law of the Lord,

Every male that openeth the womb shall be called holy to the Lord;) And to offer a sacrifice according to that which is said in the law of the Lord, A pair of turtledoves, or two young pigeons. (Luke 2:22-24, KJV)

As Mary and Joseph bring Jesus to the Temple for His dedication, we witness a powerful moment of obedience to the law of Moses. They offer the prescribed sacrifice, showing their faithfulness as devout Jews. This scene carries a double significance: it is both the dedication of a child and the presentation of the Saviour who would fulfil the law. This humble act signifies that Jesus did not come to abolish the law but to fulfil it. In following the customs of their time, Mary and Joseph were unwittingly taking part in the unfolding of God's redemptive plan for humanity.

As they enter the Temple, Simeon recognises the child.

And, behold, there was a man in Jerusalem, whose name was Simeon; and the same man was just and devout, waiting for the consolation of Israel: and the Holy Ghost was upon him. And it was revealed unto him by the Holy Ghost, that he should not see death, before he had seen the Lord's Christ. And he came by the Spirit into the temple: and when the parents brought in the child Jesus, to do for him after the custom of the law, then took he him up in his arms, and blessed God, and said, Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, according to thy word: for mine eyes have seen thy salvation. (Luke 2:25-30, KJV)

Simeon's joy is plain to see as he takes Jesus in his arms and praises God. Here we see a powerful acknowledgement that this child is no ordinary infant; He is the fulfilment of God's promise to Israel and the light of revelation for the Gentiles. Simeon's prophetic words reveal the dual nature of Jesus's mission — a light for all peoples, and a cause for the rising and falling of many in Israel — and this foreshadows the challenges Jesus would face and the division His message would bring. Yet he also speaks to Mary, offering her the sobering truth that a sword would pierce her own soul, preparing us for the pain of the Cross that this child would ultimately bear for the sake of humanity.

Following Simeon's proclamation, we meet Anna — a prophetess, and a model of faithfulness in worship.

And there was one Anna, a prophetess, the daughter of Phanuel, of the tribe of Aser: she was of a great age, and had lived with an husband seven years from her virginity; and she was a widow of about fourscore and four years, which departed not from the temple, but served God with fastings and prayers night and day.

And she coming in that instant gave thanks likewise unto the Lord, and spake of him to all them that looked for redemption in Jerusalem. (Luke 2:36-38, KJV)

At the age of eighty-four, Anna had given her life to fasting and prayer at the Temple, embodying the spirit of hope. Her instant recognition of Jesus, and her response of thanks to God, remind us how true worship recognises and affirms God's work in the world. Anna shares the good news of Jesus with all who were waiting for the redemption of Jerusalem — a reminder that our Saviour's revelation is meant to be shared. Like Anna, we are called to testify to the hope we have found in Christ, and to encourage others to know the same joy.

Application: This passage from Luke reminds us of the vital place of faith, patience, and obedience in our spiritual journey. Simeon and Anna exemplify the importance of waiting on God's promises, encouraging us to remain faithful even when the answer seems delayed, trusting that God's timing is perfect. In applying these lessons, we might practise patience — embracing periods of waiting with faith, trusting God's timing for our own circumstances and prayers; be obedient — acting on God's call in the ordinary things of our lives; recognise Christ — seeking to see Jesus in our daily encounters and celebrating His work in our lives; and share our faith — taking, like Anna, opportunities to testify of the hope of Christ to those around us. Ultimately, this passage invites us to live with expectation, joy, and a willingness to serve as witnesses of the hope found in Jesus.

And when they had performed all things according to the law of the Lord, they returned into Galilee, to their own city Nazareth. And the child grew, and waxed strong in spirit, filled with wisdom: and the grace of God was upon him. (Luke 2:39-40, KJV)

Finally we come to Paul's word to the Romans:

I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. (Romans 12:1, KJV)

In these words, Paul makes a compelling invitation to surrender — an invitation to present ourselves wholly to God. This act of surrender is deeply tied to the arrival of the Child Jesus, for His very existence was an act of submission to the Father's will. The humble birth of Jesus in a stable is itself an extraordinary act of surrender. From the very beginning He shows us a life given over to God's purpose, revealing that true greatness comes through humility and service; He came not to be served, but to serve others. This sets a profound example for us: in our

own lives, we are called to present our bodies — not as perfect beings, but as vessels of His grace.

Application: Let us examine what it means to be a living sacrifice. What are we holding back in our relationship with God? What areas of our lives do we need to invite Him into? Just as the shepherds and wise men approached the manger with humility, let us too approach the throne of grace, willing to surrender our hearts and lives to the One who loves us unconditionally.

And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God. (Romans 12:2, KJV)

The call to transformation is at the heart of our faith. Jesus, in His infancy, represents the new life that God offers to humanity; His birth signals the beginning of a radical redefinition of life, hope, and love.

Application: In a world that often pressures us to conform to its standards — values that prize power, success, and self-interest — Paul reminds us that we are called to something different. To be transformed means to be changed at a fundamental level, much as the arrival of Christ changes the whole narrative of our lives. Just as the Child Jesus brings hope into darkness, we too are invited to embrace a mind rooted in His love and truth, and to make the intentional choice to align our thoughts and actions with the teachings of Christ, allowing His life to inspire every aspect of our own. As we do this, we invite the Holy Spirit to refine our hearts and minds, helping us to discern what is good, pleasing, and perfect in God's sight. In the meeting of surrender and transformation lies our calling as followers of Christ. When we open our hearts to the Saviour, we do not only become beneficiaries of His grace — we become ambassadors of that grace to the world, and the change that takes root in us spills over into our families, our communities, and beyond.

As we conclude our reflection on the Child Jesus revealed as our Saviour, let us hold fast to the truths found in these Scriptures. In Malachi 3:1-4, we are reminded that Jesus is the messenger who fulfils prophecy and invites us into a transforming relationship with Him; as we prepare our hearts to receive Him, may we allow His refining work to shape us, embracing the grace of His new covenant. In the humble child born in Bethlehem, we discover the essence of our salvation — an invitation to approach Him with purity and wonder. Like Simeon and Anna, let us remain attentive to His presence in our lives, responding with praise and testimony. And, in Romans 12:1-2, we are called to surrender our lives as living sacrifices, for true worship is reflected in how we live.

Let us pray.

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