

READ

Malachi 2:17- 3:5

CONSIDER

For the Israelites during Malachi's time, they experienced the rebuilding of Jerusalem and the temple. There was a sense of anticipatory hope for the signs of a national recovery and a belief that God's hand was upon them. But for all the flourishing and stability, there was much to be desired in their worship and devotion. They had reverted to their old patterns of ritual and tradition, while failing to trust and follow God full-heartedly. Their offerings were deficient and blemished, saving the best of their livestock for themselves. Furthermore, the Israelites' faith was disconnected to their relationships with one another. God's covenant was not the blueprint for the care and fidelity of their community and marriages.

All of these arise out of falsehoods that they have bought into, believing that they know better than God Himself and that there are no consequences for their actions. This temptation and deception is common to all and has its origins stemming from the Garden of Eden. Adam and Eve doubted the goodness of God by wrongly believing they could eat the fruit without penalty and have a better life than what He had already given them. In doing so, they fell away from God and brought fear and death into their existence.

When we accept falsehoods, especially about God's character and nature, as the truth, we deceive ourselves and are formed by sin, self-interest, and the destructive patterns of the world. In today's passage, this led the Israelites to many injustices, which is incompatible with their devotion and worship of God. But God Himself intervenes with a justice that is compassionate, refines, and for all. It is here today and will one day be fully realized. As we have witnessed through the testimony of Scripture, He once again gives another opportunity to turn back to Him with devotion as His people, living out justly in the world.

Looking forward to exploring Malachi and these themes with all of you this Sunday!

Pastor Jon Nip

P R A Y

Gracious God, we humble and surrender ourselves into your hands. We confess that we have lived out of falsehoods and desire your forgiveness, restoration, and correction. Show us your heart for justice and how we are to join with you in participation. We ask that you help us to learn from those on the margins and are oppressed, extend your care and compassion, and work together with them to end all forms of injustice. Refine and purify us for your purposes and mission. Amen.

D I V I N G D E E P E R

What are some falsehoods that you may believe about God that have shaped your life? Is the character and nature of God as He has revealed Himself to be congruent with the practices and rhythms and how you see yourself?

How have you formed your understanding of God's justice and how does it integrate into everyday life? What opens and closes your heart to the restorative and corrective work of the Holy Spirit?

What is your relationship between devotion and justice? How can the church be a beacon and advocate for God's justice and work against systems of injustice? What is your part in that story?