

BEFORE THE SILENCE

A STUDY OF THE BOOK OF MALACHI



new beginnings church

Before the Silence: A Daily Devotional in Malachi

How to Use This Devotional

Malachi is the last book of the Old Testament in our Bibles. After it, there are about 400 years without a prophet. No new word from God. Then Jesus is born. For 4 weeks, we're going to sit in that last word and let it get us ready for Advent.

Each week starts on Sunday with a page for taking notes during the sermon. Then Monday through Saturday, we go back through the same passage a few verses at a time. Each day has a short reading, a few questions, and a simple prayer. It should take about 10 minutes.

Here's all you need. A Bible, a pen, and a quiet spot. Read the passage first, then read the page. Don't rush it. If a day gets away from us, we just pick up the next one.

Week	Sunday	Passage	Sermon
1	November 1	Malachi 1:1-14	How Have You Loved Us?
2	November 8	Malachi 2:1-16	Faithless Faithful
3	November 15	Malachi 2:17-3:12	Where Is the God of Justice?
4	November 22	Malachi 3:13-4:6	The Last Word

Advent begins November 29.

Week 1 | Sunday, November 1

How Have You Loved Us? Malachi 1:1-14

[illegible]

Monday, November 2 | God Says It First

Read: Malachi 1:1-2a

The name Malachi means “my messenger.” He’s the last prophet in the Old Testament, and his book opens with a heavy message. But look at the first thing God says. It’s not a rebuke. It’s not a list of what’s wrong. It’s “I have loved you.”

Every hard word in this book comes after that sentence. Hold on to that.

The people answer with a question. “How have you loved us?” They were back from exile. The temple was rebuilt. But life was still hard, and it didn’t look like the glory they’d been promised. So they wanted proof.

We know that question. We ask it when the diagnosis comes, when the job goes, when the prayer goes unanswered. We want God to prove it. Today, before we ask for proof, let’s just let the sentence stand. God loved first.

Think about it:

- When life gets hard, what do I start to doubt about God first?
- What would change if I believed God’s love comes before His correction?

Pray: Father, You said it first. Help us hear “I have loved you” before we hear anything else today.

Tuesday, November 3 | Love We Didn't Earn

Read: Malachi 1:2-5

God answers the people's question with a story. He points back to two brothers, Jacob and Esau. Same family. Same womb. One was chosen and one wasn't. Jacob didn't earn it. He was a schemer. God's love for Israel never depended on Israel being impressive.

The words "loved" and "hated" in verses 2 and 3 can sound harsh. In the Old Testament, those words are often about choosing and favor, not about feelings. The point is that God chose Israel by grace. Edom, Esau's family line, is the example of a people who ended up in ruins.

Then verse 5 widens the lens. God's greatness reaches beyond Israel's borders. His love was never small, and it was never only about them.

Here's where it gets personal. If God's love isn't something we earned, it also isn't something we can earn more of by trying harder. That's good news for tired people.

Think about it:

- Where am I still trying to earn what God already gave?
- Who around me needs to hear that God's love is bigger than they think?

Pray: Lord, we didn't earn Your love and we can't add to it. Help us rest in it today.

Wednesday, November 4 | A Son Honors His Father

Read: Malachi 1:6-8

God puts it simply. A son honors his father. A servant honors his master. So where's the honor He's owed?

The priests ask, "How have we despised your name?" Then God tells them. They're putting defiled food on the altar. They're bringing blind animals, lame animals, and sick animals. The law said offerings had to be without defect. These priests knew that. They did it anyway, and said it didn't matter.

Then God asks a sharp question. Try giving that to your governor. Would he be pleased? Would he accept you? They'd never hand a blind lamb to the person who held power over them. But they handed it to God.

That's the question for us. What do we give to God that we'd never give to someone we respect? Our best hours go to work, to screens, and to everyone else. God gets whatever's left.

Think about it:

- What do I give God that I'd be embarrassed to give a boss or a guest?
- Where have I started handing God leftovers: time, money, attention, energy?

Pray: God, You deserve our first and our best. Show us where we've been giving You the leftovers.

Thursday, November 5 | Better the Doors Closed

Read: Malachi 1:9-10

Verse 10 is one of the strangest in the book. God wishes someone would just shut the temple doors. He'd rather have no fires on His altar than the empty ones He's getting.

That's hard to hear, because we tend to think any worship is better than none. God says no. Worship with no heart behind it doesn't please Him. It insults Him.

This isn't God telling us to stay home. It's God asking us to look at what we're doing when we show up. We can sing every song, say every prayer, and sit in the same seat every week and still be going through the motions.

If you want to read more, look at Isaiah 1:11-17. God says the same thing to another generation. Activity was never what He was after. He wants us.

Think about it:

- When I sing, pray, or give, where is my heart? Is it with God, or is it already on the next thing?
- What is one thing I can do this Sunday to actually be present?

Pray: Lord, we don't want empty worship. Give us hearts that are all the way here.

Friday, November 6 | His Name Will Be Great

Read: Malachi 1:11-13

Verse 11 is a breath of fresh air. God says His name will be great among the nations, from where the sun rises to where it sets. People everywhere will bring Him pure offerings. God's glory doesn't depend on this group of tired priests. He'll have worship one way or another.

Then verses 12 and 13 bring us back down. The priests treated the Lord's table as something to look down on. They looked at worship and said, "What a burden." And they sniffed at it. That's the picture of someone who's bored and wants everyone to know it.

We don't usually say worship is a burden out loud. But we can feel it. We watch the clock. We check the phone. We treat the most amazing thing in the world like a chore.

God's name is going to be great. The only question is whether we get in on it with joy or sit on the side and sniff.

Think about it:

- When have I treated worship as a burden?
- What would it look like to walk into church this week expecting God to be great?

Pray: God, Your name is great and it's getting greater. Give us joy in being part of it.

Saturday, November 7 | A Great King

Read: Malachi 1:14

The chapter ends with a cheat. A man has a healthy male animal in his flock. He makes a vow to give it to God. Then he swaps it out and brings a sick one instead. He wants the credit for the promise without paying for it.

God's response is simple. He is a great king, and His name is feared among the nations. He isn't a hobby. He isn't a side project. He's King.

The truth is that we're all that man at some point. We promise God our best and give Him what's convenient. If Malachi 1 leaves us convicted, that's the right place to be.

But there's good news at the end of it. We could never bring an offering without blemish. Jesus did. First Peter 1:18-19 says we were bought with the precious blood of Christ, a lamb without blemish or defect. The one thing God asked for and we could never give, He gave for us.

Tomorrow we start a new week and a new chapter. Today, say thank you.

Think about it:

- What have I promised God that I haven't followed through on?
- How does knowing Jesus was the offering without blemish change the way I come to God today?

Pray: Lord, You are the great King. Forgive us for the leftovers. Thank You for the Lamb without blemish. Amen.

Week 2 | Sunday, November 8

Faithless Faithful Malachi 2:1-16

[illegible]

Monday, November 9 | A Warning That Wants Us Back

Read: Malachi 2:1-4

Chapter 2 begins with a warning, and it's aimed at the priests. If they won't listen and won't honor God's name, He'll turn their blessings into curses. That's a serious thing to say.

But look at why. Verse 4 says God is sending the warning so that His covenant with Levi can continue. The warning isn't there to destroy. It's there to bring them back. God wants the relationship more than He wants to be proven right.

Leaders carry extra weight in Scripture. The priests stood between God and the people, so their failure hurt everyone. That's not only true for pastors. Parents lead. Bosses lead. Older siblings lead. Anyone with someone watching them is leading, whether they signed up for it or not.

A warning from God is a kindness. He didn't have to give one.

Think about it:

- Who is watching me and learning from how I live?
- Is there a warning I've been ignoring because I didn't like it?

Pray: Lord, thank You for warning us instead of giving up on us. Help us listen the first time.

Tuesday, November 10 | What Levi Looked Like

Read: Malachi 2:5-7

God describes what faithfulness looked like in Levi. He revered God. He stood in awe of His name. True instruction was in his mouth, and nothing false was found on his lips. He walked with God in peace and uprightness, and he turned many people away from sin.

Notice the order. He revered God first. The teaching came out of that. The walking came out of that. He didn't sound right and live wrong. His life backed up his words.

Verse 7 calls the priest the messenger of the Lord. That's the same word as the name Malachi, "my messenger." God has always wanted messengers who carry His word and live it.

We all carry something to somebody. A kid is learning what God is like from us. A coworker is watching how we handle a bad day. What are they getting?

Think about it:

- Do the people who know me see the same person at church that they see at home?
- Who is learning what God is like from me?

Pray: Father, make our lives match our words. Let the people closest to us see You in us.

Wednesday, November 11 | Stumbling Blocks

Read: Malachi 2:8-9

Now God says what happened. The priests turned away from the way. They caused many to stumble by what they taught. They played favorites when they gave instruction. They broke the covenant that Levi had kept.

The result was that the people they were supposed to guide ended up lost. And God says the priests will be looked down on by everyone. When leaders fail, it's rarely private.

James 3:1 says teachers will be judged more strictly. Jesus said it would be better to have a millstone tied around your neck and be thrown into the sea than to cause one of His little ones to stumble (Luke 17:1-2). That's how seriously God takes it.

This isn't meant to scare us out of leading. It's meant to slow us down. Our example teaches more than our words. A tired, distracted, half-hearted faith teaches too.

Today, think about the people who copy us. What would they learn about God if they copied everything we did this week?

Think about it:

- Where might my example be making it harder for someone to follow Jesus?
- What is one thing I'd want someone to copy from me?

Pray: Lord, keep us from being a stumbling block. Help us lead with humility and keep our eyes on You.

Thursday, November 12 | One Father

Read: Malachi 2:10

Verse 10 turns from the priests to everyone. Don't we all have one Father? Didn't one God create us? Then why are we breaking faith with each other?

Malachi connects two things we like to keep apart. How we treat God and how we treat each other. The people thought they could be rough with each other and still be fine with God. God says it doesn't work that way.

First John 4:20 says the same thing. If we say we love God but hate our brother, we're liars. We can't love a Father and ignore His kids.

That means our church can't just be a group of people who show up at the same time. We have one Father. We're family. Family keeps its word to one another.

Think about the people in our church. Is there someone we've written off, avoided, or talked about when they weren't around? Today, we can start putting that right.

Think about it:

- Who in my church family have I pulled away from?
- What is one step I can take this week to repair it?

Pray: Father, we're Your children. Help us treat each other that way.

Friday, November 13 | Whose God Runs the House?

Read: Malachi 2:11-12

Verses 11 and 12 are about marriage, and they're easy to misread. The problem was not that these men married foreigners. Ruth was a foreigner, and the Bible honors her. She chose Israel's God as her own. The problem here is that the men were marrying women who worshiped other gods, and bringing those gods into the covenant family.

Ezra and Nehemiah deal with the same issue. God's people were letting other loyalties move in and take over. Paul raises the concern for believers in 2 Corinthians 6:14 when he talks about being unequally yoked.

The deeper question is who gets the final say in our homes. Whose God is on the throne? We don't have to marry someone from another religion to let a different god run our house. Money, comfort, success, and image all want that spot.

Today, take a hard look. What shapes our decisions at home the most? Is it the Lord, or something else?

Think about it:

- What gets the final say in my home when decisions are made?
- What has quietly moved into a place that belongs to God?

Pray: Lord, be the God of our house. Show us what we've let take Your place.

Saturday, November 14 | The Wife of Your Youth

Read: Malachi 2:13-16

God says He won't accept their offerings. The altar is covered with tears. They can't figure out why. Verse 14 gives the answer. God has been a witness between a man and the wife of his youth, and the man broke faith with her.

Verse 16 is hard to translate, and Bible versions read it differently. What they all agree on is the heart of it. God cares about the person who gets hurt when a covenant is broken. And the passage ends with a call to guard our spirits and not be unfaithful.

If you've been through a divorce, hear this. God sees the one who was hurt. This passage isn't a label to put on anyone. It shows us whose side God is on.

Faithfulness is a daily thing. It's not only about affairs. It's about neglect, contempt, and the small betrayals of what we promised each other.

Here's the best news in the chapter. Second Timothy 2:13 says that even if we're faithless, God remains faithful. He keeps His covenant when we don't. Tomorrow we ask what happens when it feels like He isn't.

Think about it:

- What is one promise I've made that I need to renew this week?
- Who do I know that's been hurt by a broken promise, and how can I check on them?

Pray: Faithful God, we've broken faith more than we want to admit. Thank You for keeping Yours. Teach us to keep our word. Amen.

Week 3 | Sunday, November 15

Where Is the God of Justice? Malachi 2:17-3:12

This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.

Monday, November 16 | Wearing God Out

Read: Malachi 2:17

God says something surprising. We have worn Him out with our words. The people ask how, and He tells them. They're saying that everyone who does evil is fine in God's eyes, or they're asking, "Where is the God of justice?"

That second question isn't a sin all by itself. The Psalms are full of people asking where God is. Habakkuk asked it. Job asked it. God can handle honest questions.

But look at what's underneath this one. The people had stopped trusting God and started calling wrong things right. They weren't asking in order to find Him. They were accusing Him in order to excuse themselves.

There's a difference between lament and contempt. One says, "God, I don't understand, but I'm still here." The other says, "God, You're not doing Your job." Today, bring God your hardest questions. Just bring them to Him.

Think about it:

- Is there a question about God I've been carrying but haven't actually said to Him?
- Are my questions drawing me toward God or pushing me away?

Pray: God, I have questions. Help me to remember to bring them to you. Help me trust You while I wait.

Tuesday, November 17 | Suddenly

Read: Malachi 3:1

The people asked where God was. Here's His answer. He's coming. First He'll send a messenger to prepare the way. Then, suddenly, the Lord they've been looking for will come to His temple.

That word suddenly matters. The people had been waiting so long that they'd quit expecting anything. And God says it will happen when they're not ready.

The New Testament tells us who the messenger is. Mark 1:2-4 quotes this verse and points to John the Baptist, who came out of the wilderness telling people to repent. Jesus said the same thing in Matthew 11:10. This one verse reaches across 400 years to Advent.

We ask God to show up. Be careful. When He does, He doesn't just fix our circumstances. He comes for us. Today, let's ask ourselves if we're ready for the answer we've been asking for.

Think about it:

- What have I been asking God to do that would also change me?
- If He showed up today, what would I want to have settled?

Pray: Lord, we've been asking You to come. Make us ready for what You do when You get here.

Wednesday, November 18 | Refiner's Fire

Read: Malachi 3:2-3

Who can stand when He comes? That's the question in verse 2. God compares Himself to a refiner's fire and a launderer's soap. Those are two pictures of cleaning. One uses heat and one uses scrubbing. Neither one is gentle.

But notice what the refiner does in verse 3. He sits. A refiner doesn't throw the silver in the fire and walk off. He stays close. He watches. The fire is there to remove what doesn't belong, so that what's left is pure.

The fire isn't aimed at destroying God's people. It's aimed at making them clean.

First Peter 1:6-7 says our faith is tested like gold in the fire, and that it's worth more than gold. If you're in a hard season, it's not proof God left. It may be proof He's still working.

We don't have to enjoy the fire. We can trust the One sitting beside it.

Think about it:

- What hard thing am I in right now that I've read as God being absent?
- What might God be burning off, and can I let it go?

Pray: God, we don't like the fire. Sit with us in it, and make us pure.

Thursday, November 19 | The People No One Sees

Read: Malachi 3:4-5

Verse 4 says that when the refining is done, the offerings will please God again. Then verse 5 gets specific about what He's coming to judge. Sorcerers. Adulterers. Liars under oath. And then a list of people who take advantage of the weak. Those who cheat workers out of their pay. Those who oppress widows and orphans. Those who deny justice to foreigners.

The people had asked, "Where is the God of justice?" Here's the answer. He's coming, and He's keeping a close eye on how the vulnerable are being treated.

God cares about the people no one else notices. The worker who got shorted. The widow nobody checks on. The child who has no one. The neighbor who doesn't speak the language.

James 1:27 says pure religion looks after orphans and widows in their distress. It's one of the clearest tests of whether our worship is real.

Today, who is that person near us?

Think about it:

- Who in my life or my community is easy to overlook?
- What is one thing I can do this week to see them and help?

Pray: Lord, open our eyes to the people You see. Make us people who notice.

Friday, November 20 | I Do Not Change

Read: Malachi 3:6-7

Here's one of the most comforting sentences in the book. "I the LORD do not change." And look at what comes next. That's why the descendants of Jacob haven't been wiped out. They've been unfaithful for generations. They're still standing because God is steady, not because they are.

Then God says, "Return to me, and I will return to you." The people ask how. They don't even know they've left.

That's a real possibility for us. We can drift so slowly that we never notice we've moved. We still go. We still sing. And somewhere along the line, we stopped being close.

Luke 15:20 shows what returning looks like. The father sees his son while he's still a long way off, and he runs. We don't have to clean ourselves up first. We just have to turn around.

Think about it:

- Where have I drifted without noticing?
- What would it look like to turn back today, even in a small way?

Pray: Lord, You don't change, and that's the only reason we're still here. We're coming back. Meet us.

Saturday, November 21 | Test Me

Read: Malachi 3:8-12

Verse 8 is blunt. God says they've been robbing Him, in tithes and offerings. He tells them to bring the whole tithe into the storehouse, and then He says something He rarely says. Test me in this. See if I won't open the windows of heaven and pour out more blessing than you have room for.

After the month we just had on stewardship, this passage could be heard as one more sermon on money. It isn't. It's about trust. Holding back wasn't really about the grain. It was about whether they believed God would provide if they let go.

This also isn't a formula for getting rich. God isn't a vending machine. It's an invitation to find out that He can be trusted with the thing we're most nervous about.

Our giving shows where our trust is. It always has. So today, ask the honest question. What are we holding on to because we don't think God will come through?

Tomorrow, we hear what the people said back to God, and what He said to them in the end.

Think about it:

- What am I holding back from God because I'm afraid He won't provide?
- What would it look like to take Him at His word this week?

Pray: Father, we want to trust You with what we're most afraid to lose. Teach us to open our hands. Amen.

Week 4 | Sunday, November 22

The Last Word Malachi 3:13-4:6

This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.

Monday, November 23 | Is It Worth It?

Read: Malachi 3:13-15

Now the people say the hardest thing yet. “It is futile to serve God.” What do we get out of obeying Him? They look around and see arrogant people doing well. Evildoers are prospering. Even people who test God seem to get away with it. So why bother?

We know this feeling. We watch someone who cuts corners get the promotion. We see people who ignore God and look happy. We wonder if our faithfulness is paying anything.

Psalms 73 is the same struggle. The writer almost lost his footing watching the wicked prosper. What changed things for him? He went into God’s sanctuary and saw how it would end. He came back with a different view.

It’s fine to be honest about the question. Just don’t stop there. Take it into God’s presence and let Him show you the end of the story.

Think about it:

- Who am I envying right now, and why?
- Do I measure my faith by what I get out of it?

Pray: Lord, we get tired and we get jealous. Show us the end of the story, and keep us faithful until then.

Tuesday, November 24 | The Ones Who Kept Talking

Read: Malachi 3:16-18

Right in the middle of all this complaining, there's a small group doing something different. Those who feared the Lord talked with each other. They didn't join the cynicism. They talked about God and encouraged one another. And verse 16 says the Lord listened and heard.

A scroll of remembrance was written in His presence for those who feared Him and honored His name. God keeps a record. Nothing done for Him is forgotten.

Then God says what He thinks of them. They'll be His treasured possession. He'll spare them the way a father has compassion on a son who serves him. Back in chapter 1, God asked where the honor due a father was. Now we see the Father's heart. He isn't only a king who asks for our best. He's a father who treasures us.

When the world turns cynical, find the people who still talk about God. And be one of them. Hebrews 10:24-25 says to keep meeting together and encouraging one another.

Think about it:

- Who do I talk with about God, and who do I only talk with about everything else?
- Who could I encourage this week?

Pray: Father, thank You for treasuring us. Put people around us who point us to You, and make us that for someone else.

Wednesday, November 25 | The Day Is Coming

Read: Malachi 4:1

Chapter 4 opens with a day that burns like a furnace. The arrogant and every evildoer will be like stubble. Nothing will be left of them, not root or branch. That's a hard verse.

Remember who it's answering. The people had asked, "Where is the God of justice?" and said it doesn't pay to serve Him. Here's the reply. Evil isn't going to win. God hasn't missed anything. There's a day coming when everything is made right.

That's a comfort when we've been wronged and nobody has done anything about it. We don't have to carry the weight of getting even. Romans 12:19 says to leave room for God's wrath.

It's also a check on our own hearts. Arrogance isn't only someone else's problem. It lives in us too. The good news is Romans 8:1. There is no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. Jesus took the heat for us.

Think about it:

- Is there a wrong I've been trying to fix myself that I need to hand over to God?
- Where has pride crept into my own life?

Pray: God, You see everything and You will make it right. Take our need to get even, and keep us humble.

Thursday, November 26 | The Sun of Righteousness

Read: Malachi 4:2-3

Today is Thanksgiving, and this passage fits it well. After the furnace in verse 1, verse 2 turns. For those who honor God's name, the sun of righteousness will rise with healing. And they'll go out and leap like calves let out of the stall.

That's a picture of pure joy. Think of a young calf let out into a field after being penned up. It runs and jumps for no reason except that it's free. That's what God says is coming.

Zechariah picks up the same image when his son John is born. In Luke 1:78-79, he says the rising sun will come from heaven to shine on people living in darkness. That rising sun is Jesus.

So on a day built around giving thanks, here's something to thank God for. The healing is coming, and it has a name. Say thank you out loud at the table today.

Think about it:

- What am I most thankful to God for this year?
- What part of me needs healing that I can hand to Jesus?

Pray: Thank You, God, for the Son who rises with healing. Fill our day with gratitude and our hearts with joy.

Friday, November 27 | Remember

Read: Malachi 4:4

God's last command in Malachi is a simple one. Remember. Remember the law of my servant Moses, the decrees and laws given at Horeb for all Israel.

Think about what that means. In just a couple of verses, the prophets will go quiet. For about 400 years, there won't be a new word from God. What do you do when the voice stops? You hold on to the words you already have.

Remembering in the Bible is more than recalling a fact. It means letting what we know shape what we do. God is telling the people that the silence isn't permission to forget.

We're in a different spot. We have the whole story, and it's in our hands. The thing we have to watch is that we don't treat it like they treated their sacrifices. Leftover time. Half our attention.

Today, open the Bible and read slowly, as if it's the last word you'll get for a while.

Think about it:

- When was the last time I read the Bible without rushing?
- What has God already said to me that I've started to forget?

Pray: Lord, help us remember. Give us a hunger for Your word and the will to live it.

Saturday, November 28 | Before the Silence Breaks

Read: Malachi 4:5-6

The book ends with a promise and a warning. God will send the prophet Elijah before the great and dreadful day of the Lord. He'll turn the hearts of parents to their children and children to their parents. If that doesn't happen, God says He'll strike the land with destruction.

Then the page turns. In our Bibles, the next thing is Matthew. Between them, about 400 years with no prophet speaking for God. Every promise in Malachi was waiting.

Then an angel appears to a priest named Zechariah. Luke 1:13-17 says his son will go ahead of the Lord in the spirit and power of Elijah, and turn hearts back. Jesus later said John was the Elijah who was to come (Matthew 11:14). The silence ends with a baby's cry.

That's Advent. God didn't go quiet because He gave up. He was getting the world ready. Tomorrow, we begin waiting with fresh eyes.

Think about it:

- Whose heart do I need to turn toward, in my family or among those closest to me?
- What am I waiting on God for right now, and can I trust that He's getting things ready?

Pray: Lord, thank You for the last word that led to the Word. Get us ready to welcome Jesus this Advent. In Jesus' name, Amen.



new beginnings church

start here. grow here.