

I Will, You Will

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[0 : 0 0] This is the morning service at Holy Trinity on the 8th of June 2003.

The preacher is Paul Dudley. His sermon is entitled I Will, You Will and is based on Malachi chapter 3 verse 16 through to chapter 4 verse 6.

Well, after watching a depressing TV ad this week, my worries and my fears of when this baby shall turn has now changed.

I now have a far greater worry and a far greater worry about what will happen in the future. The ad, you may have seen it, is this father whose little daughter comes walking into him and he looks with great affection at his daughter.

And then as he looks up, he thinks of the future. He starts reflecting on what might happen and he thinks of his daughter going out to university. Then the next picture we see is a young lad turning up at the door with some flowers and then some chocolates and then, you know, he gets hair, gets longer and woolier and the father starts looking more and more worried and then just when he's painting his house, obviously making some renovations, this young lad turns up with a box and it's obviously time for his daughter to get married.

[1 : 2 9] I'm watching this feeling a little bit worried myself. And then there's the wedding and you see that, you know, him sitting at the edge of his bed with his tuxedo on, obviously after the wedding, feeling a little bit sad about it all.

And then one of the final pictures is you see him holding grandchildren. In the flash of an eye, this man's child has grown up and has all of a sudden has grandchildren.

And at the end of the ad, there is this sign that says, Be life prepared. And the whole point of the ad is, invest in AXA and all your financial worries, not a problem.

Well, I looked at my eight-day-old daughter this week and I thought, she's going to grow up very quickly. Soon I'm going to have to get her more clothes, more nappies, toys, food, bed, socks, shoes, dresses.

There'll be the ballet that she'll want to be involved in. Then there'll be the kinder fees, the car seats. Then there'll be the school fees. Of course, when she gets older as a teenager, she'll want to go and see umpteen dozen movies. Then there'll be more make-up.

[2 : 3 3] Then more nice clothes, musical instruments, university, and then that fateful day when she leaves to get married. I have three girls, did I tell you?

And then grandkids. Goodness me. They grow up so quickly. Am I prepared for this? Am I prepared for my little Caitlin to grow up?

Have I invested in AXA? Am I life prepared? Because it's going to solve all my problems. I feel like I should get a commission from AXA here. In the book of Malachi, God's people were not life prepared.

They were a people who did not invest in God. The book of Malachi has continually, all the way through, been pointing to the fact that if you want to be life prepared, invest in God.

God is the one where your investment should lie. Last week in particular, when we looked at chapter 3, verses 13, 14, and 15, we see there that the evildoers amongst God's people say it's vain to serve God, that there is no profit in serving God, in putting their time in with God, in investing in God.

[3 : 53] They go so far as to say in verse 15, now we count the arrogant happy. Evildoers not only prosper, but when they put God to the test, they escape.

Here is a group of people, of God's people, who do not invest in Him. They can't see any benefit in investing in God. They think it's just as, they might as well invest in other things.

That evildoers are the ones who seem to prosper, not God's people. In today's reading, we see God's answer to this type of attitude, this type of attitude of not investing in God.

The book has been quite a negative book, continually, Malachi comes to the people, bringing charges time and time again. But at the beginning of today's reading, which you might like to have open on page 778, at verse 16, we have our first positive note.

Here we see that there are a group of people, a people who do revere God's name, a people who have either heard Malachi's message, or are people that are those who do trust in God.

[5 : 02] Then those who revere the Lord spoke with one another. We're not sure what they were speaking with one another, but it's clear that there is this group of people who are getting beside each other and encouraging each other, talking about what God has done and God will do.

And this does not go unnoticed by God. We see there in the rest of the verse. The Lord took note and listened, and a book of remembrance was written before him of those who revere the Lord and thought on his name.

God remembered them. Like a big honour roll that you might see in Arasola in some halls, God writes down the names that those who fear him, not fear in a sense of being terrified of God, but those who recognise the truth of God, those who confess before God their sins, those who recognise the awesome power and sovereignty of God.

God records their name. He writes them down. He does not forget these people, not one of them. Here we see in this first verse, a God who knows his people and a God who cares for his people.

In verses 17 and 18, God gives his great promise that he will act in a decisive way. We saw this a couple of weeks ago, that there is the day of the Lord when God will act and then God will deal with his people, those who revere his name.

[6 : 33] Look at the way that it describes there in verse 7. They shall be mine, says the Lord of hosts, my special possession on that day when I act. I will spare them as a parent.

Parents spare their children who serve them. I don't know if you've seen little kids with their treasured possessions. You know, those little things that they find outside or little presents that they're given and they're very, very special to a child.

They usually wrap them up in tissues or a hanky and they're very, very precious to them. And they might come walking up to you and say, would you like to look at my treasure? And they'll open up the hanky or the tissue and they'll show you their treasure possession.

It might be just simply a little gum nut or a little egg shell that they've been outside or something. But for them, it is worth more than all the gold in the world. Their treasured possession.

The picture that we have here is of God with his people on that great day where God will spare his people. And he holds them in his hand. He says, look, here's my treasured possession.

[7 : 41] Here is the one that I love. Have a look at them. Look how special they are. This is the picture that we have here. They are God's special possession.

It's interesting to note here that when God acts, it is the day of the Lord. In this day of the Lord, we saw a couple of weeks ago, God will act decisively, that he will purify his people.

But here, on this great day of the Lord, it is described here, it's a day where we will see the difference between those who are wicked and those who are righteous. It's often very difficult, isn't it, as we look around to find out who are the righteous and who are the wicked?

Who are those who trust God and who are those who don't trust God? Often it's very difficult. Particularly as we look here at Malachi where God's people, those who were wicked, when they looked around and they said, it doesn't matter how you live.

But God says here in verse 18, this great day that is coming, it will make it very clear as to which side you stand on, those who are wicked and those who are righteous.

[8 : 52] Look there in verse 18. Then once more you shall see the difference between the righteous and the wicked, between the one who serves God and the one who does not serve him.

René Rifkin this week, on this weekend, I assume he's still there in detention at the moment. René Rifkin was put in jail, but all the way he went, declaring his innocence, saying that he wasn't, shouldn't be there for what he had done.

He thinks this is a complete and utter injustice. This day of the Lord is a day of justice, a day when God will judge people and put them in the two categories.

It will be those of his special possession and those who are the wicked. You'll be able to see the difference very clear on that day. It'll be like chalk and cheese, goats and sheep, black and white, those who are in and those who are out.

It is a very clear dividing line. It'll be a day of crisis, a day of ultimate judgment, when God will judge men according to how they relate to God, how they respond to God's invite of return.

[10 : 07] Well, verses, chapter 4, verses 1 through to 3, describe more of this great and final day. If we look there in verse 1, we see that it is a day of destruction, a day of destruction for those who are wicked.

See, the day is coming, burning like an oven, when all the arrogant and all the evildoers will be stubborn. The day that comes shall burn them up, says the Lord of hosts, so it'll leave them with neither root nor branch.

When we first moved to our farm up near Bathurst, my parents decided to go into being vegetable planters. And I distinctly remember seeing these paddocks of little cabbage plants, only about so big.

We hooked up this little contraption that my dad made on the back of the tractor and we pulled it along and Dad would plant these little plants into the ground and, you know, we'd give them some water.

But they happened to start getting involved in the vegetable scene just as a severe drought hit the land. And I can still see Dad rushing around, trying to put out the irrigation system to try and make these plants grow, but slowly seeing them shrivel up, drying up in the heat without the water.

[11 : 27] The picture that we have here is not of people just shriveling up, but of burning up, where the land is like that of a great oven. It reminds me of the fires that we saw in Canberra or back in New South Wales, where the fire was so ferocious and so hot that everything is burnt, burnt down to the ground, levelled.

This is the picture that we have here on that final day, that day of destruction. It'll be a day of severe heat, a day where the fields will burn up like an oven.

Two weeks ago, as I said, we looked at God's judgment there. We saw that God's judgment is like a fire back in chapter 3, verses 1 through to 4, but it was a purifying fire, a fire that would purify Israel's worship.

Today we see that this fire is also a fire of destruction, where everything evil and everyone will be utterly destroyed who do not trust in God.

In verse 2, we have a picture of those who do trust God. What will the day hold for them, for those who trust in God and obey his commands?

[12 : 51] But for you who revere my name, the sun of righteousness shall rise with healing in its wings. The picture is when the sun comes up on these people, it won't be the sun that burns them up in destruction, but for those who are righteous, it will be a day where righteousness shines, a day of great healing that is described there.

Healing shall come with its wings. This picture of utter healing, comprehensive healing, where every wound will be healed. We had some friends during college who had a little baby girl, a delight for them, but as things went along, they realised that things weren't quite right.

They came to see, came to, after doing some tests, to see that this little girl had Angelman syndrome, a syndrome that means that she will never be able to speak.

She may learn to sign six words, that's about it. She's only at the age of six just learning to walk. She is severely handicapped. For them, it is great pain, great anguish.

We all carry a great deal of pain and hurt, but this day, this day of the Lord, it's a day of healing, a day when God will bring great cleansing, great healing, where all our wounds will be healed.

[14 : 28] For our little friend, that little girl, she will be restored to fullness. This day is a day of great relief, a day of great exuberance and joy.

The Bible here describes it as a day of great playfulness. You shall go out, leaping like calves from the store. We had lots of stupid cows on our farms, and whenever we let them out, they would be kicking up their heels from being set free from the stalls, from the little round yards or whatever happened to be.

It was great to see them, or you see the little calves, when they're first born, jumping around and kicking up their heels. Such is the description of those who revere God's name in that day.

It would be a day of great joy, of great relief. Well, here at the end of verse 2, we see the climax between the two different groups.

We see those who are evil, those who are arrogant, and we see those who revere God's name. We see the great difference between the two. It's interesting to note that this prophet Malachi is one of the few last prophets to actually speak about judgment coming within Israel.

[15 : 45] Most of the other prophets talk about judgment happening for those outside, the nations outside of Israel. But for Malachi, he speaks about how within Israel there would be this dividing line.

In verse 3, we see there that the roles are reversed. Those who are trampled down by the evildoers will trample down on them.

The picture here that we have is that of a victor, of victory being won, of those in times of war back then where they would put their foot on the neck of those of the victim, those who are captured.

You shall tread down the wicked, for they will be ashes under the soles of your feet on the day when I act, says the Lord of hosts. This is a day when God will act.

And God will act decisively. Malachi tells the people of Israel, God will act. There will be a human messenger who will come beforehand, but God will act in a decisive way in this day of the Lord.

[16 : 51] In the last three verses, we have the conclusion to the book of Malachi. In many ways, they are a fitting conclusion. They are a conclusion that looks back and looks forward.

In the end, gives a great warning, a warning of the curse that will come across those who do not trust in God. Let's have a look in verse 4.

Remember the teaching of my servant Moses, the statutes and ordinances that I commanded him at Horeb for all Israel. The first part here in verse 4 is an invitation by God, an invitation to remember the law of Moses, to go back and reflect on the covenant and the obligations of that covenant set up at Sinai.

They are able to look back and remember this. When we have the word remember here, remembering is not just thinking, reflecting on some abstract thought, but it's actually doing.

There's no use remembering that you've got a cake in the oven if you don't go and take it out. You need to go and do something about that cake, otherwise it's going to be a charred mess at the bottom of your oven.

[18 : 07] Remembering is doing. Here God is commanding his people to go back to the ordinances, to go back to the way that God set up the covenant. They were to trust and obey in him.

There we see Malachi saying, look back, look back to your past. But in verse 5 he says, look forward also. Look what God is going to do.

Lo, I will send you the prophet Elijah before the great and terrible day of the Lord comes. Elijah is this character in the Old Testament, a man who was taken up to heaven in a chariot of fire alive.

He was a man who influenced the nation and its destiny greatly. He was a man who called down fire from heaven. This figure Elijah, Malachi tells us, will come and prepare the way.

It's the same figure that we saw a couple of weeks ago in chapter 3 verse 1. The one who would prepare the way for the Lord. The one who would tell people to repent and come back to God. Here is the one, Elijah.

[19 : 13] God says, watch out for him. When he arrives, repent. Be turned by this figure, Elijah. Here we see in these two verses, verse 4 and 5, what God will do, what God will do, and what humans are to do.

For Israel, God would bring about a prophet Elijah. They were to hear his words and turn back to him. God was going to bring about the great day of the Lord, a day of great blessing and a day of great curse.

God will bring about God. But there is also what they were to do. They were to be a people who remembered the Lord. They were to be a people who turned when they heard the message from Elijah.

At verse 6, we have the final verse of the Old Testament. A verse that in many ways looks forward and indicates that the story has not ended at this point. A verse that stands as a great warning of what is to come.

What will this Elijah figure do? Verse 6 describes it to us. He will turn the hearts of parents to their children and the hearts of children to their parents so that I will not come and strike the land with a curse.

[20 : 38] This figure, Elijah, will turn people's hearts in the different generations back to the original generations, back to the patriarchs. Back to the fathers where the promises were given.

This Elijah figure will turn people's back to the covenant, telling people to come back and repent, to be in relationship with God. If they failed to do this, God would pour out his curse on the land.

This promised land of great rest and blessing, a place of enjoyment, a place of enjoyment with God. If they failed to hear this, this warning, when the Elijah figure came, they would miss out on this and fail to enter that promised land.

It's against this backdrop that you can imagine the great excitement when the people heard of John the Baptist out in the wilderness declaring, I come to prepare the way of the Lord.

You can imagine the people 400 years later after this has been written, reading their Bibles and looking forward to this character, this person who would be preparing the way of the Lord.

[21 : 53] And here is John the Baptist declaring he is the one, the one to prepare the way for the Lord. Can you imagine the excitement when they saw Jesus arrive?

Can you imagine the great excitement seeing him perform the great miracles and seeing him bring judgment on the temple as he cleared it out? Great excitement.

The New Testament declares that John the Baptist, Jesus declares that John the Baptist is this Elijah figure that Malachi talks about, the one to prepare the way of the Lord.

Jesus declares that he is indeed God's son, the one to bring about the day of the Lord. Here we see in Jesus' life the day of the Lord beginning.

We see the great day of judgment. We see the great curse being brought out on the land. Who is the one that takes the curse? It is the one who humbled himself.

[22 : 59] Jesus. The one who took on the very nature of his servant. Jesus. He dies on a cross taking the punishment that we deserve.

He became that curse that is spoken about here for us. Here is the place where God pours out his wrath and anger. Why is that not the end of the story then?

Why are we still around here today? Why is it that the sun keeps on coming up and down if the great day of the Lord has already appeared, that Jesus has come?

Why is it that we wait for Jesus to return again? the message is, is that grace has the last word. God in his graciousness is giving an opportunity for people to turn, to come back to him.

Why is it that the sun comes up every morning? It's that people may turn. People may come back to God. God gives them an opportunity to be a part of his family.

[24 : 11] Grace has the last word. But the New Testament gives us a warning also that with this grace there is also a great warning. For those who fail to enter that rest, as we saw in Hebrews, those who do not enter God's rest and do not trust in him and obey him, there is terrible judgment.

for those of us who are Christians, the word of encouragement from the book of Malachi is that we should be people who invest in God, that we are people who invest in God's ways and see that God will bring about a great blessing upon us.

We are to be a people who know God's love and react accordingly. We are to put God to the test, trust him and obey him. We are to be people telling others about what Christ has done, about God's love.

We are to be a people who recognise that we are in the days, those last days, the days of grace. I'm in no doubt that I'm going to have to spend a lot of money on my girls.

I'll have to invest a lot of money into them, I imagine. I thought of one option was perhaps to leave a baseball bat beside my door so that any young lad that turns up can see that.

[25 : 36] That may help the problem a little but the reality is I'm going to have to spend, invest a bit of time into my children. But the thing that I need to invest most of all with them is to tell them about the Lord Jesus, to invest time in them about telling them about the grace and love of God.

God, we need to be people who invest time with God, our lives, every part of it.

May we be people who do that. Let me pray. Father, we do indeed thank you for the book of Malachi where we can learn more about you and your ways, of what you demand of your people.

We thank you that Jesus Christ came to fulfill what was spoken about in Malachi. Father, we pray that you will help us to be people who trust in your Son, Jesus, that we will be people who invest our lives in you and all that we own.

We pray this in your Son's name. Amen. 12■s of time to know how we willamm to