

Malachi 2:10-16 sermon

TEXT

Judah Unfaithful

¹⁰ Have we not all have one Father? Did not one God create us? Why do we profane the covenant of our fathers by breaking faith with one another?

¹¹ Judah has broken faith. A detestable thing has been committed in Israel and in Jerusalem: Judah has desecrated the sanctuary the Lord loves by marrying a daughter of a foreign god.

¹² As for the man who does this, whoever he may be, may the Lord remove him from the tents of Jacob^[b]—even though he brings an offering to the Lord Almighty.

¹³ Another thing you do: You flood the Lord’s altar with tears. You weep and wail because he no longer pays attention to your offerings or accepts them with pleasure from your hands.

¹⁴ You ask, “Why?” It is because the Lord is acting as the witness between you and the wife of your youth. Because you have broken faith with her, though she is your partner, the wife of your marriage covenant.

¹⁵ Has not the Lord made them one? In flesh and spirit they are his. And why one because he was seeking godly offspring. So guard yourself in your spirit and do not break faith with the wife of your youth.

¹⁶ I hate divorce, says the Lord God of Israel, and I hate a man’s covering himself with violence with his garment, says the Lord almighty,

So guard yourself in your spirit and do not break faith.

BIG IDEA

‘We belong to a loving God who desires us to be faithful to the covenant he has made between us by coming back into the relationship with him’

RECAP

Good morning everyone.

Over the last few weeks we have been working our way through our current sermon series in the book of Malachi, if you have missed one or even both weeks let me get you up to speed on where we are at now.

The book of Malachi is the last book of the old testament and was written around 400 years before Jesus was born.

In the book, the prophet Malachi who’s Gods messenger is telling Judah that God is really unhappy with the way they are living.

And what we have seen over the last two weeks from this book is that even though God still shows his people that he loves them, the people have become unfaithful to him in the way they live out really important parts of their lives with him.

Today's passage continues to show us that Judah have a real heart problem in the way they are being unfaithful to God and also in the way that they are being unfaithful to their wives. We will also see today that God won't continue to put up with this unfaithfulness from his people and has a big warning for them.

But before we start investigating today's passage in Malachi, let's start by praying.

INTRO

<slide> Gloomy wedding speech

Around 15 years ago my best mate from school was getting married and he asked me to be his best man, one of my jobs as best man was to give the speech.

Unfortunately I was going through a bit of depression and had delusions that I could confidently give speeches without any preparation or notes.

I went through the details of my speech, because I have seriously tried to wipe it from my memory. But I can say it was definitely the most gloomy speech about marriage in front of 150 people that I'll ever give.

I didn't mean it to be gloomy, I wanted to say so many positive things to my best mate and his new wife about the joy of marriage, I just got lost in what we all know is real when it comes to marriage, that it's complex and that it takes a lot of work.

In today's passage the prophet Malachi is bringing some gloomy news about marriage to Judah as well.

Judah continue to be God's people but the only thing holding them in this relationship is that God is being completely faithful to the promises he has made to them in the past.

Judah on the other hand are showing the opposite kind of behaviour, they are being the unfaithful partner and not only to God but also to their wives.

POINT 1

We can see the details of Judah's unfaithfulness in verse 11 of our passage as we hear Malachi tell Judah that they have been unfaithful to God in the way they are marrying women from foreign nations, who in turn worship foreign gods.

let's look at verse 11 together to see what it says.

<slide-verse11> Malachi Chapter 2 verse 11

¹¹ Judah has broken faith. A detestable thing has been committed in Israel and in Jerusalem: Judah has desecrated the sanctuary the Lord loves by marrying a daughter of a foreign god.

Now we might not think twice about marrying a foreign person in this country because we live in a multi-cultural society where ethnicity differences between us make no difference.

So why then is marrying foreign women a problem for God?

Well it's a problem because God knows his people have a heart problem.

He knows that at the earliest possible moment, his chosen people will become unfaithful to him and worship whatever looks good, and because God loves his people and is faithful to them, he makes a very big effort to try and protect them from themselves.

He did this, by setting up a series of laws for them to follow, laws that would help them to know and understand what being faithful to God looks like.

The first of these laws were given to God's people when Moses walked down from Mount Sinai with the 10 commandments around a thousand years before.

And it's the very first of those 10 commandments, that we get to see that God's big thing is that his people remain faithful to him.

The commandment says this.

<slide> Exodus Chapter 20 verse 2-5

² "I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery.

³ "You shall have no other gods before me.

⁴ "You shall not make for yourself an idol in the form of anything in heaven above or on the earth beneath or in the waters below.

⁵ You shall not bow down to them or worship them; for I, the Lord your God, am a jealous God,

Did you notice that God says he is jealous?

He is jealous because he doesn't want his dearly chosen people to be unfaithful to him by worshipping other gods. He wants his people who are in a type of marriage with him to be completely faithful to him alone.

It's no different for us in our marriages right?, if we are part of a marriage partnership, if we have made a promise to another person to stay faithful then we hope and expect the same from them.

Unfortunately for God though, his people have not been faithful to him and are having affairs with other gods and are also being unfaithful to the wives of their youth.

Look at what verse 13 and 14 says.

<slide> Malachi Chapter 2 verse 13-14

13 Another thing you do: You flood the Lord's altar with tears. You weep and wail because he no longer pays attention to your offerings or accepts them with pleasure from your hands.

14 You ask, "Why?" It is because the Lord is acting as the witness between you and the wife of your youth. Because you have broken faith with her, though she is your partner, the wife of your marriage covenant.

Judah seem to have completely lost the plot, not only are they being unfaithful in their marriage to God but these men now think its perfectly ok and justified to be unfaithful to their own wives by divorcing them.

I want you to see from these few verses that these men can't understand what's wrong with what they are doing, see in the passage where it says that "they flood the altar with tears because God no longer looks with favour on their offerings".

These men are so deceived through their unfaithfulness to God and their wives that they ask WHY, why would God ever take away his blessing from them.

They've clearly lost sight of what is important to God. The idea of being a faithful partner in their relationship with him has gone out the window and they are now showing unfaithfulness to their own wives.

Their morale compass which had once been set to faithfulness has now turned 180 degrees and it has corrupted them from the inside out.

You know every now then I see a student at the high school I teach Religious education at, who just seems to be a little further down the track of having a bad attitude than most, maybe it's because of their home environment or maybe learning difficulties but what stands out is that they rarely see a problem with their behaviour, sure they might know that something is wrong because they are being disciplined. But you just don't see remorse or guilt when things go bad.

And that's what the men of Judah are like, they don't see anything wrong because they have lost their way when it comes to being faithful and it no longer matters, the only thing that matters is that they still desire God's blessing upon them and are weeping because of it.

And once again I think it's important here to remember that God treats the marriage covenant between husband and wife just as seriously as he treats his own marriage covenant with his people because he is the author of the marriage covenant, he set it up at the start of creation because ultimately God desires faithfulness.

Look at how his design for marriage was purposed from the start of creation which we can read ourselves in Genesis 2:24.

It says.

<slide> Genesis Chapter 2 verse 24

For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife and they will become one flesh.

God loves faithfulness, his design for faithfulness in marriage was that two would become one, I get the feeling that he wanted to create something that was almost impossible to separate.

Unfortunately though Judah has found ways to separate what God has joined and it's at this point in the passage that God's warning to them comes.

POINT 2

look at what Malachi says to Judah in verse 12.

<slide> Malachi Chapter 2 verse 12

¹² As for the man who does this, whoever he may be, may the Lord remove him from the tents of Jacob^[b]—even though he brings an offering to the Lord Almighty.

I don't know if you get how big this warning is for the people of God. God has really brought the big guns out, he wants his people back and knows exactly the one thing that should motivate them.

And it's found in the reference to the tents of Jacob.

Tents of Jacob, simply mean's 'the protection and blessing of God' and Gods people have been under this tent of God's protection ever since they became his people.

Being excluded from that protection and blessing isn't just the same as being removed from a club or pub for disorderly behaviour.

No for the people of Judah, being under the tent of Jacob meant everything, not only was it about protection and blessing from God, being under the tent of Jacob was their heritage, it was their pride, it was their history.

I don't think we can get culturally close to what this means for the people of Judah, but I reckon its like not getting an invitation to your sister's wedding.

Its like having your passport cancelled whilst you are travelling overseas and not being able to come back to your home.

Its not getting an invite this year to the family Christmas party.

For Judah being removed from the protection and blessings of God means all of that plus some.

Imagine being removed from Gods protection and knowing that there is nothing you can do to fix it, no payment, no sacrifice you can make, no good work to fix the problem, just forever banished from his protection.

I don't know if you have thought about this before, but at some point all of us here have or maybe still are in this same state of unfaithfulness before God, that is that just like Judah we also were excluded from his protection and blessing.

And that is because all of us showed that ultimately we were unfaithful to God in how we treated him.

And what's worse, is that there is or was nothing that we can do to fix the problem of that broken marriage relationship with God. And so we must rely on God's faithfulness to once again bring us back into a relationship with him.

POINT 3

Fortunately Ephesians 5 has some hope for us, because Ephesians 5 tells us that God has sent to us a new marriage partner, who faithfully repairs the broken marriage all by his own actions.

And not only is he a good marriage partner for us, he is a perfect example of what a faithful marriage partner should be like.

Lets have a look at Ephesians 5 verse 25.

It says.

<slide> Ephesians chapter 25 verse 25-27

Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the Church and gave himself up for her to make her holy, cleansing her by the washing with water through the word, and to present her to himself as a radiant church, without stain or wrinkle or any other blemish, but holy and blameless.

Up to this point the only example of faithfulness we have had is that God has remained rock solid faithful to his marriage promise that he made with his people.

And he continues in his example of being faithful with us in the Ephesians 5 passage, because he gave his only son for the sake of his people, a perfect and faithful son who willingly went to his death so he could become the perfect husband that washes his people clean with the word and in how he presents all of those who call on his name to his Father as holy and blameless.

What a contrast to the way Judah have treated their wives and God with their unfaithfulness, by leaving them blemished and stained by the shame of divorce.

And notice the ultimate price that Jesus pays, he lays down his life for his bride the church, that's us.

If you missed all that because you are thinking about lunch let me replay the important details.

All of us have been unfaithful to God, we all at some point or even still reject the one who treats us like his bride.

But he still loved all of us and laid down his own life to save ours.

You see we have been given a new marriage promise though Jesus, he is our a new marriage partner that says, if you accept me as the one true and only sacrifice for your sin and make me the Lord of your life then you will never be taken out from the protection and blessing of God.

APPLICATION

There are two big take away points for us today.

The first comes to us as we consider the warning that God gave to Judah in their unfaithfulness to him. The warning that is found at the end of verse 16. That says

<slide> Malachi Chapter 2 verse 16

So guard yourself in your spirit and do not break faith.

Remaining faithful to God means that he has to become the centre of our lives, to do this, we all have to keep in check the things of this world that can easily take over and become more important to us.

Things like money, pride in our ability, our work, our homes, or even our belongings if we give these kinds of things a position of importance over God then like Judah we are also being unfaithful to him.

Remember that is exactly what Judah was doing, replacing God with other gods.

One way of ensuring those things stay secondary is to keep the good news of Jesus and even this warning from our passage today close to us, by reading the stories from the gospels regularly and writing those stories in our hearts we will be able to become a people that are more faithful to God.

But there is more to the warning here than to just keep to these worldly gods at bay, the other half of this first warning comes as we see God's people actually ask 'WHY'. Why has God left us?

<slide> Malachi Chapter 2 verse 14

¹⁴ You ask, "Why?"

You see Judah are completely lost to the reason why God was angry with them.

They didn't see that through their unfaithfulness they were desecrating the sanctuary, they couldn't see that they had become the faithless partner in the marriage covenant with God.

And unfortunately the next 400 years would see little change in this relationship with God, by the time Jesus arrives on the scene they are still treating Gods temple with disrespect and the priests have become completely unfaithful to God in the way they live.

Judah doesn't get what's wrong in their relationship with God because they have spent generations getting to this state of unfaithfulness. This long slow process of becoming unfaithful should be a warning for us.

Because becoming unfaithful to God isn't just something that happens to individuals because as we have seen in Malachi, this is a whole nation of people who are being charged by God as unfaithful.

I recently visited Scotland for some ministry training. One of the surprising things for me was found in how the church of Scotland who had once been the centre of protestant reform in the world had now become an unfaithful Church.

The Church as a whole have become so unfaithful to Jesus and his word that they believe in liberal ideas that mean that gay men and women were now able to lead once conservative, gospel focussed churches. And we have to ask, how did they get there?

Well the church of Scotland became unfaithful to Jesus, because they married into worldly ideas and reasoning that said it was better to be inclusive, loving and show equality.

You might think that it would be impossible for us to become unfaithful like this, we have great teaching right?, but gospel focussed churches all over the world and for all Christian history have had the problem of marrying into ideas that are unfaithful to God.

Just last week, in Steve's sermon he challenged us to listen carefully when it comes to teaching that you hear in this church, the reason he said that is because of this exact reason, because unfaithfulness to God is a long and sometimes slow process that we don't even see coming.

Now the second point from our passage today is about our own marriages, the earthly ones if you like.

God shows us through the Ephesians passage that a marriage with Jesus at the centre is a marriage that is sacrificial in the love shown between husband and wife.

Through Jesus' example we get to see that the perfect husband shows lifelong faithfulness even up till death.

Now we should acknowledge that unlike Jesus, we are not perfect.

We will throughout our lives struggle to have marriages like the example he has given us in the book of Ephesians.

All of us will just like Judah gravitate towards unfaithfulness, but we now have an example in the way Jesus treats his bride and our marriages and we don't need to be in slaves to unfaithfulness anymore.

We all can put Jesus at the centre of our marriages by first making him Lord over our own lives by including him in every decision and area of our lives, even the small parts and then also by asking him to be a constant reminder to us in the way he loves his bride the church.

Men we need to be leading the way here, this part of the Ephesians passage was directly aimed at men and so we are called to love our wives as Christ has, we are the ones who are called to lay down our lives for our brides. If you are not doing this already, can I encourage you to start now.

Friends we want to be a church that shows our community what living for Christ is like, if they are to see him living in us then we need to become faithful servants of Jesus.