

INTRODUCTION:

1. [Image] Something you discover in relationships is that people change. Sometimes for the better but not always. And after Brianna and I got engaged I started to change. Suddenly I wasn't quite exactly the person she had agreed to marry. And it caused her to rethink and recalculate if marrying me really was a wise decision. Because of all of a sudden I had changed into someone who was really into professional wrestling. Now many of our conversations revolved around me informing her of all the drama and intricacies of my favorite performers and why Daniel Bryan deserved to be the champion.
2. [Need] Now that is a more humorous way people change. And despite my weirdness Brianna still married me. But not all changes are so lighthearted. Sometimes as people change it puts serious strain on relationships. Friendships drift as people change and grow apart. People who used to be your closest friends can feel like strangers. Marriages can break and fall apart as people transform in different direction. But there is one person who never changes. One person who always stays the same. And this is good news because they are already perfect and their lack of change is what gives us security. That person is God.
3. [Subject] Today we will look at the unchanging nature of God and why that is good news. Our passage this morning in Malachi 3 is about God's justice and tithing. And I think one of best ways to tie together Malachi's argument is to start with God's immutability.
4. [Text] Malachi 2:16-3:15
5. [Preview] We will start with God's attribute, then we will see how that effects God's justice and how it effects what we should tithe.

Point number 1: **God is immutable. God is immutable (v. 6).**

Immutable is a big theological word that means "Unchanging"

This is one of the attributes of God.

We studied it on Wednesday nights in 2021.

Our men's Bible study is studying His attributes right now.

So we won't cover everything about this attribute again this morning.

I have some extra copies in the foyer of our notes from that lesson if you would like a refresher, or if you missed it.

But God is worth studying.

His attributes are worth reflecting on again and again.

The key verse here is in verse 6, **"For I the LORD do not change"**

Our God does not change.

This might sound strange to you.

After all everybody changes.

But God does not change because He does not need to.

He is already perfect.

He does not change because He cannot get better or get worse.

He cannot become more gracious than He already is.

He cannot become more holy.

He already knows everything so He cannot learn something that changes His perspective.

And this is a good thing.

In fact this is why we can have hope.

It is why we can have confidence in our faith.

One of the challenges of the gods in the ancient world.

The gods of Egypt, of Canaan, and Babylon,

Those gods were fickle.

They did change.

They changed their minds.

Their moods constantly shifted.

You were not always sure that they would keep their promises.

Because they changed.

But our God does not change.

He is the same yesterday, today, and tomorrow.

As we read in our call to worship.

And His unchanging nature gives us comfort.

Because if He could change, then He would no longer be God.
Because He might change and lose His godness.
Or He could have been a creature who changed and became God.
But our God does not change.
He is not fickle.
He is the "I am", not the "I might be."

We can trust that He will keep His promises.
Look at the rest of verse 6, **"Therefore you, O children of Jacob, are not consumed."**

This is not a threat.
This is a reassurance of God's grace.
He is reminding them that He is not like the idols they are worshipping.

Other gods would lose their patience.
Other gods would get angry and lose their temper at Israel's spiritual apathy.
Other gods would tire of the constant questions and doubt.
But our God is unchanging.

Our God is the God of Jacob.
Part of the reason that God likes to use that title "God of Jacob,"
Is to remind us that He is the same God.
The same God who appeared to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob is here.
He is the one we worship today.
He has not changed.

And His mercy still stands.
Because of His mercy and promises, we are not consumed.
Instead we are shown love, patience, and grace.
And we always will be.
God will not change and become less gracious and patient.

Our God will not become a God who breaks His promises and words.
Our God is immutable

[transition] Now why start in verse 6? Because God's unchanging nature is what they doubt. They don't think God is just any more. They used to believe that God cared about justice, but now it seems as if evil has free rein.

Point number 2: **Because God is immutable, His justice is coming (2:17-3:5). Because God is immutable, His justice is coming (2:17-3:5).**

We see this objection at the end of chapter 2.

Starting in verse 17, **"You have wearied the LORD with your words."**

They have worn God out.

Again this is metaphorical language.

But picture a weary parent who has been home with the children all day.

God is so tired of listening to all of their complaints.

"But you say, How have we wearied Him? By saying, "Everyone who does evil is good in the sight of the LORD, and he delights in them" Or by asking, "Where is the God of justice?"

God is weary and worn out.

And He is worn out because of two complaints about God they keep making.

The first is that they are lying about God.

They are saying evil is good.

The things that God decreed in His word as wrong are fine now.

Worse than that they say that God actually loves it.

God is now pleased by sin, idolatry, and adultery.

This is not new.

This is happening in our day, but it was happening thousands of years ago.

There will always be those who say, "God has changed!"
This act, or thing we thought was so evil and wrong is actually good now.
But God's righteousness and justice do not change.

But they also wear God by saying, "**Where is the God of justice?**"
They do not believe that God stops wickedness anymore.
He must continually allow evil in the world.

There were recently devastating earthquakes in Turkey and Syria.
Tens of thousands of people have died.
It's hard to look at images of children being pulled from the rubble and not
ask "**Where is the God of justice?**"
Honestly I have had to stop looking.
Because I cannot emotionally handle seeing this images.
The grief overwhelms me.

So when I am faced with what I don't know, I cling to what I do know.
I know that God is immutable and unchanging.
We know that God is a God of justice.
We believe that He has not changed.
He has not become a God who hates justice.
He is still just.
But His verdict has not yet sounded.
We are only in the middle of the story.
And God's justice is coming.

Chapter 3, "**Behold, I send my messenger, and he will prepare the way before me. And the Lord whom you seek will suddenly come to his temple; and the messenger of the covenant in whom you delight, behold, he is coming, says the LORD of hosts.**"

God is coming.
His justice is coming.
And God is sending messengers ahead of Himself.

We have been studying this messenger to God's temple in Luke.
John the baptist is the messenger sent to prepare the way for Jesus.
His role was to repeatedly warn "repent! The kingdom of God is at hand!"
Why do you think John's main message was one of repentance?
Because Jesus is coming.
Because God's justice is coming.
And everyone needs to repent.

They need to repent because God's justice is coming.
Look what he says this day will be like.
Verse 2, **"But who can endure the day of his coming, and who can stand when he appears?"**

The day of God's justice will be a terrifying day.
It will be a joyous day for many.
But not for everyone.
The day that God pulls back the curtain on reality.
The day Christ rides across the sky and the angels and every heavenly host are with Him.
The day that every knee bows and every tongue confesses.
The day that God stops holding back and reveals Himself in all of His glory.
That day will knock everyone to their knees.

But for those who have put their faith and hope in Jesus,
This will be a day not of judgement, but of refinement.
"For he is like a refiner's fire and like fullers' soap. 3 He will sit as a refiner and purifier of silver, and he will purify the sons of Levi and refine them like gold and silver, and they will bring offerings in righteousness to the LORD."

The day of judgment is a day of fire and washing.
Because the refiner is not out to destroy, but to restore.
He takes the tarnished gold and silver and makes it new.

He takes soap and washes away our sins.

He does so as an act of justice and grace.

Not because our good works have earned it.

Not because deep down on the inside we are beautiful gold.

But because of Christ's righteousness has been credited on our account.

Jesus takes us and makes us a new creation.

So on behalf of Jesus, we can be refined instead of burned away.

If you do not know Jesus.

If you are here and are not a Christian.

Or if hearing about the day of justice terrifies you,

Know that there is an escape.

There is salvation and deliverance through Jesus Christ.

He dies on the cross and spilled His blood to save us.

And this salvation and refinement is available to any sinner who wants it.

You only need to cry out to the Son of David for mercy.

Ask Him to give you salvation and grace.

Give your life to Him and be saved now and forever more.

Notice to who is bring purified and refined.

"he will purify the sons of Levi and refine them like gold and silver, and they will bring offerings in righteousness to the LORD."

Those apathetic priests we talked about last week.

Jesus will take them.

And He will refine them again.

He will remove their apathetic hearts of stone and give them new hearts.

And then they will bring righteous offerings.

No longer will they bring unclean and blemished animals before the Lord.

They will come with the right animals.

They will come with the right hearts.

And they will be accepted and declared righteous.

Because of the purifying fire of Jesus.

The fire that burns away all our sins and impurities and leaves only Christ.

Verse 4, **"Then the offerings of Judah and Jerusalem will be pleasing to the LORD as in the days of old and as in former years."**

All of the nation will be made clean.

All of God's people will worship in spirit and truth.

Just as in the greatest days of revival.

The days of the temple's first creation under Solomon.

The days of worship when Moses led the sacrifices.

It will be like the good ol days, but even better.

For those who have faith God's justice will be a glorious day.

They will see all things made right.

But for others, it will be a day of terror.

It will be the day when the wicked answer for their sins.

Verse 5, **"Then I will draw near to you for judgement. I will be a swift witness against the sorcerers, against the adulterers, against those who swear false, against those who oppress the hired worker in his wages, the wider and the fatherless, against those who thrust aside the sojourner and do not fear me, says the LORD of hosts."**

This is not an exhaustive list by any means.

But this list shows who will face justice when it comes.

This justice will be swift.

We might object and say "This justice seems slow to me."

But this means that on the day of justice there will be no more delay.

God only delays now as a means of grace.

But one day the delay will be over.

The sorcerers will face justice.

Those who try to manipulate god.

Those who worship demons will face justice.

Those who commit adultery will face judgment.
Those who wrong their spouses.
Those who ignore God's commands for human sexuality.
They will face swift justice.

Those who are liars.
Who swear falsely.
Those who lie in court and manipulate the law.
They will all face God's justice.

Those who oppress their workers.
Those who cheat their employees.
Who don't pay them a fair wage.
Who lay off staff while giving themselves massive bonuses.
They will face God's justice.

Those who oppress the widow.
Who take advantage of those who are alone.
Who try to scam them and steal what they have.
They will face God's justice.

Those who oppress the orphan.
Who use foster kids as a paycheck and then abuse them.
Who treat them as problems instead of human beings God loves.
Those will face God's justice.

Those who oppress the sojourner.
Who wrong the immigrant and see them only as a problem.
Those who cast them out of their land, like Moab did to Israel when they wandered in the wilderness.
They will face God's justice.

All who do not fear God.

Who do not care for His name.
Who believe this is all make believer and opiate for the masses.
They will face God's justice.

Beloved, justice is coming.
You may be waiting for justice.
You may have been wronged by the wicked.
Had your wages stolen, seen those thrust you aside.
Those you love wrongly killed.
Those who have sinned against you seem to prosper or escape justice.
They might have escaped man's justice,
But no one will escape God's.
Not unless they repent and give their lives to Christ.

And justice is coming for you.
Turn to Jesus.
So that justice may come in your favor.
And trust in His justice.

[transition] But Israel doubts God's immutability. They used to believe that God was worth giving to and worshipping. But they don't think so any longer. Maybe that was something that worked in the early days, but things have changed.

Point number 3. **Because God is immutable, He is worthy of all we have (3:6-15) Because God is immutable, He is worthy of all we have (3:6-15)**

The people don't believe that God is worth serving anymore.
There are better gods out there, or things better worth their time.

Verse 7, **"From the days of your fathers you have turned aside from my statutes and have not kept them. Return to me, and I will return to you, says the Lord of hosts. But you say, 'How shall we return?'"**

The people have turned away from God.
They have not kept His ways or commandments.
And God is calling them back.
Over and over the prophets call the people of God to repent.
To turn around.
To come back to God and **"I will return to you."**

So the people ask how they can repent.
Verse 8, **"Will man rob God? Yet you are robbing me. But you say, 'How have we robbed you?' In your tithes and contributions."**

The place God goes for them to reveal their repentance is their tithes.
It is in the money that they are to give to God.
And God says they are robbing Him.
It is not that they are not giving enough.
God calls it robbery.

Verse 9, **"You are cursed with a curse, for you are robbing me, the whole nation of you."**

God reminds them of the curses.
We talked about those curses last week.
Curses like famine and a poor harvest.
They are being cursed because of how they have wronged God.
Because they have robbed Him.

God calls this robbery because it is all His money.
Everything everywhere belongs to God.
Our tithing, our offerings, our giving to churches and no profits is not charity.
It isn't kindness.
We are giving God what He is owed.
And a failure to give is not a failure to be generous, it is robbery.

Verse 10, **"Bring the full tithe into the storehouse, that there may be food in my house."**

Let's start here and talk about what the full tithe means.

Tithe is a fancy way of saying 10%.

When you usually here tithe that is what people are referring to.

This began with Abraham who gave 10% to the priest Melchizedek.

And Israel is required to give 10% of all of their income and harvest to the Lord.

But they are actually required to do much more than that.

There seem to be three separate tithes.

People argue about the percentages.

But the focus is that Israel is not giving everything they should.

You can read and study more about these tithes in Deuteronomy 12, 14, and 26

Part of the tithe is the 10% of their harvest and income.

They bring this to the temple and this provides for the priests and Levites. Because as servants of the Lord they survive only through the tithe.

Another tithe says to bring their grain, wine, oil, and firstborn of the flock. They bring them all to the temple and have a potluck feast in worship. And if they are unable to make it temple to buy amazing food and have a thanksgiving feast in the field as worship to God.

Then every three years they do the same thing, but invite all of the foreigners, orphans and widows.

They all come to eat and be filled and a wondrous worship filled feast celebrating God's worthiness.

All of this is part of the tithe.

And they are not participating in it.

Somewhere they are holding back.

Maybe in one of the three, or maybe in all three.

They somehow think that holding back from God will lead to blessing.
But robbing God will only lead to curses.

Now the natural questions Christians ask, or any discussion around tithing comes down to numbers.

“Well, preacher, how much do I need to give?”

I think that is the wrong question.

Our question should be, how much can I give away?

We are no longer under the legalistic requirements of the law.

But God is not any less worthy of all that we have.

When Jesus died did God become worthy of only 3 percent of our money instead of ten?

I am afraid that sometimes we are like the rich young ruler.

We ask what we have to give to be saved.

And Jesus does not say 10%, but everything.

The true answer is that it is all God's.

If you pick a number, whatever it is, and then stop there, you probably miss the point.

After all, the early church in Acts often sold whatever they had when people were in need.

They did not stop at any percentage.

They worshipped God with all of it. And so should we.

So God tries to call them to obedience in the rest of verse 10.

“And thereby put me to the test, says the Lord of hosts, if I will not open the windows of heaven for you and pour down for you a blessing until there is no more need. 11 I will rebuke the devourer for you, so that it will not destroy the fruits of your soil, and your vine in the field shall not fail to bear, says the Lord of hosts. 12 Then all nations will call you blessed, for you will be a land of delight, says the Lord of hosts.”

God says that if they will stop robbing Him,
If they will give the full tithe, then God will bless them again.
All of their crops will be successful,
Famine will go away,
And blessing will pour out so much that everyone calls them blessed.

Now there is a lot we need to explain here.
Because unfortunately this passage has been abused and misused by false teachers.

These preachers will stand and read from Malachi.
Then tell you to empty your bank account.
Give them checks for thousands of dollars.
And they will say that IF you do this, then God will bless you.
And He will bless you by doubling your money.
As if God is an investment with NFT's, Crypto, or the stock market.

But this misunderstands God's Word.
It rips it from the context.
God said this to the people of Israel.
People who were still under the law of Moses.
They were under the covenant and promises of God.
And this blessing is a reference to the blessings of the covenant.
The blessings and curses that are listed in Deut. 28 and Leviticus 26.

If they obey God and keep His commands, then they will experience blessings like great harvests and years of peace.
If they disobey God and do not keep His commands, like not tithing, then they will experience curses.

So this is not a call for us to test God by sending TV preachers money.
It is a call for Israel to believe what God has already told them.
But America is not Israel.
The church has been grafted into the people of God,

But we are no longer under the law.

We are under the new covenant of Jesus' blood instead of the law.

The prosperity gospel tells us that God is worthy because He gives us money back.

But giving to God today does not mean that you will always get a raise.

It does not mean that you will be safe when the layoffs come.

You will be blessed, but your blessing might come in the next life.

Your blessing may come in the presence of the Holy Spirit.

God is worthy.

Not because of what we receive, but because of who He is.

So don't misunderstand.

This verse is still true to us,

The principle remains.

But our application is different then it was for Israel in Malachi's day.

We don't need to give in the exact same way they did.

But we do need to give.

We give to the church, the poor, and the needy.

Verse 13, **"Your words have been hard against me, says the Lord. But you say, 'How have we spoken against you?' 14 You have said, 'It is vain to serve God. What is the profit of our keeping his charge or of walking as in mourning before the Lord of hosts?'"**

Their main complaint is in verse 14.

They believe God is no longer worthy.

He is no longer worthy of their worship

They describe it in terms of profit.

As if following Jesus can be broken down into a spreadsheet showing the income and losses.

Verse 15, **"And now we call the arrogant blessed. Evildoers not only prosper but they put God to the test and they escape."**

They say that God is not worth it.

Israel says, "Blessed are the arrogant in spirit"

The arrogant and proud are better than the humble.

Being evil is greater than being holy.

They wonder why they should struggle to make ends meet even while tithing and the wicked give nothing yet prosper.

In the end they believe that God is not worthy.

But our God has not changed.

And we know that His justice will come.

We know that every single cent.

Every single moment of obedience.

Every song of praise.

Every hand lifted high.

Every gospel presentation.

Every minute we meditate on His word.

All of it will be worth it.

[if time, story about couple who gave extra 1% every year]

CONCLUSION:

1. [Summary] God is immutable. Because God is immutable, His justice is coming. Because God is immutable, He is worthy of all we have.
2. [Challenge] Take comfort and be encouraged by our unchanging God. Trust that His justice is coming. Treat Him like He is worthy. Because He is worthy of everything. And that will never change. Because "No eye has seen or ear has heard nor the heart of man imagined what God has prepared for those who love Him." 1 Corinthians 2:9.