

Weekly Study of Sunday's Message.

November 20, 2022 "The time was right. See I will send my messenger."

I Intro.

Welcome to the weekly devotional that gives you some specific things to work through from the message Sunday. Whether you were able to participate in this service or not, this devotion is free-standing, and you can use it to help you dig deeper into your own spiritual walk. We're deep in fall and we're moving towards Advent and winter. Our children's program is growing and we're still tweaking ways to love on them well. We also have many ways you can plug into life at NCC. You can find all that through our new website, upgraded app, and social media sites. We're so encouraged by your love and presence when you gather with us. A great group of familiar and new faces join us each Sunday. If you're joining us online, we appreciate your presence also. We are 100% committed to our virtual attenders. We are your church family, and if there is anything you need, prayer, ideas or suggestions, please pass them our way. We know the future is still uncertain, but we are committed to making our virtual congregation as central to NCC as our in person group.

II Recap.

This is our final Sunday in this series, and we're basically just doing some looking back into the final messages in the Hebrew scriptures, Old Testament, to see what the nation of Israel was being told about the coming messiah. The first Sunday we looked at specific things we can do to help us wait well. The nation of Israel was in exile, things weren't going to get better, and the people never would see the birth of Jesus. But there were things they could do to hold their spirits in place. And last week our guest preacher, Steven Cole, encouraged us with the promise of restoration and to live in community to work until the kingdom is restored. Not only from the Hebrew scriptures, but also what this looks like at the end of the age in Revelation. If you missed those, go back and check them out.

III Sunday.

Sunday we finished with the promise from a messenger, of a messenger, who would tell us about the ultimate messenger. Confused yet? Good. We'll keep going. The last book in the Hebrew scriptures is Malachi. God's final word to the Israelites until Jesus comes...over 400 years later. The people needed to know they were not alone, there was a better future out there, and the last message was telling the people of God there were some things they, the Israelites, needed to do to get ready for this messiah. And obviously, this has a lot of applications for us today, in what we can do to get ready for the coming of Jesus, and the season of **expectant waiting**...Advent.

Think of a time you ran into a problem or were in a tough situation, and alone you weren't able to fix or get yourself out of it. How did you feel?

In that situation did help come? What was that like?

There were two scriptures for Sunday. We'll read each one, unpack them a bit, and then hit some larger overarching truths. Read **Malachi 1:1-3**.

What jumped out to you from this passage?

Did you feel any promise or assurance in this passage?

What did you feel like this passage challenged its readers to do?

Now read **Luke 3:1-6**. This references what was said in Malachi.

What jumped out to you from this passage?

Did you notice any similarities with the Malachi passage?

What do you think it means; “*And then all the people will see the salvation sent from God*”?

Bible scholars link the passage in Malachi with John the Baptist and the “*prepare the way*” speech he gives before the coming of Jesus. A little history before we pull some applicable truths from these two passages. In Deuteronomy 7 we see that God chose Abraham to build a nation of people that would grow an intimate relationship with this God to be an example for all nations of the goodness of God. The problem is that the nation of Israel turned The Law from a covenant between God and his people that would benefit other nations, to a self-serving righteousness code that Israel used to isolate themselves from gentiles, non Jews. The Israelites became more concerned about their personal holiness, seeing themselves better than others, than being used by God to reach others. You can see at the end of the Luke passage that John the Baptist is reminding the people of God what their original purpose was. So, let's tie a lot of loose ends together.

Malachi was promising the coming of a messenger who would call people to prepare the way for the messiah. We found this coming messenger to be John the Baptist. Both passages talked about this work that needs to be done to prepare for the coming of the promised messiah. But first.

Where have you noticed the people of God, the church, lose sight of its calling or purpose?

What do you believe causes that?

And then...how would the teachings of John the Baptist understood generally help us to realign ourselves with God?

Kal led everyone through a guided meditation that challenged us to consider three areas of our lives.

1. What do you need to do to redirect your attention and focus? What is taking up space in your head, heart, spirit? Do these things help or hinder you from preparing for the coming of Jesus? What barriers, struggles, things that could block your preparation to receive the coming messiah need to be taken care of? Are there any strained relationships, unfinished things, clutter, that are only going to hinder you from the work of preparation? Can you identify one or two things that are keeping you from directing your attention to prepare the way for the coming of the messiah?

2. What can you add to your daily life that would help prepare the way? What are some good, healthy, life producing habits that you once did, or have been meaning to do, you just haven't gotten around to? You've been too busy, too distracted, just haven't developed the will to do so. But you know you really want to be able to do these things regularly. Knowing who you want to be, what will help you get there? So, what one or two things, habits, practices could you add to your life to help you genuinely prepare for the coming of Jesus?

3. In what way could others see the gift of salvation, Jesus, in you? Who do you look up to as someone you admire, respect in others that reminds you of Jesus? What is it about them that you wish you could grow in? How could you form, shape, your life to be the same kind of example to others that they are to you? How could others see and experience salvation just from watching you?

IV Challenge.

The challenge has already been laid down. There's not a lot more to say. Next week we begin the season of Advent...expectant waiting. **What can you do to prepare for the coming of Jesus?**