

North Summit Church
Malachi 4:4–6
Turning Hearts: The Mission Until He Comes
June 14, 2026

Announcements:

- **Saint George Institute:**
 - We are launching Saint George Institute — a year-long formation program designed to equip believers with a deep theological foundation, a biblical worldview, a clear sense of personal calling, and the practical tools to lead faithfully in every area of life.
 - Through four 8-week courses meeting Tuesday evenings, SGI will take you from doctrine to discernment, from calling to action — forming you as a champion of biblical truth ready to live all of life for God's glory.

Introduction

- If you've ever watched a 4x100 relay—at the Olympics, or a middle school track meet, it doesn't matter which—you know that the most dangerous part of the race isn't the start, and it isn't the finish. It's the exchange zone.
- That's the official name for it: a marked-off stretch of track where the runner carrying the baton has to get it into the hand of the next runner.
- **What makes it so hard? Both runners are moving.**
- The one finishing can't slow down, or the team loses time. The one starting can't wait for a handoff standing still—they have to already be running, reaching back, timing their stride to a runner they can't even see.
- **Coaches will tell you:** races are won and lost in the exchange zone. You can have the four fastest sprinters in the world, and if the baton hits the track even once, none of that speed matters. The team that wins isn't always the team that runs the fastest. It's the team that hands off the best.
- I want you to hold onto that picture, because the last three verses of the book of Malachi—the last words God speaks before four hundred years of silence—are about an exchange zone. Not a track. A much older one: the handoff of the fear and knowledge of the Lord from one generation to the next.

Where We've Been

- For months now, we've walked through this book together. It opened with a declaration that sounds almost gentle until you feel the weight underneath it:
 - *'I have loved you,'* says the Lord—met by a people so worn down by disappointment that their first response was a question instead of gratitude: *'How have you loved us?'*
- From there we watched the drift.
 - Worship that kept its forms while the heart behind it went cold.
 - Offerings that had become an afterthought...the leftovers, not the first and the best.
 - Priests who still had the office but had lost the fear of the Lord.
 - And then the drift followed the people home—into their marriages, into the question of what kind of households they were actually building.
 - In recent weeks, we've watched their disillusionment harden into an open accusation against God Himself—*'Where is the God of justice?'*—and heard His answer:
 - He is coming, like a refiner's fire, to purify His own people before He judges the world.
- Last week, Pastor Mark walked us right up to the edge of that day and left us with a charge: be ready, be faithful, be busy with the work God has given us while we wait.
- This morning, we come to the last three verses of the book—the last words of the Old Testament, in the order most of our Bibles place it. And in these three verses, God answers the question Pastor Mark left with. Busy with what, exactly?

Malachi 4:4–6

Remember the law of my servant Moses, the statutes and rules that I commanded him at Horeb for all Israel. Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the great and awesome day of the LORD comes. And he will turn the hearts of fathers to their children and the hearts of children to their fathers, lest I come and strike the land with a decree of utter destruction.

- Here's what's so powerful about these words: they were first spoken to a people waiting for the first coming of Christ. They didn't know how the story would

unfold—four hundred years of silence stood between them and the night an angel would appear to a priest named Zechariah. We're on the other side of that silence. We know how the first coming went. And now we wait for the second.

- But notice: the mission does not change. Verse 4 looks backward: remember. Verse 5 looks forward: God is sending someone. Verse 6 tells us what that someone will do, and what is at stake if it does not happen. Remember. Watch. Turn. That was the mission for a people awaiting the first coming. It is still the mission for us, waiting for the second.

Malachi 4:4 — Remember

- After everything Malachi has confronted in this book—cold worship, broken marriages, a people so disillusioned they accused God of injustice—you might expect the final word to be something new. A fresh revelation. A new program.
- Instead, God says: remember.
 - ***'Remember the law of my servant Moses, the statutes and rules that I commanded him at Horeb for all Israel.'***
- In Scripture, 'remembering' is never just a mental exercise—pulling an old fact out of storage.
- **To remember, in the biblical sense, is to let the past govern the present.**
- When God 'remembers' His covenant, He acts on it. When Israel is told to 'remember' the Sabbath, or 'remember' that they were slaves in Egypt, the remembering is meant to produce something: worship, gratitude, mercy toward the stranger, obedience.
- So when God's last word to a drifting, cynical, exhausted people is remember, He is not assigning something new. He is diagnosing the disease. Everything that has gone wrong in this book—the polluted offerings, the broken marriages, the complaint that God doesn't care—traces back to a people who forgot. Forgot who God is. Forgot what He said. Forgot the shape of the life He gave them at Horeb before they entered the Promised Land.

- And notice what's bundled up inside *'the law of Moses... for all Israel.'* Some of you will remember—we touched on this back in chapter 1—the Shema, the great prayer of Israel from Deuteronomy 6:

'Hear, O Israel: the LORD our God, the LORD is one. You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might.'

- That's the verse we heard back then. But the Shema doesn't stop there. The very next words are:

'And these words... shall be on your heart. You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, and when you walk by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise.'

- We started this series hearing the command to love God with everything. We end it hearing the rest of that same command: pass it on.
 - In the ordinary rhythm of sitting, walking, lying down, rising—not as a program, but as the texture, or shape, of life itself.
- The very last word of the Old Testament points back to a command about raising children in the rhythm of ordinary days. That's not a coincidence. Hold onto it—we'll come back to it.

Malachi 4:5 — Watch

'Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the great and awesome day of the LORD comes.'

- *'Behold'* is a word that is intended to make you sit up...something is coming.
- And what is coming, before *'the great and awesome day of the LORD'*—the refiner's-fire day we talked about a few weeks back—is a person: Elijah.
- The prophet of Mount Carmel, the man who stood alone against the prophets of Baal and asked Israel the question that is really the question of this whole book: '

'How long will you go limping between two different opinions? If the LORD is God, follow him' (1 Kings 18:21)

- So 'I will send you Elijah' means: before the great Day, I will send someone with Elijah's spirit—someone to call a drifting people back to decision.
- That son was John the Baptist. Jesus later confirms it directly: *'if you are willing to accept it, he is Elijah who is to come'* (Matthew 11:14).
- Notice that phrase, though: if you are willing to accept it. Hold onto it. We will come back to why Jesus had to say it that way—because it tells us something important about how the mission of verse 6 actually unfolds, then and now.

Malachi 4:6 — Turn

'And he will turn the hearts of fathers to their children and the hearts of children to their fathers, lest I come and strike the land with a decree of utter destruction.'

- Here is the mission, stated as plainly as anywhere in the whole book. Whatever Elijah—and the One Elijah prepares the way for—comes to do, the heart of it is this: turning hearts. Not just informing minds. Not just adjusting behavior. Turning hearts—fathers toward children, and children toward fathers. A reciprocal, relational, generational re-orientation.
- This is the word the whole book has been building towards.
 - Back in chapter 1, the diagnosis was that the priests had the behavior of devotion without the heart of it.
 - Now, at the very end, the cure is named: turned hearts.
 - Hearts turned toward God—and because you cannot separate the two—hearts turned toward each other, across generations, inside the home.
- **Then comes the warning:** *'lest I come and strike the land with a decree of utter destruction.'*
 - That phrase—*'utter destruction'*—is covenant-curse language, the kind of total devastation associated with a land under God's judgment.
 - The turning of hearts between generations is not a nice add-on to faithfulness. Its absence is itself a kind of judgment—or at least the leading edge of one.
- I want us to turn to the New Testament once more here, because Paul describes, in Romans 1, exactly what a culture looks like when this turning doesn't

happen—when God, in judgment, ‘gives a people over’ to the consequences of having rejected Him.

- **Paul traces a descent:** a people who knew God but did not honor Him exchange the truth for a lie and the Creator's design for something else, and the disordering spreads—into how people relate to their own bodies and desires, into the relationship between men and women itself, and finally into a list of what marks a society that has been ‘given over.’
 - Near the end of that list is a single word that should cause us to pause: *'heartless'* (Romans 1:31).
 - The Greek word is *astorgous*—without *storge*, the natural, built-in affection between parents and children. The very bond Malachi 4:6 says the Lord's messenger comes to turn toward, not away from.
- **Do you see the connection?** One passage names the cure. The other names the disease when the cure is refused. And we do not have to look far to see this disease at work—fatherlessness, a generation delaying or avoiding marriage and children altogether, confusion on a massive scale about what a man is, what a woman is, what a family is for.
 - Through the lens of Malachi 4:6 and Romans 1, this is not just 'the way things are now.'
 - It looks like exactly what it is: a culture experiencing, in real time, the kind of 'utter destruction' that comes when hearts are not turned toward each other across generations.
- **The Gospel:** But here is the thing—this is not where Malachi leaves us, and it is not where the gospel leaves us either. The whole reason God sends Elijah, the whole reason the Lord Himself comes to His temple, is because of this exact problem—not to abandon a people in this condition, but to do something about it. The turning of hearts in verse 6 is not a threat. It is a promise. God does not diagnose the disease and walk away. He sends help. He sends His own Son—born into a family, raised by a father and mother who taught Him ‘in the way’—and He grows up to be the one perfectly turned-hearted Son, oriented toward His Father and toward us, even to the cross. Whatever cold, fractured thing has crept into our homes and our culture, it is not the final word. The final word—the very last word of this book, in fact—is a promise of turning. And that is our mission this morning: not to despair over what is broken, but to take part in what God has promised to mend.

I. Remember: The Mission Has a Foundation

- Before we get to the ‘turning of hearts’ in verse 6—before mission, before culture, before the next generation—we have to deal with verse 4. Skip it, and everything else gets built on sand.
- The first word of God’s mission briefing is not ‘go.’ It is ‘remember.’ For many of us, that’s almost disappointing—we want the exciting part, the calling, the ‘what’s next.’ But God starts somewhere else: with whether we actually know, and live by, what He has already said.
- Here is the diagnostic question this raises: **is the Bible the foundation of your home, or just a feature of it?**
- A feature is something you have. It’s on the shelf, on the app, maybe even read most mornings. A foundation is something everything else rests on—your decisions, your priorities, your conflicts, your money, how you talk to your spouse, how you discipline your kids, what you do with your Saturday.
- Malachi’s people had the law of Moses. They weren’t lacking information—they had had it for a thousand years. What they had lost was the practice of letting it govern. Before any of us can talk about turning the hearts of the next generation, we have to ask: turning them toward what? You cannot hand off what you do not actually have. You cannot pass on a foundation you are not standing on yourself.

If your kids, or the people who watch your life most closely, had to guess from how you actually live—not from what you say on Sunday—would they conclude that Scripture is the foundation under your home, or just a decoration?

II. Watch: The Mission Doesn’t Look Like We Expect

- Remember the phrase from verse 5 we set aside—*‘if you are willing to accept it, he is Elijah who is to come?’* Let’s come back to it now, because I think it’s one of the most important phrases in this passage for us, here, in 2026.
- Israel had the prophecy. They were watching for Elijah. In that sense, they were doing exactly what verse 4 told them to do—remembering, watching, expecting God to act. And the Pharisees, whatever else we want to say about them, were

not indifferent to Scripture. Many of them were serious, devoted people who genuinely wanted to see God's kingdom come and Israel restored.

- **So what went wrong?** I don't think the problem was that they weren't watching. I think the problem was that they already knew what they were watching for. They had a picture in their minds of what 'the great and awesome day of the LORD' would look like when it arrived: visible, dramatic, top-down, political. Rome broken. The throne of David restored in glory. And when God's actual answer to Malachi 4:5 showed up, it did not look like that at all. It looked like a man in camel's hair, out in the wilderness, baptizing people in a muddy river. And after him, a carpenter's son from Nazareth who rode into Jerusalem on a borrowed donkey and was crucified outside its walls a week later.
- Same fulfillment. A different shape than expected. And many missed it—not for lack of devotion, but because they were looking in the wrong place for the right thing.
- **I want to suggest...that we can do the same thing.**
- We live in a culture that looks, in a lot of ways, like the culture Malachi describes—cynical, drifting, calling evil good. And it's right, it's good, to long for that to change. But where do we instinctively look for that change to come from?
 - If we're honest, our eyes go to the same places the Pharisees' eyes went: the headlines, the courts, the elections, the institutions. Get the right people in the right positions, win the right battles, and the culture will turn.
- I'm not saying any of that is unimportant—Christians should care about justice in the public square; that's part of our calling too. But notice where the 'turning of hearts' promised in verse 6 first landed, historically. Not in Herod's palace. Not in the Sanhedrin. It landed in the home of a childless old priest and his wife, who finally—after a lifetime of waiting—had a son. And everything that son would become was described, before he was even born, in terms of turning hearts inside households.
- The great and awesome day of the Lord, the first time it came, arrived through a home before it ever touched a temple, a courtroom, or a capital.

When you imagine the renewal you long for—for your kids, our church, this town, this country—where does your mind go first? To a headline you are

waiting to read? Or to the conversation you could have at your own dinner table tonight?

III. Turn: The Mission Begins at Your Table

- So if cultural change does not start at the top, where does it start? Verse 6 already told us: hearts turned toward each other, fathers and children, inside the home. And the law of Moses—the very thing verse 4 told us to remember—already told us how.
- **Go back to Deuteronomy 6.** After the command to love God with all your heart, soul, and might comes this: *'these words... shall be on your heart. You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, and when you walk by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise.'*
- **Notice what isn't there.** No seminar. No curriculum to purchase. The transmission of faith happens in sitting, walking, lying down, rising—in other words, in everything. Breakfast. The drive to school. Bedtime. Discipleship is not a program bolted onto family life; it is family life, lived with eyes open toward God. This is the Great Commission, and it starts here—before it ever reaches 'the nations' (Matthew 28:19–20). Every Christian home is a mission field, and the missionaries live at the same address as the mission.
- So what does this actually look like at home? Here is one picture: music. Music has real structure—keys, scales, chords, time signatures. And within that structure you get everything from a Bach composition to a bluegrass tune to a four-chord pop song to a cappella harmony around a campfire. The structure doesn't shrink the possibilities; it's what makes the possibilities mean something. A note outside the key doesn't sound 'free.' It sounds wrong.
- Your home needs the same thing: guardrails, not a tightrope. A tightrope has no margin for error—one wrong step and you're falling, with no room to be a beginner, fail, and be caught. Kids raised on a tightrope tend either to walk it, terrified, until they can't anymore—or to jump off the first chance they get. Guardrails are different: here is the road, it's a good road, and within these rails there's room—room to ask hard questions, room to mess up the chord and try again, room to wander near the edge and be steered back without the relationship ending.

- And God does not hand us the guardrails and walk away—He invites us into the work, because He has always wanted to do this with His people, not just to them. So invite your kids in, too. Let them see you in the Word and ask about it. Let them pray out loud, even badly. Let them serve alongside you. Give them a stake in what this household is for.
- That is how hearts get turned: not by a lecture, and not by the absence of all structure, but by a thousand ordinary moments inside real boundaries, where a son or daughter watches someone they love actually live what they say they believe—and gets invited to live it too.

Look at the actual rhythms of your week—not the ideal version, the real one. Where, in the sitting and walking and lying down and rising, is there room for the next generation to see what you treasure most? And honestly: is your home right now more of a tightrope, or a set of guardrails?

Conclusion

- **Let's go back to the exchange zone.**
- The runner finishing their leg of the race doesn't get to also run the next one. Their whole job, in that final stretch, is to get the baton into the next runner's hand—while both of them are moving. The one finishing can't slow down too much, or they'll never close the gap. The one starting can't wait for a stationary handoff—they have to already be running, reaching back, before the baton ever arrives.
- That is where Malachi's people were standing: holding the baton handed to them at Horeb. And God's last word to them was not 'stop and admire what you're carrying.' It was: get ready for the handoff. Elijah is coming. And what Elijah did—what John the Baptist did, what every faithful generation since has been called to do—is exactly the work of the exchange zone: reaching back to receive what was given, and reaching forward to place it into the next set of hands, while the race is still going.
- We are in the exchange zone right now. Not the first one—that one happened two thousand years ago, when the One the Law and the Prophets pointed to actually came. We are in a different one: the stretch of track between His first coming and His second. And the mission in this stretch has not changed. Be ready. Be faithful. Be busy—with this: turning your heart toward the ones who

handed you the baton, and turning your heart toward the ones you are handing it to.

- You do not have to win the whole race today. You just have to make a good exchange—in the sitting, the walking, the lying down, the rising, today, this week, in your own home. Reach back. Reach forward. And do not let it drop.

[Closing Benediction]