

North Summit Church | Malachi Series
His Treasured Possession
Malachi 3:16–18

Announcement:

- **CDF Presentation**
 - Play Video
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 - Gratitude
 - People You May Never Meet Are Investing in Your Spiritual Growth
 - Not possible without CDF Capital
 - **Call to Action:** QR Code: Invite the audience to join the Kingdom story by investing in other churches through CDF.
 - Encourage them to take immediate action by scanning the QR code on the screen.
 - Conclude with a vision of how their participation can empower churches and make an eternal difference.
 - **Key Closing Message**
 - “Let’s invest in God’s work together and advance His Kingdom.”

Series Context

- We’ve been walking through Malachi for several weeks. The book opens with God’s declaration — *“I have loved you”* — and the people can’t see it. Their expectations haven’t been met, and their doubt has grown into something worse: drift, hollow religion, faithlessness at the altar and at home, and finally a full accusation — *“Where is the God of justice?”*
- All of that has had the camera on the faithless — the drifting priests, the broken marriages, the accusers. **Now the camera shifts.** Malachi pulls back the curtain and shows us something the book hasn’t shown us yet: a small group of people who, in the middle of all that corruption and doubt, were still fearing the Lord. And God is reminding them that He is paying attention.

Introduction

- There is a scene near the end of a long, grinding war — the kind where the fighting has gone on so long it has started to feel like the normal state of things.
- The generals are arguing strategy. The politicians are making speeches. The newspapers are full of the latest disaster. Everyone of importance is visible and loud.
- And somewhere in a trench, far from the cameras and the speeches, a small group of soldiers has done something no one is talking about, and everyone is taking for granted: they kept their post. They didn't defect. They didn't desert. They didn't stop believing in what they were there for. They just stayed — faithfully, quietly, without recognition — and kept doing what they were sent to do.
- No one is writing their names down. No one on earth knows what they are doing in that trench.
- **But there is a record being kept. And the commanding officer knows every name.**

- Malachi 3:16–18 is God pulling back the curtain and showing us that He is keeping that record. The noise of the faithless has filled this book. Now we hear about the ones who were quietly faithful — and what God says about them should shape how we live this week, and every week.

Malachi 3:16–18 (ESV)

"Then those who feared the LORD spoke with one another. The LORD paid attention and heard them, and a book of remembrance was written before him of those who feared the LORD and esteemed his name. They shall be mine, says the LORD of hosts, in the day when I make up my treasured possession, and I will spare them as a man spares his son who serves him. Then once more you shall see the distinction between the righteous and the wicked, between one who serves God and one who does not serve him."

Let's unpack the text:

v. 16a — The remnant gathers

- Notice what triggers this gathering: not a command, not a program. A remnant who feared the Lord simply began to speak to one another.

- Fear of the Lord in Scripture is not primarily terror — it is the settled recognition of who God is and what He is worth. The opposite of the casualness Malachi has been diagnosing from chapter one.
- And that shared fear did something visible: **it drew them together**. It moved outward — toward the community of those who shared it.

v. 16b — God paid attention

- "The LORD paid attention and heard them." For most of this book, we've been reading God's complaints about what the people are doing wrong. And now, quietly: **He leaned in**. He listened. He inclined His ear toward the people who were speaking about His name.
- The people in chapter 2 wept at the altar and wondered why God wasn't receiving them. Malachi told them why. But these people? God heard them.

v. 16c–17 — A book of remembrance

- The image of a royal book of remembrance was immediately legible to Malachi's audience. Persian kings kept archives of loyal service — and when the day of reckoning came, the records were read and the faithful were rewarded.
- **Esther 6 gives us an example**: Mordecai had saved the king's life, and the record had been kept.
- God borrows that image and scales it infinitely. He is keeping a record — not of the loud, the powerful, the visibly successful — but of those who feared His name in the ordinary days when no one was watching.
- And the claim He makes over them is: "*They shall be mine.*" The word *segullah* — translated "*treasured possession*" — is the same word from Exodus 19:5 when God first called Israel His special people.
- **Treasured. Owned. His.**

v. 18 — The distinction is coming

- This is the answer to the complaint of 2:17: "*Where is the God of justice?*" The distinction the people said they couldn't see — between the righteous and the wicked — they will see it.
- Paul picks up exactly this thread in 2 Thessalonians 2. He tells his readers that the **spirit of lawlessness** is already at work — already active in his day, already blurring the line, already working against the things of God. And it continues in our day. The "*man of lawlessness*" Paul describes is not necessarily just a single

end-times figure — it is the accumulated expression of everyone who has been captured by that spirit, the spirit that sets itself against God's order, against His distinction, against His claim over the world.

- And what will undo it? Paul uses two Greek words: **epiphaneia** — the appearing, the blazing into view — and **parousia** — the coming, the royal arrival, the presence of the King. The spirit of lawlessness will be destroyed "*by the appearance of his coming*" (2 Thess. 2:8). Not by a political solution. Not by the right argument winning. By the King *showing up*.
- **Already and not yet:** This is not a single moment that arrives from nowhere. It is the completion of something that began at the resurrection of Christ. That resurrection was the first act of the new creation breaking into the old — the firstfruits, as Paul calls it in 1 Corinthians 15. Those who are in Christ will rise first; those who are His will meet the coming King and usher in His eternal kingdom (1 Thess. 4:16–17). The final distinction is not an interruption of history. It is the conclusion history has been building toward from the beginning.
- Jesus made this point over and over in His parables. The wheat and the tares growing together until the harvest. The sheep and the goats separated at the throne. The net pulled from the water, sorted on the shore. The ten virgins, five ready and five not.
 - These separations happen throughout history in smaller ways — every generation faces its own moment of reckoning, its own preview of the final distinction.
 - But all of them are pointing forward to the same thing: the day when God draws the line in permanent ink. When the distinction Malachi promised — between the one who serves God and the one who does not — is made unmistakably, finally, forever clear.

Application

I. Fear the Lord — He Is More Than We Act Like

- The thread running through every verse is the fear of the Lord. Three times in three verses: those who feared the LORD, esteemed His name, feared the LORD.
- **This week we had a thunderstorm.** And in the middle of it, lightning hit just blocks from our house.

- There is nothing abstract about that moment. The power is not theoretical. You feel it in your chest before you hear it. You are suddenly, unmistakably aware that you are standing in the presence of something wildly beyond your control.
 - You don't *decide* to be humbled. You just are. Because you are small, and what is in front of you is not.
- That is the closest I can get to describing the fear of the Lord experientially. It is standing before something genuinely, overwhelmingly powerful — and being unable to pretend otherwise.
 - **Here's the diagnosis Malachi has been making for three chapters:** we act like God isn't that powerful. We bring Him leftovers because we don't really believe He sees. We drift in our marriages because we don't really believe He is a witness. We accuse Him of injustice because we don't really believe He is capable of handling it.
 - **We don't live like God is capable and competent.**
 - We worry as if He might miss something.
 - We manipulate as if He needs our help.
 - We drift as if He's not paying attention.
 - The remnant in 3:16 had not solved all the hard questions. They lived in the same world, under the same Persian rule, with the same unanswered prayers. But they maintained a posture of genuine reverence before a God they believed was actually, really, truly in charge.
 - **Proverbs 9:10** — *"The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom."* Not the advanced level. The beginning. Everything good flows downhill from this one spring.

Application Question: *Where in your life has your view of God quietly shrunk? Where are you acting like He's not capable, not watching, not enough — and what does it look like to stand before the lightning again?*

II. Find the Remnant — And Speak

- Notice what the God-fearers did: they found each other and spoke. In the middle of a culture that had drifted, in a religious environment gone casual, they gathered. And God leaned in.

- But here's what I want you to feel the weight of: they weren't gathered to sort out everyone else. They weren't taking inventory of all the faithless priests and the treacherous husbands. They were gathered around their shared fear of the Lord.
- **This is one of the most countercultural things this passage calls us to.**
- We live in an era of relentless public finger-pointing. And the online Christian world is one of the worst offenders — full-grown adults acting like schoolyard kids, everyone announcing why they are right and everyone else is wrong, parsing every pastor and every church and every statement for heresy.
 - It is mostly noise.
 - And almost none of it looks like what God is paying attention to here in Malachi 3:16.
- God isn't paying attention to who won the argument. He is paying attention to the people who gathered in His name and spoke about Him to one another. Encouraging one another.
- **You don't have to fix the faithless. You have to be faithful.**
 - Don't worry about the ones not doing what they're supposed to do. You do what you're supposed to do.
 - Don't worry about the ones doing injustice. You don't be unjust.
 - Don't spend your energy pointing fingers. Spend it pointing people toward Christ.
- That is what we are trying to be as a church. We don't believe we're the only Christians. But we are trying to be Christian only — gathered around the fear of the Lord, not around our opinions about everyone else.
- **Hebrews 10:24–25: "Let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, not neglecting to meet together... all the more as you see the Day drawing near."**
 - The Day is approaching. The response is not more arguing. It is more gathering.

Application Question: *Who are the people in your life who are genuinely stirring your fear of the Lord? Who are you stirring up? Is there someone God is calling you to pull closer into this kind of conversation?*

III. You Are Known — Live From That

- **The book of remembrance. The treasured possession. Spared as a son.**
- Here the pastoral heart comes out: the God-fearers living faithfully in an unfaithful world needed to know they were not invisible. And neither are you.
- **The work no one notices** — the prayer before the house wakes up, the marriage you are tending when it would be easier to coast, the integrity you are holding where all the incentives point the other way — **God is not unaware.**
- A book of remembrance is open. He is paying attention. He hears you. He is leaning in toward the quiet faithfulness that the world will never write about.
- And when the Day comes — when the final distinction is drawn — what was invisible will be unmistakably clear. The righteous and the wicked. Those who serve God and those who do not.
- **The same fire that refines the one — will consume the other.**
- This is not a call to pride. It is a call to **endurance**. The same God who said *"I have loved you"* at the start of this book says *"they shall be mine"* here. The love at the beginning and the possession at the end are the same love — steady, attentive, writing down what it sees.
- Relief is coming (2 Thess. 1:7). The distinction will be seen. The Day will settle what the present cannot. In the meantime: **you are His. Live from that.**

Application Question: *If you genuinely believed God was paying attention to the ordinary faithfulness of your life this week — what would you do differently? What would you stop? What would you start?*

Conclusion

- Remember the soldiers in the trench. No cameras. No speeches. No one of importance writing their names down.
- But the commanding officer knows every name.
- We live in Malachi's world. The noise of the faithless is loud. The wicked sometimes appear to prosper. The God-fearers are not always easy to find. The evidence doesn't always match what we were told to expect.

- And into that season, this passage says four things:
 - **Fear the Lord.** Let that be the posture of your life — standing before the lightning, unable to pretend He is small.
 - **Find the remnant and speak.** Gather. Be gathered. Stir one another up. Stop pointing fingers and start pointing to Christ.
 - **Know that you are known.** The book is open. God is paying attention. He has leaned in.
 - **Wait for the distinction.** The spirit of lawlessness is already at work — blurring lines, capturing hearts, telling the world there is no difference. But the King is coming. The *epiphaneia* and the *parousia* — the blazing appearing and the royal arrival — will complete what the resurrection began. Every parable of separation Jesus told was a preview. The final act is still coming.

- The God who said "*I have loved you*" — He sees you in the trench.
- **He is writing your name.**
- **He calls you His.**

Closing Benediction

Small Group Discussion Questions
Malachi 3:16–18 | North Summit Church

Question 1: The Fear That Draws Together

The remnant in Malachi 3:16 is identified by one characteristic: they feared the Lord. Not the most successful, not the most visibly religious, not the ones with the most articulate answers. Just those who had maintained a settled, reverent orientation toward God in a season when the rest of the culture had lost it. And that shared fear did something visible: it drew them together. They found one another and they spoke. Proverbs 9:10 tells us the fear of the Lord is not the advanced level of wisdom — it is the beginning. Everything flows downhill from this one spring. The drift Malachi has been diagnosing for three chapters was, at its root, the slow loss of this posture.

Discussion: How would you describe the fear of the Lord in your own life right now — is it growing, holding steady, or quietly eroding? What is the evidence? And what does it mean practically to stand before a God who is genuinely, overwhelmingly capable and in charge — not just in theory, but in the decisions you make this week?

Question 2: God Paid Attention

One of the most arresting phrases in this passage is deceptively simple: "The LORD paid attention and heard them." For most of Malachi, we have been reading God's complaints — the drift, the failure, the accusations hurled at heaven. But in verse 16 the camera shifts and we see God lean in. He noticed. He inclined His ear. He listened to the conversation of people who were simply speaking to one another about His name. The people in chapter 2 were weeping at the altar wondering why God wasn't receiving their offerings. Malachi told them why — they had broken faith at home while performing worship at the altar. But these people? God heard them. The difference was not volume or vocabulary. It was a heart turned toward Him.

Discussion: When has your prayer life felt most like a real conversation with a God who is actually listening? What was different about that season? What does it mean to you that God "paid attention" to people who were simply gathering together around the fear of His name — not performing, not arguing, just speaking about Him?

Question 3: Don't Point Fingers — Point to Christ

The God-fearers in Malachi 3:16 weren't gathered to catalogue everyone else's failures. They weren't tallying up the corrupt priests or debating the theology of the treacherous husbands. They gathered around their shared fear of the Lord and spoke to one another. There is a sharp contrast here with a temptation that is alive in every era — including our own. When the culture around us drifts, the instinct is to spend our energy pointing out what is wrong. But this passage calls us to something different: you be faithful, whether or not anyone else is. Don't worry about the ones doing injustice — you don't be unjust. Don't spend your time pointing fingers at everyone else — spend it pointing people toward Christ.

Discussion: Where are you most tempted to spend your energy on what others are doing wrong rather than on being faithful yourself? What would it look like for you specifically to redirect that energy — toward Christ, toward your own walk, toward building up the people around you?

Question 4: His Treasured Possession

The word translated "treasured possession" in verse 17 — the Hebrew *segullah* — is the same word from Exodus 19:5 when God first called Israel His special people among all the nations. It is the language of personal ownership and cherished belonging. God is not saying the God-fearers will barely survive the coming Day. He is saying they are His — in the way that something precious belongs to the one who prizes it. And then He adds the image of a father sparing his son. Not a legal transaction. Not a technicality. A father shielding a child. This is who will stand when the Day comes — not those who performed best, but those who belong to the Father who spares.

Discussion: How do you tend to relate to your standing before God — as something you are earning, maintaining, or resting in? What does the image of being God's "treasured possession" do to how you think about your identity on a hard week? What would it look like to live from that truth rather than toward it?

Question 5: The Coming Distinction

The book ends where the complaint began. In Malachi 2:17, the people said: "Everyone who does evil is good in the sight of the LORD" — they couldn't see the distinction between the righteous and the wicked, and they concluded that God must not care. Malachi 3:18 is the answer: you will see it. Paul tells us in 2

Thessalonians 2 that the spirit of lawlessness is already at work — blurring the line, pressing against God's order, capturing hearts. But it will be undone by the epiphaneia and the parousia — the blazing appearing and the royal arrival of the King. This is not a new idea arriving from nowhere. It is the completion of what the resurrection of Christ began. Jesus told parable after parable about this separation — wheat and tares, sheep and goats, the net sorted on the shore. These happen in preview throughout history. But all of them are pointing forward to the day when God draws the final line. For those who feared His name, the sun of righteousness rises with healing in its wings (4:2). For those who did not, the day burns like an oven. The same fire. Two outcomes. Not because the fire changes — but because of what it meets.

Discussion: Where in your life are you currently struggling to see the distinction — where faithfulness seems costly and the world's way seems to be working just fine? How does the promise that the spirit of lawlessness will be destroyed by the appearance of Christ's coming — and that the resurrection begun in Him will be completed in us — reframe what it means to be faithful in the ordinary week, when the distinction is not yet visible?