

The Healing Wings of Ultimate Restoration - He comes to make all things right

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Date: 18 December 2016

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[0 : 00] Please do have a seat and if you take up your Bibles and turn to Isaiah chapter 59, you'll find that on page 618. If you have one of our Blue Church Bibles, page 618.

And Anjali Chittaradi is going to read to us a selection beginning at Isaiah chapter 59 and verse 1, page 618.

Behold, the Lord's hand is not shortened, that it cannot save, or his ear dull, that it cannot hear. But your iniquities have made a separation between you and your God.

And your sins have hidden his face from you, so that he does not hear. For your hands are defiled with blood, and your fingers with iniquity. Your lips have spoken lies, your tongue mutters wickedness.

No one enters suit justicely, no one goes to law honestly. They rely on empty pleas, they speak lies, they conceive mischief, and give birth to iniquity.

[1 : 00] Their feet run to evil, and they are swift to shed innocent blood. Their thoughts are thoughts of iniquity. Desolation and destruction are in their highways.

The way of peace they do not know, and there is no justice in their paths. They have made their roads crooked. No one who treads on them knows peace. Therefore justice is far from us, and righteousness does not overtake us.

We hope for light, and behold darkness, and for brightness, but we walk in gloom. Justice is turned back, and righteousness stands afar off. For truth has stumbled in the public squares, and uprightness cannot enter.

Truth is lacking, and he who departs from evil makes himself a prey. The Lord saw it, and it displeased him, that there was no justice. He saw that there was no man, and wondered that there was no one to intercede.

Then his own arm brought him salvation, and his righteousness upheld him. He put on righteousness as a breastplate, and a helmet of salvation on his head. Arise, shine, for your light has come, and the glory of the Lord has risen upon you.

[2 : 06] For behold, darkness shall cover the earth, and thick darkness the peoples. But the Lord will arise upon you, and his glory will be seen upon you. Thank you, Angelee.

Justice is turned back. Righteousness stands afar off. Truth has stumbled in the public square, and uprightness cannot enter.

What a picture of misery, that description of our human world. But who could have thought that God's answer to all the darkness of this world would be in the coming of a little child?

Child in the manger. Well, if you'd take up your Bibles again, and this time turn to page 802.

802 in the Church Bibles to Malachi chapter 4, which we've been looking at in our Christmas studies together. And Stanley Kamalo is going to read to us from chapter 3, verse 18, through to the end of Malachi chapter 4.

[3 : 21] Verse 18, verse 19, Verse 19, Thank you, Lord.

And the hearts of children to their fathers, lest they come and strike the land of a decree of utter destruction. Thank you. Thank you.

Thank you. Well, would you take up your Bibles and turn with me to that passage that we read there in Malachi at the end of chapter 3 and beginning of chapter 4.

I want us to think this morning about these healing wings of ultimate restoration that the prophet speaks about and longs for in the coming of the Lord himself to this earth in the promise of Christmas.

Where is the God of justice? Where is the God of justice? If there is a God, then why is there so much suffering, so much injustice, so much inequity, so much war all over the face of this world? [5 : 19] That's a common complaint today. That's a common complaint today. It's something that you hear people saying when they doubt the existence of God. But in fact, it's nothing new because in Malachi's day, some 450 years before the birth of Jesus, the complaint was in fact just exactly the same.

In many ways, Malachi the prophet was addressing a post-God world, a bit like our own. People were saying exactly that sort of thing. If God is real, then he needs to show it. Where is the God of justice? That's what they were saying. If you look at chapter 2, verse 17, their very words. What's the point in serving God? They were saying.

It's vain to serve him. There's no profit in keeping his charge, in keeping his ways, because it's the arrogant who seem to be blessed.

It's the evil who seem to prosper. So what on earth is the point of walking in the ways that God tells us to walk? Where is the righteousness that God says he stands for, if this is the reality that we see in our world?

[6 : 32] Well, God says through his prophet Malachi, my righteousness will be revealed. It will be revealed. Look at chapter 4, verse 1 once again.

Behold, he says, the day is coming. It will be a day of searing, white-hot justice. Burning like an oven. It's the coming of the refiner's fire that we looked at last time in Malachi chapter 3, which will divide between the precious metal and what turns out just to be dross, just to be dirt, to be burnt off. And that's why it will be a day of great division. Look at chapter 3, verse 18, just the verse above. It will be a division between precious jewels, the treasured possession that God speaks of in verse 17 there, those who fear his name.

It will be a division between those people and those who are going to be destroyed, it says here in verse 1. Root and branch both. It's where we get our expression. Root and branch, reform.

Root and branch, destruction. The day of justice, he says, will be a blazing oven for all those who have scoffed at God, who have resisted his righteousness.

[7 : 53] A fearsome thought. But look at verse 2. For those who fear God's name, it will be very different. It will be a different kind of heat.

Not a destroying heat, but quite the reverse. It will be the warming, the healing, the life-giving wings of the sun, says Malachi. For you, the sun of righteousness will rise with healing in its wings.

It's a lovely picture, isn't it, of the sun's rays carrying the sun into the sky as the dawn breaks. The wings of healing that bring light into the darkness.

That bring righteousness. That bring restoration. And that bring the abundant joy, the leaping liberation. You'll be set free from bondage like calves leaping out of a stall.

Out of darkness into the glorious, wonderful light of the coming God himself. That's what I want to talk about this morning for a little while in amongst our carols. The sunrise of Christ's coming.

[8 : 57] Which promises, according to Malachi, these healing wings of ultimate restoration for humanity and indeed for this whole world. Because he is coming, says the prophet, to make all things right.

I want to look at that by asking two questions. First of all, what does his coming really signify? And then secondly, how does God achieve that?

First then, his coming is the rising sun of his righteousness. He comes to make all things right. To restore all things to God forever and ever.

Now this coming righteousness that the prophets spoke about. It really was an ultimate restoration of all things for this whole world.

It was to put this whole world right in every place where the world has gone wrong. And that was God's promise to mankind right back at the very beginning.

[10 : 01] Way back in Genesis chapter 3. That God would put everything right that man had put wrong by his rebellion against God.

Despite the punishment that God inflicted upon man and upon the whole world. By subjecting this entire universe to a curse. Way back at the beginning, that promise was given that God would one day make all things right.

Way, way back in the book of Genesis. Way back in the law of Moses. The first five books of the Bible. That's why down here in chapter 4 verse 4. The prophet says, remember. Remember the

law.

Remember the instruction of Moses. Way back in Genesis 3. That's what he promised a rebellious man. Do you remember? The seed of the woman shall one day crush the serpent.

Crush the destroyer of righteousness. And right order in this world. And he will restore again. The rightness of God that you saw in the Garden of Eden.

[11:07] When all things were good and holy and right and pure and pleasing to God. Behold, everything is very, very good. He will make things right again.

Book of Exodus. The second book of the Bible. After God redeemed Israel out of Egypt.

Remember, he promised that he would be their God forever. And that they would be his people despite their sin.

He would make them what he called his treasured possession. Which is exactly the word used here in Malachi 3 verse 17. His treasured possession.

His people Israel. That's what Moses promised them. Remember the instruction of Moses. Don't forget that. Of course, Moses wasn't naive. Far from it.

But he spoke very openly of the Israelites' sin. He was very clear of the fact that they would go on and on and on. Continuing to rebel against God. Just read Deuteronomy chapter 31 and 32 for example.

[12:07] You'll see that. But Moses promised. Because God had told him. That he would be faithful to his covenant with Abraham. To bless all the nations through his seed.

Through the people of Israel. And it was Moses. That very first of the prophets. It was Moses who spoke about the latter days. The days to come long in the future.

When God would restore the world to righteousness. It's way, way back there. In Deuteronomy chapter 4 as a matter of fact. And that was the promise that all of the later prophets picked up on. And proclaimed that God's righteousness would at last in the latter days. That it would be restored to this world. Just listen to a few excerpts from the great prophet Isaiah.

We heard from him earlier. Shower, O heavens, from above. And let the clouds rain down righteousness. Rightness. Let the earth open and salvation and righteousness bear fruit.

[13:17] Or again. I will bring near my righteousness. Says the Lord. It's not far off. And my salvation will not delay. Or again.

My righteousness draws near. My salvation has gone out. And my arm will judge the peoples. The coastlands hope for me. And for my arm. They wait.

And you could read abundantly in almost any one of the prophets. These things. You see righteousness. Salvation. That's what the world longs for. But that is what God promised.

Right from the very beginning. That one day. He would at last make things right. Make things right forever and ever.

And it's so desperately needed, isn't it? Because still this world is so far short of what it ought to be. Even among God's people. Turn back with me to that passage that Angeli read to us from Isaiah chapter 59.

[14:21] Page 618 in your church Bibles if you have one. It is such a grim picture, isn't it? Of the world as we know it. And so little has changed from 800 BC to 2000 AD.

Just look at the verses here in Isaiah chapter 59. Did these things not describe the world that we live in today? Violence. Evil. Exploitation of the innocent.

Verse 7. Their feet run to evil. They are swift to shed innocent blood. Just think of these ghastly stories that we've seen so much on the news in recent days of people trafficking.

Across the Mediterranean Sea, people being brought into Europe. But all over the world as well. The enormity of the slave trade. The sex slave trade.

Among women. Even among children. Their feet run to evil. They are swift to shed innocent blood. Look at verse 8.

[15:27] The way of peace they do not know. Of course we can sing, can't we? Peace on earth at Christmas time. But let me tell you friends, we know there's no peace in Syria today, is there?

There's no peace in the Yemen today.

There's precious little peace in Iraq and in many, many parts of the world. The way of peace they do not know. Verse 14.

Righteousness stands afar off. For truth has stumbled in the public squares. Or can you ever remember a time when our public life has been so discredited, so publicly scorned?

Our parliamentarians. So much rejection, isn't there, of the political orders today. I'm not sure that there's been something on that scale in this country and since the 17th century. Or in places like France and America in the 18th century, which brought their revolutions.

Verse 4. No one goes to law honestly. You can't trust the law. Well, we're hearing plenty of screaming about that, aren't we?

[16:41] Just yesterday's newspaper was full of the fact that people in Northern Ireland are bemoaning the fact they can't trust the law. That allows convicted terrorists to walk free.

But sends British soldiers and those who are sent by the arm of the state to fight terrorists back into the court, back to prison. And numerous other examples.

And look at verse 4 again. You can't trust businesses or banks either. They rely on empty pleas. They speak lies. They conceive of mischief. They give birth to iniquity.

I don't think I can remember a time in my lifetime when there's been such a collapse of public truth. And as a consequence, such a collapse in trust right across the world.

That was the root of the credit crisis, wasn't it? A collapse of trust. A collapse of credery. Trustworthiness. That's where the word credit comes from.

[17:38] Believing. I believe that you'll pay me back what I give to you. But banks and governments couldn't believe that that would happen. That's what caused the crisis. We're facing exactly the same thing.

A lack of trust. A crisis in trust. Among politicians and lawmakers. Isaiah's world and Malachi's world desperately needed a restoration of righteousness.

But our world today certainly needs still that same restoration. That putting right. Does it not? Look down to verse 15. The second half of it there under the heading judgment and redemption.

The Lord saw it. All this mess of darkness. And wrong. And lies. And cheating.

The Lord saw it and it displeased him that there was no justice. He saw that there was no man. And wondered that there was no one to intercede.

[18:44] Then his own arm brought salvation. And his righteousness upheld him. He put on righteousness as a breastplate. And a helmet of salvation on his head.

There was no one on this earth who could restore righteousness. Who could make things right. So God himself has to put on his armor. And enter the fray to bring righteousness into this world. To make things right. To bring his ultimate restoration to a fractured world. To right all the brokenness. All the ruptures.

And to restore true health among nations. Between nations. And societies. Within families. He will do that said the prophets.

He will restore all things says Malachi. And when he does. It will be the sunrise of righteousness. That we have all longed for.

[19:45] Actually Isaiah uses exactly the same image here. We look down to the beginning of chapter 60. Light in the darkness. Arise. Shine. For your light has come.

And the glory of the Lord has risen upon you. The sunrise. For behold darkness shall cover the earth. And thick darkness the people. But the Lord will arise upon you. And his glory will be seen upon you.

And nations will come to your light. And kings to the brightness of your rising. And you see centuries later. Malachi. Is writing to the people.

Speaking to the people. And saying don't forget that. Remember that. Remember all these promises. Going right back to Moses. And all the prophets. Hold on to it when doubts arise.

That day is coming. Because he is coming. Himself. To make things right. But how can things be made right?

[20:44] When everything in this world is so wrong. How will the coming of God. Make things right. When the root of the problem is the human heart.

That is so wrong. Well Malachi and the other prophets. They tell us that as well. And we'll look at that in a moment. But first we're going to sing another carol. That speaks of that great restoration. And the glorious righteousness. That will one day fill the world with joy. Joy to the world. The Lord is come. Let earth receive her king.

Here we go. Here we go.

Thank you.

[22:05] Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

[24 : 35] Thank you. Malachi chapter 3 verse 7.

It's just so succinctly summed up there. The entire problem with this universe. From the days of your fathers, you have turned aside from my statutes and have not kept them.

Or as we read in Isaiah 59. Or as we read in Isaiah 59.

Your iniquities have made a separation between you and your sins have hidden his face from you. That's the root of the problem. That's the root of the problem in this world. The prophet is speaking through God is speaking through the prophet to his people Israel. But Israel's story is just man's story in the world.

[25 : 57] And the root of all the problems in this world is that there is a massive rift between God and man. That's the root of the root of the earth. And the root of the earth is fundamentally that terrible ruptured is that there is a terrible ruptured.

And when that is broken, everything is broken. There's a trail of tragedy left in the wake of that fractured relationship. Now we know that to be the case, don't we?

When our relationship is ruptured, it's not just those two parties that are affected. Think about a marriage when a marriage ruptures. There's pain, deep pain, isn't there?

Between those two spouses. But not only there. Pain is inflicted on the whole family and many others. Friends, indeed communities. And where marriage rupture becomes endemic in a society, communities and the whole of society itself reaps a terrible reward.

The havoc that that ruptured relationship brings. And that's the way it is with our whole world. The rupture that Genesis chapter 3 speaks of between God and man.

[27 : 37] It leads right on, if you read the very next chapter of Genesis, to rupture between man and man. Between brother and brother. Straight after man is estranged from God, we see human beings becoming deeply estranged from each other.

To the extent that Cain murders his own brother. And you read on in Genesis chapter 4 and it becomes a litany. One after the other. Of evidences. Of human enmity.

Rupture. Broken relationships. Right across the board. And when you think about it, that kind of relationship rupture is right at the heart of all our world's problems today.

Nation at odds with nations. Well, that's what leads to trade wars, to currency wars. Ultimately to military wars. And our world has all of a sudden become a much more fragile and dangerous place in recent months, has it not?

The talk of all of these things. Race at odds with race. Just think of all the misery that that has inflicted upon our world. All the exploitation of one race to another.

[28 : 49] Leading to great resentment. Poisoning. Peoples. Communities. Not just for a few years. Not even just for a few generations.

But for centuries. Running deep. Think of the ruptured relationships between employers and workers. Well, again. Right this very week.

Are our papers not full of these very things? The strife with the southern railways. Now we're going to have a postal strike running up to Christmas. We're going to have airport people on strike right over Christmas.

The British Airways pilots are going to go on strike. Ruptured relationships all over the place. Man at odds with man. And of course men at odds with women.

And the last. So much destruction because of these ruptured relationships. Marriages. Families. As I said. Societies. Whole communities disintegrate.

[29 : 48] Because of ruptured relationship. And our whole world is so wrong in so many ways. All as a result of the curse.

That we brought upon ourselves. Because. Chapter 3 verse 7. From the days of our fathers. We have turned aside from God's ways.

And rejected him. But into that. Sorry mess. Of tragedy. And of darkness. And of misery. In this human world.

The prophet Malachi says. God is coming. With the healing wings. Of ultimate reconciliation. Bringing together. He himself is coming.

As Isaiah said. Because he saw that there was no man. We were powerless. We were powerless. To intercede. To change things. To sort things out ourselves. No kings or rulers of this world. [30 : 47] Can sort these things out. No prime minister. No president. Whether you're from the elite. Or whether you're from the populist party. The one is no more powerful than the other.

To sort out the problems. Of the human heart. Let me assure you of that. The G8 summit can't do it. The United Nations Assembly can't do it. The European Union certainly can't do it.

Not even. The prophets and the priests. The preachers. The religious men. Not even they. Can do any of these things. Even those who speak the truth from God himself.

They have no power. There is no man. Says the prophet. All are helpless. But. God can. He who made the world.

Who framed it. And saw. That all that he has made. Was very good. He can come. And make things right. And good.

[31 : 45] Once again. And that's the astonishing thing. God's not blind. God can see. I've seen their ways. He said in Isaiah 57 verse 18.

But. I will heal them. I will heal them. The son of righteousness will rise with healing in its wings. Even. Over a world that has spat in the face. Of its creator. And that's how ultimate righteousness comes.

And only thus. Because God himself. Humbles himself. To do what we could not do for ourselves. Even for those. Who are his enemies. To do what we could not do for ourselves. It's such a monumental task. To bring that kind of reconciliation. Just think. What a monumental task it is.

[32 : 42] To reconcile. A warring couple. To reconcile. Warring tribes. Or communities. Warring nations. Look at the.

The. The terrible strife. That has. Raged. For decades and decades. In the Middle East. How impossible it is. For even the greatest presidents. And prime ministers. To bring peace.

To that strife. We can't even solve little things. In this world. Never mind. Solve the greatness. Of the world's problems. In total.

With such a monumental task. That it takes the. Mighty intervention. Of the creator. Of heaven and earth. Itself. In a deeply personal way.

To even begin. To put this world right. And not without cost. Not without deep. And grievous cost. To God himself. To the great reconciling healer.

[33 : 41] Who bears the cost. Isaiah the prophet. Spoke of one that he saw. In his vision. In Isaiah chapter 6. The one high. And lifted up. Whose glory.

Filled the temple. Filled the whole earth. But later on. In his prophecy. He sees. One. Who is humbled. In the form of a servant.

With no beauty. Or honor. Being despised. And rejected. And being. Lifted up high. To die. So that he could become.

That great healer. And upon him. Was the chastisement. That brought our peace. He says. And with his stripes. We. Are healed.

That's how. The healing. Wings. Rose upon this world. I. When I am lifted up. Will draw people to myself.

[34 : 41] Said the Lord Jesus Christ. As he went. To the cross. At Calvary. So that in Christ. And in his birth. And in his death.

For our sins. Paul says. God. Was reconciling. The world. To himself. Because. And only because. The king of heaven.

Stooped. To become. The friend of sinners. To be born. Into the squalor. Of a borrowed stable. Amid shame. And scandal.

And only because. Through the kisses. Of a friend's betrayal. He was lifted. On a cruel cross. To be punished. For the world's transgressions. That's what it meant.

For the God of heaven. To come. And to make this world right. To bring this dark world light. Let's pause again.

[35 : 43] For a moment. And ponder these things. As we sing a carol. That reminds us. Of what it meant. For God to come among us. As Emmanuel. From the squalor. Of a borrowed stable.

By the spirit. And a virgin's faith. To the anguish. And the shame of scandal. Came the savior. Of the human race. The sin.

Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

[37 : 36] Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

[40 : 06] Thank you.

Thank you. Thank you.

Thank you. Thank you.

Thank you. Thank you.

Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you.

[43 : 20] Thank you. Thank you.

Thank you. Thank you. Thank you.

Thank you.

You have to be. To be. That in you. We might become. The right. of God.

[46 : 42] We might be real. We might be made. We might be made. We might be made right. We might be made right. We might be made. They are surgical. We might be made right. We might be made right.

part of his wonderful future of ultimate righteousness and reconciliation. I can't understand why anyone will want to do anything else but make that true for them right now, today, this Christmas.

Not wait a moment longer. And God's message to us is, I've come to make everything all right.

Let's pray. O Lord, raise up, we pray thee, thy power. And come among us.

And with great might succor us. That, whereas though our sins and wickedness sorely hinder us in running the race that is set before us, that thy bountiful grace and mercy may speedily help and deliver us through the satisfaction of thy Son, our Lord, to whom with thee and the Holy Spirit be honor and glory, world without end.

[48 : 06] Amen.