**Malachi 3:1-4** Look! I am sending my messenger! He will prepare the way before me. Then suddenly the Lord, whom you are seeking, will come to his temple! The Messenger of the Covenant, in whom you delight, will surely come, says the Lord of Armies. 2But who can endure the day when he comes? Who will remain standing when he appears? For he will be like a refiner’s fire, like launderers bleach! 3He will be seated like a refiner and a purifier of silver. He will purify the sons of Levi and refine them like gold and like silver. They will belong to the Lord and bring him an offering in righteousness. 4Judah and Jerusalem’s offerings will be pleasing to the Lord as they were in the days of old, in years long ago.

 Seriously, God’s Word is just so interesting and clearly so revealing about so many things. Just take a moment to consider a brief history of God’s prophet Malachi. Malachi is the last of a line of prophets sent by the Lord beginning with Moses and going on for the next 13 centuries. That’s right, 13 centuries of prophets, men of God who spoke and shared with us the message of the Lord that they received and passed on to us. Now there were also many false prophets but those men and what they wrote will never make it into the Book that God assembled for us called: The Old Testament.

 Now mind you, prophets ended up in the Old Testament even though they are men like Malachi. Malachi was sent to the apostate people of Judah, the remnant of the Jewish people left in the world. Some 200 years earlier God had the Northern Kingdom of Israel carried into captivity by the Assyrian nation, ten tribes that were never heard of again. 100 years later, God had the Southern kingdom of Judah carried into exile by the Babylonians but God had promised they would return to their land, rebuild their Temple and resume true worship of God. God kept his promise.

 But the returning people of Judah did not keep theirs. They did not stay faithful and true to the Lord. They took this beautiful religion that pointed them to the Savior to come, a religion of grace and mercy from God foreshadowed in almost everything they religiously did and they turned it into a religion of work righteousness. The focus was no longer God and his promises, rather the focus became their goodness, their works, and their total pleasing of God by being a righteous and godly people. Except they weren’t.

 So the Lord God sent Malachi to preach, one last prophet with one final message of repentance. Malachi points out their faults, their hypocrisy and their godlessness. But like many of the prophets of God before him Malachi and his true message is cast aside for the false message of works. God is not happy. Following Malachi there will be a 400 year period of silence from the Lord, a silence only broken because God will fulfill his promise of a Savior.

 And that is the wonder of Malachi. Malachi does not just preach law, but Malachi preaches hope and salvation, preaches the wonder and joy of what will be. One such section is the words of our text for today. Here is God’s message of the hope yet to come, the message of his salvation for a people who have already rejected this grace of God. Let’s you and I look at these words under the theme: **THE LORD OUR DELIGHT!**

 As we begin to look at this text, I hope a few things about what I said kind of crossed your mind. First, even though Malachi preaches about the godlessness and apostasy of the Jewish people and even though it is clear in Malachi that his message has been rejected by the people, still this book and writing end up being a part of the Bible of these people. That alone should tell you something about the Godly nature of the Bible. Not a book assembled by men but rather a book assembled by God for the enlightenment of men. That’s the other thing that should stand out. The people had rejected God and the message of God sent through Malachi. So who was Malachi giving this promise of hope and salvation to? Yes, to the true believers, the small group still found among the people but also to the true believers who were yet to come. For as we read these words and realize how they came true we see the hand of God in providing all thing necessary for eternal life and salvation. Yes, these words are written as much for us as for the people of the day.

 What do our words tell us? Verse 1 says, **“Look! I am sending my messenger! He will prepare the way before me. Then suddenly the Lord, whom you are seeking, will come to his temple! The Messenger of the Covenant, in whom you delight, will surely come, says the Lord of Armies.”** I don’t know if anyone can read those words and not see the events of the coming of Jesus. But what is even more interesting is that very first mention of “**my messenger.”**

 That line is important because that line is actually pointing to John the Baptist. Isaiah was another prophet who foretold the coming of John. Think about this. Isaiah was 700 years beforehand and Malachi is 400 years beforehand. This is not accident or coincidence. This is the work of God. John appears on the scene and he is the one who prepares the people for the revelation of Jesus. That was his job and the crowds he attracted are testimony to his doing a great and godly job. Yes, Malachi speaks of John the Baptist and predicts the second messenger. And what a marvel that second messenger is.

 Did you catch what was said of that second messenger? **“Then suddenly the Lord, whom you are seeking, will come to his temple! The messenger of the Covenant, in whom you delight, will surely come, says the Lord of Armies.”** Notice it says that the Lord is coming. The Lord is coming to his Temple and that is exactly what Jesus did! Do you remember the baby Jesus being brought to the Temple to fulfill the requirements of the law? At that time we heard of Simeon, who had been told by the Holy Spirit to look for the child, who was the Savior! When Simeon saw Jesus he burst into song, a marvel of praise that we still use today to highlight the greatness of God’s gift. Or as an twelve year old Jesus came to the Temple and we are told the Priest and Levites were astounded at his knowledge and grasp of Scripture. Finally, as an adult Jesus came. Came as a part of his ministry to show how he was indeed fulfilling the promise of God. Jesus came bringing the complete and awesome truth of God, to fulfill the Covenant, the promise of salvation in the Christ.

 But if you think that part is awesome then please consider the point of the very next words. That part of Malachi’s words are really a shadow of all that Jesus would be and do. It says this: **“But who can endure the day when he comes? Who will remain standing when he appears? For he will be like a refiner’s fire, like launderers bleach! He will be seated like a refiner and a purifier of silver. He will purify the sons of Levi and refine them like gold and like silver. They will belong to the Lord and bring him an offering in righteousness. Judah and Jerusalem’s offerings will be pleasing to the Lord as they were in the days of old, in years long ago.”**

Who can endure the day when he comes? In truth, who would stand against this gift of God sent to bring eternal life? Oh it is true, while on this earth Jesus doesn’t look much like a conquering hero or the invincible man. He is humble and lowly. And despite the greatness of his deeds, he will end up on the cross there to pay the total price for the sins of the world. But think of Jesus now. The risen Lord. The one who came back from death and with that resurrection proclaimed the forgiveness of sins, eternal life and salvation for all who believe. Dear people, since Jesus won, eternally won against sin, death and the Devil, do you not see his exalted nature? He is the King of kings and the Lord of lords. He rules and reigns over all things for the salvation of his people. Indeed who can stand against Jesus, the Son of God?

 And note that Malachi says Jesus will be a **“refiners fire, a launderer’s bleach.”** The picture here is that of the person who purifies and cleans. The refiner takes the raw materials of the earth, melts them down, pulls off the dross, and creates the pure silver and gold, precious and valuable metals. Or the launderer washes the clothes, scrubs and applies his soaps and bleaches until the clothes are clean and without stain. All of this is a picture of what Jesus does for us. We are the precious metals obscured by impurities and worthless things. We are the clothes, stained and dirty in this life. Jesus refines us through his sacrifice. Jesus cleans us and makes us spotless before His Father and ours. In other words this is a picture of what the Savior has come to do, what the Lord has come to do for you and me and all who believe.

 What he has done is summed up in the words: **“They will belong to the Lord and bring him an offering in righteousness. Judah and Jerusalem’s offerings will be pleasing to the Lord as they were in the days of old, in years long ago.”** We will belong to the Lord. We belong because the Lord has refined and cleansed. And now, we are the Lord’s! We are filled with works of praise and honor. We have desires to please and follow. And before the Lord, we are always considered holy and pure, that’s right, righteous, all because of Jesus.

 Because of the forgiveness found in Jesus we are the righteousness of Jesus. We bear his mark, carry his goodness, reflect his light, and are filled with his love. As the previous verse said, **“We belong to the Lord!**”

 Again think of what has happened with this section. It is clearly a section dealing with the Savior to come, dealing with what the Savior will be and what the Savior will do. Again marvel that Malachi was some 400 years before Jesus. And yet these words come true in Jesus. This is something that happens hundreds of times in Scripture. God makes a prophecy through one of his messengers and that prophecy hundreds of years comes perfectly true. This is not coincidence. This is not accident. This is fulfillment and shows without a doubt the complete veracity of God’s Word.

 How do you have a group of people 400 to 700 years later conspiring to fulfill all of these promises of God? It is clear that the prophecies existed at the time of the prophet. In other words, someone in Jesus day does not go back and add all of these things to the various books. They were already there! In the next few Sundays as we hear other Old Testament readings you will hear a few more of these prophecies that have come true. Again, not coincidence but a testimony to the truth of God’s Word!

 The Christ will be born of a virgin. The Christ will be born in Bethlehem. The Christ will be a descendant of David. The Christ will visited by the Magi. The Christ will come out of Egypt. The Christ will be called a Nazarene. The Christ will performs miracles signs and wonders galore. The Christ will die on a tree, a reference to crucifixion. The Christ will die with the wicked. The Christ will be laid to rest in a rich man’s tomb. The Christ will rise from the dead, seen and witnessed by hundreds. These are but a few of the hundreds, conservatives say 350 such promises directly fulfilled by Jesus! The evidence is actually overwhelming. God’s Word is true. Jesus is the Son of God and the Savior of the world!

 And yes, the part of this prophecy that I especially enjoy is the fact that it says this **“messenger of the Covenant”** will be **“delightful.”** How absolutely true that word. When you grasp what Jesus is and has done isn’t that the right word to use about him? It is a word that means “have pleasure in, delighting in.”

 That’s Jesus. He has paid for my sins and I no longer fear the consequences of hell. He has taken on my enemies and conquered. He loves me despite my sins. He sends his Holy Spirit to help and guide me, to open my eyes and give me true life and wisdom. He watches over me so that I have nothing to fear. He promises to never give me more than I can bear. He reminds me again and again of his compassion and mercy, His grace showered upon me. I can’t think of a better word to use concerning Jesus. “Delight.” I find pleasure and delight in Jesus!

 Not bad for a 400 year old prophecy, is it? A revelation of the wonder of Jesus. The Savior, the very Lord, the messenger of the Covenant who has come to refine and launder and the end result is that I am his, I belong to Him. Praise God for Jesus! Amen.