



W H E N T H E
L O R D
C O M E S N E A R

H E H U M B L E S H I S P E O P L E

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Malachi 3:1–7 (EHV) ¹ 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. ² 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! ³ 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. ⁴ Judah and Jerusalem’s offerings will be pleasing to the LORD as they were in the days of old, in years long ago. ⁵ I will approach you to judge you. I will be quick to give testimony against those who practice occult arts, those who commit adultery, those who swear false oaths, those who cheat workers out of their wages, those who wrong a widow and a fatherless child, those who turn away a resident alien—all those who do not fear me, says the LORD of Armies. ⁶ Certainly I, the LORD, do not change. That is why you, sons of Jacob, have not come to an end. ⁷ Since the days of your fathers, you have turned aside from my statutes and have not kept them. Return to me, and I will return to you, says the LORD of Armies.”

Think back to some of your history lessons. Can you think of a messenger or a courier who played an important role by delivering a message?

The German military described Nancy Wake as “the white mouse,” for her ability to elude capture. Between 1940 and 1944 she had close calls but always managed to give her pursuers the slip. It began, she said, with a visit to Vienna in the mid-1930s as a freelance journalist. There, she saw roving Nazi gangs randomly beating Jewish men and women in the streets. Those attacks made her promise herself that “if ever the opportunity arose, I would do

everything I could” to stop the Nazi movement, she said. “My hatred of the Nazis was very, very deep.”

Ms. Wake left home at 16, worked briefly as a nurse, and managed with the help of a small inheritance from an aunt to leave Australia at age 20. She traveled to London, New York and Paris, and decided Paris was the place that suited her best. She found work as a freelance journalist. In 1936, she met a Marseilles industrialist named Henri Fiocca, whom she married and settled with in Marseilles three years later. With the German invasion of France, Ms. Wake’s wealth and social standing gave her a certain cover as she began helping members of local Resistance groups. She became a courier and then an escort for Allied soldiers and refugees trying to leave the country.

Even closer to home are the Navajo Code Talkers. Grandma Marian’s brother, Edmund Henry, Sr. was included in their ranks. The U.S. Marines took him out of his high school classroom, trained him to use Navajo words and descriptions to communicate during battles, and he communicated in the unbreakable code that enabled the U.S. to win the Pacific in World War II.

There are so many stories of messengers and couriers playing important roles at crucial times in history. They come in all shapes and sizes and with different gifts and abilities. What’s the most important thing that every single messenger does? They deliver the message, good or bad.

Malachi understood the role of messenger. His name in Hebrew is the same word that the LORD uses in verse 1: **“my messenger.”** That’s all we know about him. He recorded the words of this message to God’s people about 400 BC. In the years that followed, God was silent. No more messengers. At least not yet.

The LORD promised that all of that would change. He would send two different messengers. **“Look! I am sending my messenger! He will prepare the way before me”** (Malachi 3:1 EHV). We heard about the first messenger in Luke’s gospel this morning. Luke was a detail man. He made sure everyone knew when this messenger appeared by listing the Roman and Jewish authorities of his day. Then he wrote, **“The word of God came to John, the son of Zechariah, in the wilderness”** (Luke 3:2 EHV). The LORD broke his 400-year silence when he called John the Baptist to be “my messenger.”

This messenger’s job was to prepare the way before the LORD. Have you seen Highway 550 just outside of Durango? Road construction crews have been hard at work preparing the way. They have filled in the low spots and bulldozed the high areas. They are building a new, smooth road so that it’s easier to get to Durango.

The LORD called John to preach a message that would bulldoze the high, proud places in people’s hearts and fill in the empty low spots in their lives. **“He went into the whole region around the Jordan, preaching a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins”** (Luke 3:3 EHV). John was getting them ready for the next messenger, THE Messenger. Malachi wrote, **“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”** (Malachi 3:1

EHV). Get excited, because the one whom the LORD had promised to send since the days of Adam and Eve would suddenly, shockingly arrive - the promised Savior!

When we think of messengers throughout history, what kind of news do they bring? Good or bad?

It depends on the message. Sometimes they have to deliver bad news. The White Mouse would have to tell the soldiers hidden in a secret cellar, "The Germans are coming! Quick, we have to go!" The Code Talkers would call for reinforcements: "The battle is going against us. We need help! Come quickly. Drop your bombs at these coordinates."

How would you classify Malachi's message? **"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"** (Malachi 3:2–3 EHV). Good news or bad? Sounds a lot like bad, doesn't it? Jesus, the Messenger of the Covenant, is coming to clean things up – to clean people up! He'll take hold of us with his silversmith's tongs, put us in a crucible, and heat us and melt us down till all the impurities and evil are cleaned away. I don't like the sounds of that! Sounds pretty bad!

"He will be like ... launderer's bleach." Picture this scene with me. Your 5 year olds have been outside playing all day. They have been tossing stones in the dirt, stomping in the puddles left by the overnight rain, riding their bikes, racing each other up and down. They played hard. Now it's time to come in and get clean. They are so filthy that you tell them, "It's time to get in the tub." Immediately they start to screech and wail, "No! I don't want a bath! I hate getting wet! I don't want a bath!" They need it, and they're going to get it!

The LORD's people needed refining and washing. He referred to them as **"sons of Jacob,"** not "sons of Israel." They are the descendants of the heel-grabber, the deceiver, the plotter, and they committed the same sins as their ancestor. The LORD would have to come down hard on them because of their lack of humility and repentance. **"I will approach you to judge you. I will be quick to give testimony against those who practice occult arts, those who commit adultery, those who swear false oaths, those who cheat workers out of their wages, those who wrong a widow and a fatherless child, those who turn away a resident alien—all those who do not fear me, says the Lord of Armies... Since the days of your fathers, you have turned aside from my statutes and have not kept them"** (Malachi 3:5,7 EHV).

What a mess! God's people were too proud, too haughty to admit where they were at. They wanted to be right and do whatever they wanted. The LORD knew that they needed to humble themselves before his perfection and judgment, or they would be lost forever.

Good news or bad? When we look at our own lives, we see the same kind of mess. Maybe we don't practice "occult arts" or witchcraft, but sometimes we cross our fingers and hope that we're lucky. We may not have committed adultery, but sometimes our eyes look at someone and our hearts long for a physical connection with them that has nothing to do with marriage. We may not cheat workers out of their wages, but sometimes we are loud complainers and cheap tippers in a restaurant. We may not wrong widows and orphans, but we may not lift a finger to help them either. We may not slam our door on a foreigner, but we don't always show

kindness and mercy when we have the opportunity. In so many ways we **“have turned aside from [the LORD’s] statutes and have not kept them”** (Malachi 3:7 EHV).

Sometimes bad news ends up being good news. Bad news – the White Mouse warned that the Germans were coming and they had to leave immediately! Good news – they escaped and were safe! Bad news – Code Talkers relayed the message about the need for reinforcements and air support. Good news – air support came and bombed the enemy position. They were safe!

Bad news – the refinement is coming and it’s going to hurt as the fire burns away the impurities! Bad news, the soap is coming even though we don’t want the bath!

Good news – once the Messenger refines and washes us, we are pure and clean! Malachi said it like this: **“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”** (Malachi 3:3 EHV). The priests and Levites who had been corrupt and unfaithful would be pure and clean. They would be able to bring sacrifices that pleased the LORD because they would bring them in faith!

When the LORD refines and scrubs us, we belong to him. Can anyone remember when he does this refining and scrubbing? At our baptism! Bad news – we come to the font a filthy, dirty mess. We don’t want to be there. Our hearts resist, kicking and screaming! But water and Word go to work. It scrubs away every impurity. All gone! It’s the same thing that happened this morning when I told you that your sins are forgiven. We’re clean. Perfect. Brand new!

Jesus, the Messenger of the Covenant, brings a message that is good and bad news. The bad news for all those who reject him – he will reject them. The good news? **“Certainly I, the Lord, do not change. That is why you, sons of Jacob, have not come to an end. Return to me, and I will return to you, says the LORD of Armies”** (Malachi 3:6–7 EHV). Advent is the time for us to listen, humble ourselves before our Savior, and trust his promises. Jesus could have refused to come, refused to be one of us, refused to save us. He couldn’t because he doesn’t change. He can’t go back on his word. He had to come and rescue us. He had to come and die for us.

Nancy Wake, the Navajo Code Talkers, and many other messengers across history shared what they had been told to say. They saved thousands of lives by delivering their messages. Those messages were only temporary. The Messenger of the Covenant has good news that benefits us now and forever. Return to him! Listen to his message and live! Don’t forget that God calls each one of us **“my messenger”**. How will we share the news this December? We have a Facebook page that you can share with your friends. Every morning until December 25th there’s a new passage that helps focus on Jesus for our Christmas celebration. Share those pictures on your page. Share our Facebook Live stream or our YouTube page with people on your friend list. Ask if you can bring your neighbor children to Christmas for Kids next Saturday. Tell someone. It doesn’t matter who. It doesn’t matter when. Just tell them. Tell them so they can be ready for Jesus’ arrival. Tell them so they can listen and live too! Amen!

To God alone the glory! Pastor Jon Brohn