Subi SMALL GROUPS

Malachi – Reconnecting with God

We have begun a new sermon series on Malachi. For many of us, we are wholly unfamiliar with the minor prophets[1]. We find that it is a strange and largely unexplored "land". When we do read the minor prophets, it seemed hard to understand and more importantly, it seemed irrelevant to us today. What do the words of the prophet to God's people more than 2400 years ago have anything to do with us today in the 21st century?

The fact of the matter is that, while the words in Malachi were not written *to* us, but the words were written and preserved *for* us. After all, those of us who trust in God stand in the same lineage of God's people back then. If God's people needed to hear God speak to them then, God's people today need to hear God speak all the more. While technology and society have changed drastically since then, the issues that we face as mankind have not – insecurity, confusion, faithfulness (or lack thereof), injustice etc.

As we turn to Malachi, let us approach the book with the understanding that "the word of God is alive and active". God still speaks to us through his word, and we have much to learn from Malachi. Our session today will be relatively short as we will only cover the introduction to Malachi.

Launch

1) Tell of the time when you last read any of the Minor Prophet books. Be honest about what you thought about the book as you read it.

Malachi

In order to properly understand and interpret Malachi, it is vital that we locate the period of time in which Malachi was written. Failure to do so will cause great confusion and worst of all, cause us to misapply God's word into our lives. To do so, we'll need to look at the larger picture of the storyline of the Old Testament. Take the time to re-arrange the following 12 historical events chronologically according to the storyline of the Old Testament. You can either do this as a group or individually:

1) After roughly 70 years in exile, God raises up Zerubbabel and leads the Israelites (Judah – south) back to Canaan.
2) Israel (north) was led by unfaithful kings and they were eventually taken into exile by the Assyrians in 722BC
3) Nehemiah leads the people to rebuild the walls of Jerusalem and the temple was also rebuilt
4) God casts out man and woman from the Garden of Eden (the land) because of their sin
5) God gives them his law through Moses as the people travel to the Promised Land (Canaan)
6) God calls Abram and promises him and his descendants that God himself will be their God
7) God creates the world and mankind in his own image

[1] The minor prophet books include Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obadiah, Jonah, Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah, Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi. These books are considered Minor Prophets *not* because they are less important, but rather it is simply because they are shorter compared to the Major Prophets (Isaiah, Ezekiel, Jeremiah (& Lamentations), and Daniel)

8) Solomon sinned and his offspring engaged in civil war that split the nation into two – Israel (north) and Judah (south)
9) Judah (south) was led by unfaithful kings (with some exceptions) and they were eventually taken into exile by the Babylonians in 586BC
10) God raises up David to be his first king to rule over his people in the Promised Land
11) Sin enters into the world through man and woman
12) After 400 years of slavery, God raises up Moses to save his people from slavery in Egypt

Chronological Order: (SG Leaders – feel free to email me [Chin] if you need answers to this)

1)	7)
2)	8)
3)	9)
4)	10)
5)	11)
6)	12)

2) Where does Malachi fit into the timeline as you listed out above? Why do you think it is significant that we know which part of Israel's history is Malachi situated in? (This question will be explored more in the coming sessions)

3) **Take the time to read aloud all of Malachi.** This will probably take 15 minutes to do so. There are several ways that you can do this. The group can assign a set amount of verses (or paragraphs/chapter) to each group member to read aloud. An alternative is to find one group member to read all of the book, with each group member following along in their own bibles.

   As you do this, jot down or highlight any part of Malachi that made an impression on you. Write down any questions that you may have as well, and we will explore those questions when we come to those passages in the future.

   There are two reasons for this method. The first is that this word of prophecy was originally meant to be *heard* rather than read on a page. By reading it out loud, we receive this oracle in the same way that the original listeners did. Thus, if it is at all possible, when reading Malachi out loud, avoid being monotonous, but rather read it as you think it was meant to be given. (You may not be perfect, and that is okay. The idea is to try our best to put ourselves in the same situation as the original listeners.) The second reason is that by reading all of Malachi, we get a rough picture of the whole tone and message of the book. This will help us in our Bible studies in the coming weeks.

   At the end of this exercise, take the time to discuss what each member has wrote down and highlighted. As a way to end small group, pray together and ask God's Spirit to help you understand and embrace the message of the book.